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# Students' Perception of Their First Experience of the Sacrament of Penance Within the Archdiocese of Perth, Western Australia

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# Students' perception of their first experience of the Sacrament of Penance within the Archdiocese of Perth Western Australia.

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## ABSTRACT

***Students' perception of their first experience of the Sacrament of Penance within the Archdiocese of Perth Western Australia.***

This study examined the perceptions of year three children of their first experience of the Sacrament of Penance within the Archdiocese of Perth in light of contemporary developmental research. In the Archdiocese of Perth, the Catholic Church's present practice is to prepare students to receive Penance in Year 3 when they have reached the 'age of reason' (7 years).

The theology behind the Catholic Church's decision to administer Penance at the age of reason is also investigated. The work of developmental psychologists, particularly Kohlberg and Fowler, underpins this investigation of the cognitive, moral and spiritual development of the sample population.

Students who had reached the age of reason and had recently received Penance at co-educational Catholic Primary schools were surveyed, and interviewed in order to reveal their perceptions regarding sin, penance and reconciliation. Students from varying socio-economic backgrounds were selected for the study. The findings of the descriptive research indicated minor differences in students coming from varying socio-economic groups.

Results indicate that many of the children, in this population, are at differing stages of spiritual development, many lacking the cognitive skills required to understand the theological concepts of 'sin' and 'penance'. Nevertheless, students did express a positive orientation towards God through Penance.

This study discusses the pastoral and theological implications of administering Penance at the age of reason considering the cognitive immaturity and affective orientation of the age group.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Scriptural Background

The biblical history of Penance is steeped in tradition. Prophets throughout the ages have offered an invitation to repentance. John the Baptist linked repentance closely with baptism (Mark 1:14 [All Biblical references refer to the RSV Translation]).

Jesus welcomed sinners and reconciled them to the Father, physically healing them in the process. Cooke (1994) writes about the restorative powers of Penance in "Sacraments and Sacramentality". Bible stories about the healing of the paralytic (Mark 5: 16-18); the centurion's servant (Matthew 8: 5-13); the maniac who is cured (Mark 5: 1-20) and Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9: 18-26) indicate a God who is all-loving, all-forgiving and all-compassionate.

Jesus empowered the disciples, saying to them: "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). These instructions indicate that developing a relationship with God involves maintaining a relational covenant with the Church community.

In breaking this covenant with God, a person not only offends God and mankind; he/she alienates himself/herself from his/her community. In the Catholic tradition, Penance

provides the opportunity for a person to restore their relationship with God, himself/herself and his/her community.

## A Brief History of Penance

The theology of Penance has developed throughout the years.

In the early church, Penance centered on the community. A sinner was sponsored to join the order of penitents and was subjected to a severe and public disciplining in order to show his/her repentance. In Catholic teaching this process was known as 'canonical' Penance and is also often described as 'public' Penance (Bausch, 1983).

The severity of this public form of Penance lead to its decreased use and a form of the rite, known as 'private' Penance. Private Penance had evolved from the Irish church, which was heavily influenced by the pastoral theology of monastic institutions in which younger monks would seek advice from older monks.

As the practice became more popular, priests began to consult each other regarding the appropriate penance for particular sins. This led to the development of 'penitential books' (Bausch, 1983) which were a dictionary of every imaginable kind of sin and the correct expiation for each.

In the sixth century, missionary priests transported the Irish system of Penance to the Mediterranean. Inevitably, the public and private penitential practices began to conflict.

The Council of Toledo in 589 (*The Church's Confession of Faith. A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 1987) denounced the private use of Penance and decreed that the public canonical rite be followed. Toledo effectively outlawed private Penance.

The Council held at Chalon-sur-Saone (*The Church's Confession of Faith. A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 1987) in the middle of the seventh century upheld the Irish penitential system, even recommending it, albeit in tacit terms. This recommendation was immensely popular.

During the ninth century, the Church, in co-operation with Emperor Charlemagne, amended this recommendation claiming to recognise the need to restore uniformity to Penance. The bishops of southern France met again in 813 at Chalon-sur-Saone (*The Church's Confession of Faith. A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 1987) repudiating the penitential books. An attempt to destroy the practice of the private use of Penance through the destruction of the penitential books failed, indicating the mindset of the time.

The 4th Lateran Council in 1215 and the Council of Trent in 1551 canonized private Penance (Coffey, 2001). The Fathers of the 4th Lateran Council introduced a law, making annual confession and the reception of Eucharist binding on all Catholics. This law, known as 'omnis utriusque sexus' (Catholic Church, 1983: Canon 989) endorsed private Penance.

While the Fourth Lateran Council named the 'age of reason' as the point at which an individual was bound by 'omnis utriusque sexus' (Catholic Church, 1983: Canon 989), it did not name a chronological age. Common practice at the time was to administer first confession and first Holy Communion in the seventh year.

The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) ratified the decision of Lateran in defending the structure of Penance against Protestant reformers. The Council Fathers at Trent justified the origins of the rite, from Scripture, where Christ, as founder of the Church, gave the disciples the power 'to bind and loose' (Cook, 1994).

In 1910, "Quam Singulari", a decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments on First Communion was written in response to the 'errors and deplorable abuses' that had crept into the precise determination of the 'the age of discretion (reason)'. The 'errors and deplorable abuses' Quam Singulari referred to were related to the delayed reception of the Eucharist. There were factions within the Church claiming that a full and perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine was important prior to the reception of Eucharist in order to protect the sacrament. Therefore, it was proposed that the age of reason should be around the age of fourteen when it was possible to attain such knowledge.

Quam Singulari disagreed with this reasoning stating that the pages of the Gospel clearly called for the Catholic Church to bring the little ones to Christ as early as possible. It

cites ancient Church history describing the practice of the time, which was to administer Holy Communion to infants whilst they were still being nursed.

Quam Singulari prescribed the seventh year, more or less, as the age of reason, in order to ensure that children were not 'forced away from the embrace of Christ and deprived of the food of their interior life'. The decree refers to several sources as justification for this decision.

The decree cites the approval of Thomas Aquinas, to this practice. During his lifetime, St Thomas (1225 – 1274) stated, "But when children once begin to have some use of reason so as to be able to conceive some devotion to the sacrament (Eucharist), then it can be given to them" (in Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments on First Communion, 1910). We can deduce that St Thomas Aquinas approved of the practice of the time, which was to administer Penance and the Eucharist in the seventh year.

The teachings of St Antonius are used as further justification for introducing the child to Penance and the Eucharist at an early age. St Antonius wrote, "But when a child is capable of doing wrong, that is of committing mortal sin, then he is bound by the precept of Confession and consequently of Communion." (in Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments on First Communion, 1910)

From 1966-1970, a study group conducted initial research regarding the doctrinal, historical, liturgical and pastoral elements of Penance (Favazza, 1997). This study group

had largely been assembled to consider Penance in light of the instructions of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary of March 25, 1944, which revolved around the use of the third rite of Penance. However, apart from leading to the promulgation of three separate rites for Penance, part of the study, 'The Outline of Religious Instruction' (in Favazza, 1997), opened the door for comment on the traditional order of Penance and Eucharist, and the age at which Penance should be administered.

During this period of comment there was experimentation with the order in which children received the sacraments. In 1971, the International Catechetical Congress in Rome (in Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987) reported positive results from a new sequence where First Communion was administered prior to First Confession (as it was called). In the United States some dioceses began to experiment with this order.

Later in 1971, the General Catechetical Directory contained an addendum echoing 'Quam Singulari' (Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments on First Communion, 1910). This addendum insisted on the traditional sequence of Penance then Eucharist. The reason for insistence on the maintenance of the traditional sequence lay in the fear of many of the clergy that the faithful would receive the Eucharistic Sacrament then fail to follow this with an introduction to Penance. This introduced the possibility of Catholics presenting themselves for Confirmation and Marriage never having participated in Penance (Champlin, 1995).

Despite a plea by the Bishop's conference of the USA to the Holy See to cease all experimentation in this area (Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987), in 1974 the Congregation for the Liturgy and the Congregation for the Clergy kept the period of experimentation open (Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987).

A committee including Anciaux, Rahner and Vogel was assembled to draft a new rite of Penance (Favazza, 1997). This committee prepared twelve schemas between 1967 and 1970 including a proposal to lift restrictions on general absolution. The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith opposed this proposal, and issued its own 'Pastoral Norms on General Absolution' (in Favazza, 1997). A second drafting committee was formed and published 'The New Rite of Penance' (The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1974).

Vatican Council II emphasised the rite of reconciliation, community rather than private and the ministry of all the baptised rather than the ordained. It found a place for scripture within the rite rather than containing only juridic formularies.

## Official Church Regulations

While the emphases of Penance shifted, the age of reason did not. The official Church regulations (Catholic Church, 1983: Canon 914) regarding the time for first confession decrees that 'children's first communion should be preceded by 'prior sacramental confession' and reaching the age of discretion obliges a person to participate in Penance.

The age of reason is stated as 7 years of age and is deemed by the Church as the point at which a child can internalise the laws of the Church.

The Rite of Penance

Penance consists of four parts a) Contrition, b) Confession, c) Satisfaction and d) Absolution.

When speaking of contrition, "The New Rite of Penance" states,

> "The most important act of the penitent is contrition, which is heartfelt sorrow and aversion for the sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more. The genuineness of penance depends on this heartfelt contrition. For conversion should affect a person from within so that it may progressively enlighten him and render him continually more like Christ."
>
> The New Rite of Penance, 1974: 7.

While this statement is important for the adult penitent, it has been proposed by several writers such as Mette (in Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987) and Duska and Whelan (1977) that a 7-year-old child is incapable of feeling the heartfelt contrition required for genuine, or 'perfect' Penance, as they might not have the ability to recognise the sin to which they must show aversion. This thesis will address this issue through the survey and interview of a 7/8-year old population.

So while it is possible to teach children a 'technique' involving the four parts of the rite, one could argue that the most important part of the rite, genuine contrition, is inappropriately expected of children.

A Working Definition of Sin

Over the years there has been great debate about the definition of sin. In the fifth century, the dogmatic teaching on the sin of Adam and original sin was clarified in response to the heretic Pelagius. The monk Pelagius believed that sin was an erroneous act committed by man, and therefore was spread by imitation and bad example. He believed man was able to control his sinful actions: Sin was seen as a developmental flaw.

Later, the Council of Trent (in *The Church's Confession of Faith – A Catholic Catechism for Adults,* 1987), in response to Protestant Reformers, provided further clarification of the meaning of original sin. The reformers claimed that the essence of original sin meant man had turned from God and therefore lost his original likeness to God. Through original sin man had fallen into a situation of perdition.

The Council of Trent argued that man had fallen out of communion with God through original sin, but was not completely perverted, only 'changed for the worse, in body and soul' (in *The Church's Confession of Faith – A Catholic Catechism for Adults,* 1987). It is possible to wash away original sin through Baptism, however, concupiscence – or the inclination to evil- remains after Baptism.

Essentially, while pelagianism is extreme optimism about man's inherent 'goodness', the Protestant reformers' model is very pessimistic. The Catholic ideal recognises the inherent inclination of man to evil, but also acknowledges the inherent goodness of man.

In "The Church's Confession of Faith – A Catholic Catechism for Adults" (1987), Baptism is described as the sacrament that washes away original sin, and Penance as the sacrament that helps man deal with personal sin or the concupiscence that remains and affects his everyday relationships.

For the purpose of this study, sin is defined as a breaking of relationship with God, others and self. Considering this definition, the question arises at what age is a person capable of breaking such relationships?

## Developmental Research and Penance

Enormous advances in child psychology over the years have prompted great debate regarding Penance. While many developmental psychologists argue that the spiritual development of a child depends upon more than their cognitive development, much of the research Penance revolves around the work of cognitive theorists, such as Kohlberg. Duska and Whelan (1987), describe how Kohlberg's work was largely based in the cognitive Piagetian research paradigm, but focused specifically on the moral development of children. His work brought to light the concepts of moral realism and moral action. Fowler (1995) has also extensively researched the stages of faith development.

While it is important to acknowledge a Vatican warning (Favazza, 1997) that to depend entirely on psychological research is to encourage 'psychologism' and diminish the

theological character of Penance, it is also important for the Church to engage in genuine dialogue with the world.

## Significance of the Study

The underlying assumption of this study is that a child of the age of 7/8 is not necessarily capable of understanding what it means to break a relationship with God, others and/or self. Therefore, a child of this age is probably incapable of committing serious sin. Introducing a child to Penance at a time when they are still developmentally immature may have negative implications for future faith development.

## Statement of the Problem

Presently children in the Archdiocese of Perth first receive Penance during Year 3, (aged 7-8 years) in accordance with the official Diocesan policy.

## Research Questions

The study focused on researching the students' perception of their first experience of Penance within the Archdiocese of Perth Western Australia.

Key Questions:

1. What understandings/feelings do children in year three hold on Penance?
2. What understandings/feelings do children in year three hold on sin?
3. What understandings/feelings do students in year three hold on the term 'reconciliation'?

4. How do year three children intend to use Penance as part of their faith development?
5. What understandings/feelings do year three students see as being held by their family and faith community regarding Penance?

## Definition of Terms

Age of reason/ discretion.

Can. 11 names the age of reason as seven:

> Merely ecclesiastical laws bind those who were baptised in the Catholic Church or received into it, and those who have a sufficient use of reason and, unless the law expressly provides otherwise, who have completed their seventh year of age.
> Code of Canon Law, 1983:3

Absolution

The point at which a priest pronounces forgiveness over repentant sinners, through Christ.

Code of canon law

The highest code of law for the Latin Church which aimed to express Vatican II and its teaching in juridical terms. Revision was initiated in 1959 by Pope John XXIII and promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1983. This code contains 1,752 canons within seven books.

Confession

When penitents acknowledge their sins in the presence of a priest.

Contrition

The sorrowful state achieved when reflecting on past sins, accompanied by a resolve not to sin again. This state is also called 'metanoia'.

Diocese

A geographical area under the jurisdiction of a Bishop or Archbishop (Archdiocese).

Eucharist

This is the primary sacrament of the seven sacraments, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. Eucharist begins with the liturgy of the Word, and culminates with the consecration of bread and wine and reception of communion by the congregation. Presently children who have not attained the age of reason are excluded from receiving communion.

Sacrament

An outward sign which reveals and communicates Grace. The Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church recognise seven sacraments instituted by Christ: Baptism, Penance, Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, and Anointing of the Sick. Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation are known as 'initiation sacraments' in that they initiate people into the Catholic faith.

Sacrament of penance and the rite of reconciliation

One of the seven sacraments often referred to as the 'Sacrament of Penance' or the 'Rite of Reconciliation'. This sacrament allows a penitent to reflect sorrowfully on their sins, confess and receive absolution (forgiveness from God) for them. A priest gives penance, such as prayer or a charitable work, to the penitent in order to show an outward sign of sorrow. This study will refer to the sacrament as 'Penance'.

Satisfaction

Penance imposed by the priest after using the Sacrament of Penance.

Sin

Mortal sin

Sometimes called 'serious' or 'grave sin', this sin refers to a rejection of God in taking a serious or important decision. The Latin translation of 'mortal' is 'death bringing'.

Venial sin

A sin, which still sees the rejection of God, but in less serious matters that do not necessarily affect a person's fundamental option (generally positive orientation towards God).

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Church Requirements

The reasons for administering Penance in a child's seventh year stem from the requirements outlined in 'The Code of Canon Law' (1983).

Canon 11:

> Ecclesiastical laws bind those baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it and who enjoy the sufficient use of reason and, unless the law provides expressly otherwise, have completed seven years of age.

Canon 97:

> Before the completion of the seventh year, a minor is called an infant and is to be held incompetent; with the completion of the seventh year one is presumed to have the use of reason.

Canon 914:

> It is the responsibility, in the first place of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as the pastor, to see that children who have reached the age of reason are correctly prepared and are nourished by the divine food as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession.

Canon 989:

> The faithful, of either sex, once having reached the age of discretion (age of reason), must confess, sincerely, alone, once a year at least, all his sins, to his own priest. He should then fulfill, as his strength allows, the penance that has been imposed, and receive reverently, at Easter at least, the sacrament of the Eucharist.

In essence, children are bound by Canon Law from the age of seven years. The parents and pastor of the child are responsible for ensuring he/she is correctly prepared to receive Penance followed by the Eucharist.

## The Basis of 'The Age of Reason'

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council cited anthropological and theological references in formulating 'omnis utriusque sexus' (in Collins & Power (Eds.), 1987). Scholars believed that all children were fundamentally bad and involuntarily tended to evil. Therefore, an early introduction to Penance was helpful in teaching them to make better moral choices in life. This belief coupled with the high rate of childhood mortality meant there was an urgency to provide children with a means for salvation outside of Baptism.

While the Fourth Lateran Council named the age of reason as the point at which an individual was bound by 'omnis utriusque sexus'(Catholic Church, 1983: Canon 989), it did not name a chronological age. Common practice at the time was to administer Penance and first Holy Communion in the seventh year.

It was Quam Singulari (Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, 1910) that named 'around the seventh year' as the age of reason. This decree was to advocate the early and frequent introduction of Eucharist, and by implication, Penance.

### Theological Ambiguity.

In determining whether or not the practice of administering Penance at the age of seven years is theologically sound, there are several points to note concerning Canon Law.

Canon 97 is a 'presumption' which means that with adequate proof this law may yield. A seven-year-old child, as a legal entity, in the eyes of the Church has, in the past been problematic. While we assume a seven-year-old may have the use of reason, in a legal sense, he/she cannot be 'held liable for criminal actions nor be regarded as having the discretion to conclude a contract.' (Coriden, Green & Heintschel, 1985: 71)

The Code of Canon Law (Catholic Church, 1983) acknowledges the work of modern psychology, recognising that young persons gradually grow in knowledge and responsibility. In doing so, it admits the age of seven years, is arbitrarily determined.

Only those who are capable of committing mortal sin are bound by 'omnis utriusque sexus'. Therefore, a child who is incapable of committing serious sin is not bound by 'omnis utriusque sexus'.

Theologians note that Penance, which is administered prior to first Eucharist, interrupts the Christian initiation sequence of Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation (Favazza, 1997). For an individual to be in full communion with the Church, they should have completed the full initiation sequence. As the essence of Penance is to restore an individual to full communion with the Church, the present order suggests that we require children to restore full communion with the Church through Penance prior to actually being in full communion with the Church.

## Pastoral Propriety

The Code of Canon Law (1983) insists that children who are *capax doli*, capable of committing sin, have a right to Penance. It also claims that an early introduction to Penance allows for a good disposition in receiving the Eucharist, thus deepening the child's faith in God's love and mercy.

The implication h is that the child, who has not reached the age of reason, cannot be harmed by an early introduction to Penance. However, there are those who believe that an early introduction can undermine a child's understanding of God's love and mercy (Duska and Whelan, 1977).

Norbet Mette's 'Children's Confession'

Mette (in Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987) discusses children's 'confession' (as it was called). He discusses reasons behind present decisions to administer Penance at an early age, the detrimental effects this could possibly have and possible changes regarding our approach to Penance.

Mette claims that it is almost impossible to name historical continuity as a reason for continuing the traditional practice of Penance. As previously mentioned, while the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) set the age of reason for participation in the Eucharist and Penance, there has been a wide range of pastoral practices and theological interpretations in use over the centuries.

Mette is very concerned with the emphasis sometimes given to the authority of the local parish priest in determining the age of reason. In 1973 the German bishop's conference make a point of allowing parents to request exemption from Penance – Eucharist order (in Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987). The 1983 revised code, canon 914, makes no mention of this exemption, nor of the faith and family background of the child and the role that would play in determining a child's ability to reason.

Mette points out that the work of modern psychologists shows the early introduction of this sacrament coupled with the fact that adults rarely participate in it, could cause the immature mind to trivialise it and associate Penance with childhood.

He also claims that introducing Penance to the immature mind could cause the child to see the experience as a means of objectifying sin and 'erasing' it from the psyche rather than seeing it as a developmental tool.

While Mette agrees the sacrament can give children a sense of achievement in becoming a more active member of the Church, he comments that this could produce the negative effect of making children believe they are expected to achieve something prior to being worthy of receiving the Eucharist. This may lead some to view Penance with a sense of fear or certain self-righteousness.

Mette claims children under the age of 8-9 are not capable of understanding the real meaning of guilt and sin. Consequently they are not capable of committing grave sin.

Teaching a 'technique of confession' (Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987: 68) and giving children a sense of achievement is possible, but deepening their sense of the sacrament as a means of conversion is difficult.

Culture of Reconciliation.

Mette describes a 'culture of reconciliation' (Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987: 70) as the ideal way to introduce children to the notion of Penance. He makes the point that families and communities should be involved in developing a child's understanding of Penance.

He believes that it is possible to recognise other ways of reconciling our community and ourselves to God and that these should be given recognition. He reminds us that the Eucharist is a means of reconciliation in situations of venial sin.

In stating this, Mette points out that in our culture we often look to create images of perfection. Our chief sin lies not in our direct actions, but in our habit of laying blame elsewhere. In creating a culture of reconciliation, he claims that we need to address this habit and explicitly teach children to take responsibility for what they do wrong. Similarly, adults need to be more aware of taking responsibility for the wrong they do.

With Hearts Light As Feathers – Joseph M. Champlin (1995)

Champlin (1995) comments on the practical aspects of introducing children to Penance at an early age. He examines the modern history of Penance, and the reasons behind the

Church's decision to maintain the traditional order of first Penance followed by first Eucharist. There are many positive points in his work.

Champlin emphasises the importance of parents in teaching children about morality. In the program offered at his parish, parents are actually required to judge whether or not their child is ready to receive Penance. They are also the primary teachers of the sacrament. The pastor and children's liturgists are involved in facilitating meetings throughout the program rather than in the teaching process.

Champlin received positive feedback from those involved with the program, however it is interesting to note that while 110 evaluation forms were sent out, only 33 were returned. The comments on these forms were immensely positive, but indicate the attitudes of less that 50 percent of parents involved.

Champlin emphasizes the importance of the community in the sacrament. The program he runs in his parish seeks to actively involve the whole community.

However, there are some points that must be made about this study. Firstly, the program differs greatly from the program offered in Perth, Western Australia. In Western Australia, the program is run at school, as part of a Religious Education Unit. While the degree of parent input will vary from school to school, it is minimal compared with that of Champlin's program.

In order to comment on the developmental propriety of administering Penance at an early age, Champlin examines the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, Eisenberg-Berg and Damon (Champlin, 1995).

While Champlin comments on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, he neglects to mention the purpose of their study. The study of Piaget and Kohlberg indicates that the age of reason is not a particular point in one's life, and that children develop morality and cognition at different rates. The attaining of reason takes place over several years. This needs to be taken into account when considering the appropriate age to administer Penance. While the examples Champlin cites support his theory that children are developmentally ready for Penance at age seven, there are many more examples, within the studies of Piaget and Kohlberg that undermine this theory. Champlin acknowledges the differences in development when he points out that his program requires parents to comment on the readiness of their children for the sacrament rather than determining readiness by age alone.

Champlin also examines the work of William Damon whose focus on young children makes his work significant for this study. In "The Moral Child", (in Champlin, 1995), Damon comments on how small children view authority. He claims that while 4-year-old children will feel an obligation to authority figures due to the need to avoid punishment, 5/6-year-olds believe authority figures have a right to be obeyed because they have power. 7/8-year-olds reach a point of voluntary submission where they see that, in return

for the help they receive from authority figures, they must be obedient. By the age of 8/9, according to Damon, children see authority legitimately based on wisdom and love.

Damon's work differs from Kohlberg's as he does not refer to fear on the part of the child in conceding to authority. However, Damon does recognise the continual referral of young children to authority in moral decision making. One could argue that the heartfelt contrition required for 'perfect' Penance is not something that can be legitimately imposed by authority.

Champlin also looks at the work of Nancy Eisenberg-Berg (see Champlin, 1995). In her study, Eisenberg-Berg observed five-year-old children in a social setting. When a child showed pro-social behaviour such as comforting a hurt child or sharing food with a child, Eisenberg-Berg would approach the child and ask them, "Why did you do that?" Not one child responded that they acted out of fear of authority or punishment. Only a small number of the children, reported that they acted for reasons of selfish gain. Champlin points out that Eisenberg-Berg's study highlights the importance of the types of questions we ask children. He writes:

> "Questions about breaking the rules of authority figures are more likely to lead children to focus on punishment; questions about helping behaviour are more likely to reveal, even pre-school children's capacity for considering the needs of others."
>
> Champlin, 1995: 55.

In response, one could ask, 'Why should we teach young children to focus on sin and penance (broken relationships) at an age when we could be meaningfully focusing on building relationships?'

"Let the Children Come To Me" – Jose M. De Mesa

De Mesa's (2002) article focuses on the first Eucharist of the child. In his article, he discusses the historical availability of the Eucharist to infants, and the acceptance of the age of reason as mandated by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215).

De Mesa points out that presently, the chief obstacle to children receiving the Eucharist at an earlier age is the imposition of the age of reason. He relates how 'omnis utrisque sexus' was formed in 1215 and discusses how the theology has changed over time. His article then goes on to describe the community building nature of the Eucharistic sacrament. He comments on the irony that children cannot fully participate in the Eucharist until they are capable of evil and therefore able to participate in Penance.

In reminding us of the important part the Eucharist plays in building a faith community, De Mesa highlights the anomaly of the interruption of the western Catholic initiation sequence by Penance. Through Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation, western Catholic initiation is complete. Penance is presently administered prior to the Eucharist and requires the penitent to reconcile with a community he/she has not yet been fully initiated into. De Mesa believes that allowing children to participate in the Eucharist from an early age would help them to identify more meaningfully with their faith community.

## Summary

These writers call our attention to the possible detriment of introducing children to Penance too early. Mette warns us that an early introduction can diminish the importance of this sacrament, and even cause children to view it as a 'technique of mitigating burdens' (Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987:70*)*. Champlin (1995) highlights the importance of community and the social nature of sin. While he advocates the early introduction of Penance, his program shows the need for community involvement in preparing children for the sacrament. De Mesa (2002) re-iterates the importance of community and draws attention to the community building nature of the Eucharist and its 'unnatural' connection to Penance and the age of reason.

## CHAPTER THREE

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In the past, researchers in the field of religious education have often focussed on the role of cognition in spiritual development. Goldman (1964) is seen as a pioneer in this area. This study, however, aimed to investigate not just the cognitive understanding of children, but also the feelings associated with their first experience of Penance in order to gain more insight into their perception.

Many theorists have hypothesized about the different realms of knowing associated with spiritual development (Hardy, 1979), but an in-depth analysis of these theorists is beyond the scope of this study. In order to simplify different realms of knowing, Bloom's terminology (in Woolfolk, 1987) was used. The cognitive and affective (social and emotional) domains of the children were investigated in this study.

### Cognitive Theorists

During the time of experimentation within the Church regarding Penance (1966 – 1977), the research of many developmental psychologists was studied in great depth. Moral reasoning has traditionally been closely linked to cognition, and therefore the work of Kohlberg and Piaget was of particular importance.

Kohlberg and Piaget

Duska and Whelan review this research in 'A Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg'(1977).

Kohlberg's field of study is of particular interest as he draws upon the cognitive theories developed by Piaget and applies them to the moral development of the individual.

Kohlberg places the seven-year-old child at what he has determined to be the 'pre-conventional level' (Duska and Whelan, 1977). This level, which is divided into two stages, is defined by the individual's egocentric perspective of the world. Kohlberg states that the individual at this level feels like an outsider who is controlled by autocratic forces within his environment. In any relationship, the child feels subordinate, as he/she is largely dependent on adults. The child is unable to empathise with adults due to the egocentrism characteristic of this level and sees adult power as absolute. The stages within this level of moral reasoning describe it further.

Stage One: Heteronomous Morality.

Kohlberg describes how, in this stage, the driving force motivating moral value is fear.

> The physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority.
>
> Duska and Whelan, 1977: 45-46.

Stage Two: Instrumental Exchange.

This stage offers a more positive concept of what is good, and it holds a more adequate view of society. However, the child at this level of moral reasoning is receiving

instruction about Penance and learning about 'breaking relationships' at a time when a relationship may mean little more to him than autocracy or a means to a pleasurable end.

The instruction for Penance requires a child to understand what it means to relate with God, self and others on a more abstract level than the child is capable of comprehending. As pointed out by Duska and Whelan:

> At the time of first confession we are taught about making a perfect act of contrition... not because of a fear of hell or a desire for heaven (which is developmentally appropriate for this level) but merely because one loved God.
>
> Duska and Whelan, 1977: 86.

The child's logical way of thinking regarding punishment and reward is insufficient for understanding the nature of the perfect act of contrition. This could lead the child to see the perfect act of contrition as an incantation designed to save him/her from hell.

## Study of the Affective Domain

### Fowler

While Fowler's work regarding the spiritual development of children is recognised as being based in the cognitive domain, his work has also been acknowledged as attempting to broaden cognitive research into more of an affective domain (Campbell, Francis, Kay, 1996). Fowler describes his work as having some affective credibility:

> ...in contrast to the strict focus on the mathematical and logical models of intelligence that Piaget employed, [his] faith development theory has tried to take account of the constructive involvement in faith of intuition, emotion and imagination.
>
> Oser and Scarlett, 1991: 42.

As his research paradigm focuses specifically on the spiritual development of children, it will be used to examine some of the aspects of the affective domain in this study.

Fowler's Stages of Faith.

Fowler identifies six stages of faith development. The stages coinciding with the age of seven are the Intuitive-Projective stage and the Mythic-Literal stage. This is the point at which children reach the age of reason, according to Church.

The Intuitive-Projective faith stage is when children are still establishing the boundaries between fact and fantasy as no stable operations of knowing have been established. Children of this age may, therefore be highly emotive. The imagination is strongly influenced by stories, and the images formed by these stories affect the intuitive/emotional understanding the child has of the world. In this way, prime carers (chief storytellers) in the child's life can be highly influential in developing the basic understandings and feelings a child has towards his or her existence. Fowler (1995) points out that to orientate children positively towards God at this stage can be of enormous value to the way they perceive the world.

The Mythic-Literal stage finds children with a literal interpretation of beliefs, morals and values, and a dependence on logical operations. Typically, children are able to interpret symbols in a one-dimensional sense. This means they are unable to consciously interpret the multiple layers of symbol and myth and, therefore, are unable to generalise and reflect meaningfully on morals, attitudes and beliefs. As they have more control of cognition, children may be less emotionally charged than a child in the previous stage, but limited in their ability to empathise with others.

Fowler's work implies that at the age of seven/eight, children have limited and very egocentric cognitive ability thus restricting meaningful introspection. At this age, Fowler sees a positive orientation towards God as extremely important.

Montessori's Study.

Fowler's belief that the positive orientation of the child affects his/her spiritual development finds support in the work of Maria Montessori which is used to discuss moral formation in 'The Religious Potential of the Child' (Cavalletti, 1992). Montessori describes planes of development in the life journey of every human. The planes must be consecutively constructed, and can only be harmoniously created if the preceding plane is well established. In later childhood, the moral plane is constructed and the development of this plane depends largely on the affective orientation of the child from early childhood.

Conflicting Ideas of Fowler and Kohlberg.

There is a distinction between faith development and moral development. When discussing the age of reason in relation to Penance, it is important to take this distinction into consideration. Both Fowler and Kohlberg comment on the relationship between faith development and moral development, but their ideas are somewhat conflicting.

The reason Fowler sees a positive orientation towards God as important in early years stems from his perception of the role of religion in faith development. Fowler asserts 'every moral perspective is anchored in a broader system of belief and loyalties'

(Campell, Francis and Kay, 1996: 84). In other words, faith development precedes moral reasoning. One could argue that Fowler's perspective would support De Mesa's (2002) proposal regarding the traditional order of administering Penance prior to the Eucharist. Children should be given more of and opportunity to build their faith through participation in the Eucharist prior to participating in Penance.

Kohlberg's belief, however, was that moral reasoning preceded faith development and was necessary for faith development, though not always sufficient for it. In acknowledging that moral reasoning is not always sufficient for faith development, Kohlberg acknowledges the ambiguity surrounding the ability of young children to meaningfully participate in Penance.

While these research paradigms differ in regard to the order of the development of faith and morality, both highlight the difficulties arising from administering Penance at an early age.

## Emotional Cognition and Long-Term Memory

In recent times researchers have placed more emphasis on the role of the affective domain in cognition. In 'Feeling and Thinking – The Role of Affect in Social Cognition', (2000), Forgas discusses the importance of the interaction between the cognitive and affective domains. In 'Emotional Cognition' (2002), Moore and Oaksford (Eds.) further investigate the role of emotion in learning. An article by Adolphs and Buchanan in 'Emotional Cognition' connects emotion to long-term memory. Considering the theory that long-term memory is modulated by emotion, the affective

perception of children regarding their first use of the Sacrament of Penance is important to this study.

Adolphs and Buchanan discuss the enhancement of memory in emotional situations. This discussion describes the 'Easterbrook' hypothesis, which was developed in 1959 and proposes that higher levels of emotional arousal cause a focus of attention on specific details of the object/subject causing the arousal. The article also discusses how several studies (Bradley, Greenwald, Petry, & Lang, 1992; Heuer, & Reisberg, 1990; Hamann, Cahill, & Squire, 1997) have found that emotional arousal, rather than valence (pleasantness), is a major factor contributing to storing information in the long-term memory. Considering this, the children in this study were asked to describe their emotional perception of their experience.

## Summary

This study sought to investigate the cognitive and affective domains of children who had recently experienced Penance for the first time in light of the research of Kohlberg and Fowler, and considering the research connecting long-term memory to emotional arousal.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# METHODOLOGY

## Target Population

Two Co-educational Catholic Primary schools from differing socio-economic groupings were randomly chosen from within the metropolitan area to locate subjects. 50 students, 25 from a school with a relatively low socio-economic standing (14 boys and 11 girls) and 25 from a school with a relatively higher socio-economic standing (13 boys and 12 girls), who had recently received instruction for Penance were randomly selected for participation in the study.

## Design of the Study

The Likert survey method was used to measure the attitudes of the children in this population towards Penance.

Following the Likert survey method, an unstructured indirect method of interview was used to further investigate 10 children's attitudes towards sin and reconciliation. In the words of Kolb, "the interview is the most important technical instrument in all those professions concerned with man and his social functioning" (in Goldstein and Hersen, 1984).

In "The Children's God", Heller (cited in Campbell, Francis, Kay (Eds.), 1996) discusses the way children relate to God, in semi-structured interviews. He is careful to use language the children can understand and bases his questions in experiences children are

likely to relate to. Heller links his findings regarding the feelings and attitudes of children to a broad range of research. This study attempted a similar method in order to investigate the feelings and relationships the children have to Penance.

Description of the Instrument

The instrument was designed to investigate the perceptions of year three children of their first experience of Penance within the Archdioceses of Perth in light of contemporary developmental research. It was designed to investigate both the cognitive and affective domains of the child.

Five key questions were devised:

1. What understandings/feelings do students in year three hold on Penance?
2. What understandings/feelings do students in year three hold on sin and guilt?
3. What understandings/feelings do students in year three hold on the term 'reconciliation'?
4. How do year three children intend to use Penance as part of their faith development?
5. What understandings/feelings do year three students see as being held by their family and faith community regarding Penance?

These key questions were used to create a survey questionnaire (Appendix 6), which was examined by a lecturer and member of the clergy in the field of sacramental theology in order to determine whether or not they were adequate for measuring the purpose of the study. This questionnaire revolved around the story of Kim – a hypothetical child who

had recently participated in Penance for the first time. The 'story' elements of the instrument aimed to make it developmentally appropriate (see Fowler's Intuitive-Projective faith stage).

A Likert scale was created to accompany the questionnaire. It was adapted due to the young age of participants in the study. Likert's scale involves the choice of 5 responses to questions asked: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. Rather than use these words, graphic faces were used to indicate feelings on a scale moving from strongly positive (extremely comfortable), to positive (comfortable), to neutral, to negative (uncomfortable) and finally to strongly negative (extremely uncomfortable). The questions of the survey were read aloud to the group accompanied by a projected illustration to help keep children engaged. They were asked to respond by colouring or circling the face that indicated their feeling towards each question.

Prior to conducting any research, the children were made aware of the fact that they were under no obligation to participate in the study and were free to withdraw at any time.

An interview schedule was created from the five key questions (Appendix 8). Children were randomly selected to participate in the interview component of this study. An unstructured indirect method of interview was used in order to allow a free-flowing exchange between interviewer and subject.

A pilot study was conducted to test the age appropriateness of the questions. Following this study, more questions regarding the effect of punishment and reward in situations of sin, the definition of 'community' and the role of intent were put into the interview schedule.

Data Collection Procedures

Following ethical approval of the project from University Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences Ethics Committee, permission to conduct the research was requested from twelve principals of randomly selected schools. Each received covering letters describing the purpose, method and proposed benefits of the study together with a copy of the survey and interview questions (Appendix 2). This covering letter also indicated that it was not mandatory for students to participate in the study. Students had the right to withdraw from the study if they so wished. The role of classroom teachers in the administration of the survey was also outlined.

Four principals permitted their school to participate in the study. The two schools with the greatest socio-economic difference were selected. Another school was selected as a pilot school.

Permission for children to participate in the study was requested from legal guardians using a form letter and permission slip (Appendix 3).

Children were also given a personal consent form outlining the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw from the study if they so wished (Appendix 4).

A letter, outlining how to administer the survey, was sent to class teachers (Appendix 5).

The teachers administered the survey.

The researcher conducted the qualitative interviews within 90 minutes of the completion of the survey.

Thank you letters were sent to the schools participating in the study (Appendix 10).

Data Analysis

The data collected for the descriptive component of this study was analyzed using the SPSS computer package, version 11.5 (Windows XP). The program calculated frequencies for each question with the mean for each question, a standard deviation and a standard error between the lower and higher socio-economic groups was also obtained (Appendix 7).

The researcher transcribed interviews (Appendix 9). They were analysed using Kohlberg's, and Fowler's research paradigm.

Limitations to the Study

As only a small population is represented, this study cannot make generalisations regarding the results to the general population.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

A total of fifty students completed the survey – twenty- seven boys and twenty-three girls. Ten of these children were randomly selected for interviews – four girls and six boys. The names of children in the interviews have been changed to preserve their anonymity. All the children participating in the study were eight years of age and had recently received Penance.

Results show frequencies and totals of all survey questions from which a mean and standard deviation has been calculated. As the study involved schools from a high socio-economic and low socio-economic area, the standard error between the two schools has been recorded (a significant difference being > 0.7500).

The standard deviation for each set of frequencies is also reported, (a significant difference being >1.0).

### Results of Research Questions

### Children's Perception of Penance

Cognitive Understanding of Penance

There are four parts to Penance; contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution. Of these parts, 'heartfelt contrition' is described as the most important part of the ritual (The New Rite of Penance, 1974).

In the interview, children were asked to describe what they did when participating in Penance.[1]It is important that not one child mentioned the independent activity of contrition despite the fact that both classes had a special liturgy prior to the sacrament calling on them to repent. One child only mentions this special liturgy[2]. All saw the rite beginning with the priest rather than with themselves.

The aspect of the ritual receiving most vivid description in the interviews was confession.[3] This is important when considering long term memory and emotional cognition. The work of Easterbrook (1959), Bradley, Greenwald, Petry, and Lang (1992), Heuer, and Reisberg (1990), Hamann, Cahill, and Squire (1997) (in Moore and Oaksford (Eds.), 2002) would propose that this detailed memory of confession indicates a high state of emotional arousal at this point in Penance.

The interview population was also asked why we participate in Penance, in order to gain further insight into the cognition behind their feelings. Su Lin, Mike, Paul and Daniel again mentioned 'cleaning', 'washing away' or 'eliminating'. Mike, Kristen and Emily reported that we go to Penance to free ourselves from sins that get 'stuck inside' us. Most interesting was Mike's answer about the reason for participation.

Interviewer: What are the reasons that we go to Reconciliation (Penance)?
Mike: We go so that we can get closer to God and so that our sins can be forgiven.
I: How do we get closer to God?

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[1] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p.138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166
[2] Kristen p.153
[3] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p.138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

M: Well, when we get baptised, we're in God's family, but when we get the second sacrament, we get closer.
I: So, do we get closer like God's up here and each time we get a sacrament we move up closer?
M: Yes. But then when we get the last sacrament we're not as strong as God.

Reasons for using Penance vary from cleansing, to dislodging sins that are 'stuck', to gaining favour with God[4]. These results reflect the concrete nature of the children.

Finally, children who were interviewed were asked about alternative ways of reconciling with their community rather than going through the formal process of Penance. The interview population was asked, "Are there any other ways in your life you could make up with God and other people rather than going to Penance?"[5]

While the interview population answers were practical and reverent, these results indicate that none of the children interviewed were aware of the Eucharist as a means of reconciling with God and the faith community after committing venial sin.

Affective Perception of Penance

In the survey component of the study, the children were asked to indicate how they felt about preparation for, participation in and reflection on Penance.

[4] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p.138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

[5] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 125, Paul p.159, Brad p.148, Kristen p.155, Mike p.144, Su Lin p.139, Frank p.134, Chad p.128, Daniel p.167, Emily p.163

The mean result [3.46] in the following table, suggests that children feel discomfort while reflecting on their sins prior to using Penance.

Table 5.1

Feelings While Reflecting on Sin Prior to Penance

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 0 | 0 |
| Comfortable | 2 | 4.0 |
| Neutral | 28 | 56.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 15 | 30.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 3.4600 |
| Std. Deviation | 0.73429 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.20913 |

To further investigate these feelings, the children interviewed were asked 'How did you feel before you participated in the sacrament?'

Ann: Very, very, very, very nervous.
I: Why were you nervous?
A: Because I didn't know what the priest would say and I might get it mixed up.

Frank: Scared.
I: Why did you feel scared?
F: Because I thought Father might be cross about what I did.

Chad: Yeah. I felt a bit scared.
I: And why did you feel that way?
C: Because, well, I don't really know. I just felt like that.

Mike: Mmmm. I felt a bit nervous, but when I was done it was better.
I: Why was it better?
M: Because the priest forgived me.

Brad: I felt a bit scared.
I: Why did you feel scared?
B: Cause I done lots of stu... 'Cause I'd done something wrong, and I didn't want to talk about my sins.

Kristen: I don't remember.
I: Did you feel nervous or happy at all?
K: I felt happy.
I: So, why did you feel happy before you went in?
K: Because I was going to speak to Father and get rid of all my sins.

Emily: I was a bit scared and a bit happy.
I: Why? What was the happy bit?
E: That I was gonna forget all my sins.

Daniel: Nervous.[6]

While Kristen and Emily felt excited to be unloading their sins in some way, Ann, Chad, Frank, Mike and Daniel reported feeling nervous; Ann, Frank and Mike indicated that this was because they were worried about the reaction of the priest. This indicates that the discomfort children reported in the survey may not have entirely been feelings of guilt, but in many cases, feelings of fear regarding confrontation with the priest – an authority figure. The interview results also tell us that feelings prior to using the sacrament revolve around interaction with the priest rather than reflection on sin. From the research, fear of the priest was more predominant than a sense of guilt.

Children in the survey asked about their feelings after using Penance.

[6] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p. 137-138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

Table 5.2

Feelings Post Confession

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 23 | 46.0 |
| Comfortable | 15 | 30.0 |
| Neutral | 7 | 14.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 3 | 6.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 2 | 4.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 1.9200 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.10361 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.31454 |

This mean [1.92] indicates that children felt positive after participating in Penance.

This was re-iterated in the interviews. All the children interviewed reported that they felt very positive after participating in Penance. However, the reasons for their happiness differed. Brad, Kristen, Paul and Daniel mentioned that they had in some way eliminated sin from themselves by participating ("washed away", "forgotten", and "got rid of"). Chad and Mike said they were happy because the priest had not been angry with them. Ann and Su Lin felt better after having the chance to confess their sins while Frank expressed relief.[7]

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See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p. 138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

## Children's Perception of Sin

Cognitive Understandings Regarding Sin

The interview population was asked to define 'sin'.

Ann: It means something that isn't very good.

Chad: If you do something wrong on purpose.

Frank: When you do something wrong.

Su Lin: I don't know. I've forgotten. It was all last term.

Mike: It means when you've done something wrong and you know it's wrong. And you just want to do it.

Brad: Stuff that we've done wrong.

Kristen: It's the bad things that you have done.
Interviewer: Why is it bad to steal?
K: Because you'll get caught and you'll have to pay.
I: And what about other sins? Like, why's it bad to lie?
K: Because you'll get in more trouble when other people find out.
I: So, the reason sin's bad is because you'll get in trouble at the end?
K: Yes.

Paul: I don't know.

I: Can you think of an example of a sin?
P: When you did something to someone that wasn't very nice. I think this is one. Once when I wanted to watch my favourite TV show I wasn't allowed because I had to eat my dinner and I got all angry and I ran out the door, down the street.

Emily: It's bad stuff that you or somebody else has done.
I: Can you give me an example of a sin?
E: Somebody bullying someone else and calling them names.
I: Why is that a sin?
E: Because you're calling someone a name and bullying them, and those people get really upset and then you get a bit sad because you've done something bad.

Daniel: Something that you've done wrong in the past.
I: And can you give me an example of a sin?
D: Like if you're lighting fires out the back, which you're not allowed to do.
I: Do you think sins are bad?
D: Yes.

I: Why are they bad?
D: Because you've been doing something bad and you haven't told anyone about it.
I: Why is that bad, not telling anyone about it?
D: Because if you don't tell anyone about it, it becomes a sin.
I: So, if you tell someone about it, it's not a sin anymore?
D: No.
I: So why isn't it a sin when you've told someone about it?
D: Because you've told someone about it and you've shared it.

The children all saw sin as 'doing something wrong'- like breaking a rule. Only two children, Paul and Emily, made reference to how sin affects relationships.

It is also noticeable that most children do not really comment on the role of intent in sin. Only Chad and Brad commented on how sin must be a deliberate act. In order to make further comment on the children's understanding of the role intent plays in sin, a question about Kim's younger brother was asked.

Interviewer: Kim's brother is about three. Do you know anyone who's three?
Ann: No, but I do know a two year old child. That's my niece.
I: Right. Well, imagine a little one about the same age as your niece. Kim's little brother is about the same age as her. Kim's brother went to the shops with his Mum and when he saw a bright, shiny lolly, he picked it up and put it in his pocket and took it home without paying for it. Do you think he committed a sin?
Ann: No, not really because he didn't know he was naughty.

Ann was one of only three children recognising the infant's innocence. She along with Su Lin and Emily recognised that a three-year-old child couldn't deliberately commit a sin. Five of the children, Frank, Chad, Mike, Brad and Daniel believed the 3-year-old child had committed a sin even after his age and sensibility was highlighted. Kristen believed he was guilty of sin until she was reminded of his age. Paul was unsure about whether or

not the three-year-old child was guilty of committing a sin.[8] Most of the children did not recognise the role intent plays in sin.

The interviewed children were also asked, "What do you think God thinks of sin?"[9] Seven of the ten children perceived that God sees sin as bad because He is not to be disobeyed. Three children commented that God saw sin as bad because He wants the world to be in harmony. All saw God as an authority figure. Emily's comment highlights this: "Well, I don't think He really likes it because it's bad and He brought the world up to be a good place but there has to be some sins."[10]

In order to comment on children's perception of serious sin, the survey population was asked about Kim's feelings towards several different types of sin (see Tables 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6).

[8] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p. 138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

[9] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 123, Chad p. 126, Frank p. 132, Su Lin p.136, Mike p. 142, Brad p. 147, Kristen p. 152, Paul p. 157, Emily p.161, and Daniel p.165

[10] See Interview Transcriptions Emily,163

Table 5.3

Hypothetical Feelings After Name-Calling

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 6 | 12.0 |
| Comfortable | 1 | 2.0 |
| Neutral | 8 | 16.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 25 | 50.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 10 | 20.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 3.6400 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.19112 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.33862 |

Table 5.4

Hypothetical Feelings After Stealing

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 2 | 4.0 |
| Comfortable | 1 | 2.0 |
| Neutral | 19 | 38.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 24 | 48.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 4 | 8.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 3.0800 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.32234 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.37506 |

Table 5.5

Hypothetical Feelings After Lying

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 8 | 16.0 |
| Comfortable | 9 | 18.0 |
| Neutral | 12 | 24.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 13 | 26.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 8 | 16.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 3.5400 |
| Std. Deviation | 0.83812 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.23889 |

Table 5.6

Hypothetical Feelings After Bullying a Smaller Child

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 3 | 6.0 |
| Comfortable | 2 | 4.0 |
| Neutral | 10 | 20.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 29 | 58.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 3.6600 |
| Std. Deviation | 0.96065 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.27398 |

Children in the survey see bullying behaviour as most serious, followed by name-calling, then lying and finally, petty theft. The children believe Kim feels more discomfort in situations of confrontation rather than in situations of 'secret sin'.

In the interview, however, Chad, Su Lin, Mike, Brad and Emily all commented that stealing was the most serious sin because money was involved. Kristen and Paul also thought stealing was most serious because there would be greater degrees of punishment if caught. Ann commented that stealing and lying were the worst because they're sins. Daniel and Frank, however, believed that hurting her little brother was the most serious sin Kim committed. Daniel saw it as the most serious sin because it attracted punishment and Frank said that it was worst sin because it's unfair to bully someone weaker than you are[11].

This indicates that five of the ten children interviewed believe stealing is the most serious sin out of lying, bullying, stealing and jealousy because it has a greater monetary cost. Three of the children measure the seriousness of sin by degrees of punishment. Here is further indication of the concrete nature of eight-year-old children supporting Kohlberg's research paradigm.

[11] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p. 138, Mike p. 143, Brad p. 148, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

In order to investigate Kohlberg's findings that reward and punishment affect moral judgement in early developmental stages, the survey questioned children about their feelings in situations where reward and punishment affected moral decision making. They were asked to comment on how Kim felt after lying about theft and then being rewarded due to the effectiveness of her lie.

Table 5.7

Hypothetical Feelings After Receiving a Reward Due to Lying

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 30 | 60.0 |
| Comfortable | 8 | 16.0 |
| Neutral | 3 | 6.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 4 | 8.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 1.9200 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.38269 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.39362 |

The majority of children believe that Kim was quite happy to accept a reward she did not deserve. This is re-iterated in the interviews with Ann and Kristen.

Interviewer: How do you think Kim felt when she got the reward from her Mum?
Ann: Good, but a bit worried.
I: Why?
A: Because she didn't get into trouble.
I: Why was she worried?
A: Because she still might get caught.

Interviewer: How did she feel when she got the computer time from her Mum?
Kristen: She felt um...happy.

I: Why?
K: Because her Mum didn't know about the bubblegum.

These responses indicate that the children responded to reward and punishment in moral decision making. While Kim was happy to receive the reward, she was still wary of the punishment she may receive.

Affective Perception of Sin

In the survey, children were asked to comment on their own feelings when they had done something wrong.

Table 5.8

Personal Feelings After 'Doing Something Wrong'

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 1 | 2.0 |
| Comfortable | 1 | 2.0 |
| Neutral | 10 | 20.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 12 | 24.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 26 | 52.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 4.2200 |
| Std. Deviation | 0.97499 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.27398 |

This mean [4.22] indicates that children generally felt uncomfortable when they believed they were doing wrong. In the interview the children were asked to elaborate on their feelings regarding personal guilt.

Interviewer: If you did something deliberately to another person that you thought was wrong, how would you feel?

Chad: Well, you would feel sort of 'middle'.
I: Why's that?
C: Because you wouldn't feel happy about it because you might have hurt them or something, but you wouldn't be sad because you did it. Like if you stole something from the shops or something you'd be a bit happy because you had it to eat, but then you'd feel a bit sad for the shop people because then, one item would be gone.

Several of the children's answers reflected Chad's response. Frank and Mike also acknowledged that they felt little remorse immediately after committing a sin, but later, as they reflected on their actions they felt sadness. Some children reported immediate sadness after 'doing something deliberately wrong'. Su Lin, commented that she felt very sad, but admitted her sadness was partly due to the punishment she was likely to receive after the act. While Daniel found it difficult to comment on any feelings of remorse, the general feeling amongst the interview population was discomfort after deliberately doing something wrong. [12]

These responses could be considered evidence of the concrete nature of reflection at this age. They also show the differing rates of development. Daniel found it difficult to reflect on his feelings, Su Lin was influenced by punishment, and Chad, Frank and Mike are still egocentric when reflecting on sin.

## Children's Perception of the Literal Meaning of 'Reconciliation'

In this study, the term 'reconciliation' was used to refer to the process of reconciling or 'making up'. According to the definition of sin used in the introduction of this study, sin is 'deliberately breaking a relationship with community and God'. Reconciliation or 'making up' is, therefore an important concept regarding Penance.

Cognitive Understanding of the Literal Meaning of 'Reconciliation'

Only Mike and Kristen recognised that 'making up' is related to sin because if you break a relationship, you need to say sorry in order to reconnect with the offended party.[13]

When asked to give an example of a time they experienced 'making up'[14], all the children recognised ways to reconcile in everyday life. Chad, Kirsten, Emily, Daniel, Ann, Frank and Su Lin described a physical action or gesture. There were several examples of the children reconciling for some reason of concrete reciprocal gain: Paul said he reconciled 'so he had someone to play with', while Su Lin and Brad made mention of avoiding punishment by making up. This is further evidence of Kohlberg's "Instrumental Exchange" (Duska and Whelan, 1977).

In order to investigate the role the Sacrament of Penance has in restoring a relationship with God, the children were asked, "Does (Penance) have anything to do with God?"

Ann: Yes because it makes God happy.

Chad: Well, God was the one who made all the sacraments.
I: Why did He make the sacraments, do you know?
C: So then it will keep everyone calm and everything, and it won't like, basically, if you had no sacraments, not much things would go right.
I: So God wants us all to live together well and that's why he's given us the sacraments?
C: Yes.

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[12] See Interview Transcriptions Chad p.129, Frank p.134, Su Lin p.139, Mike p.144, Brad p.149, Kristen p.153, Paul p.159, Daniel p.167
[13] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p.126, Frank p.135, Mike p.146, Kristen p.156, Brad p.150, Paul p.160, Emily p.164, Daniel p.168
[14] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p.124, Chad p. 129, Frank p.135, Su Lin p.139, Mike p.146, Brad p.150, Kristen p.155, Paul, p.158, Emily p.164, Daniel p.168

Frank: Yes.
I: OK, what's that?
F: You have to say sorry to Him, which is in your prayers.
I: Why do you think you have to say sorry to Him?
F: Because He has a part of Him in everyone, so you'll hurt that part of Him. So you have to say 'sorry' to Him.

Su Lin: My Mum told me that in term two and I can't remember. Then there were the school holidays so she told me and I forgot.

Mike: Well, when you've hurt someone, God's the one who actually forgives you.

Brad: Yes.
I: What does it have to do with God?
B: Because we're washing away our sins and God doesn't like our sins.
I: So what does that have to do with making up?
B: 'Cause if we've done something wrong and our sins go away, we feel like saying sorry to them.

Kristen: Yes. You're saying sorry to God for hurting someone.
I: Why do you have to say sorry to God if you've hurt other people?
K: Because you are disobeying Him.
I: Right. How are you disobeying Him?
K: He wants us all to love each other.
I: So what does God do to those who disobey Him?
K: He'll always forgive you.

Paul: Yes. 'Cause we all know God's at our hearts and we're saying sorry and God feels better. And then you get closer to God and when you do something you get further away from God. I think that's what people say.

Emily: I think so. Is it because God likes people to forgive people so that the world can be a happy place?

Daniel: Yes.
I: What's it got to do with God?
D: Because it helps you to do things that are right and God helps you.

These comments show that while the children have a positive understanding of God's place in Penance, He is only involved in 'making up', as a parent would be in mediating between two children who have had a conflict. God is seen as an authority figure and

many of the children are eager to please Him. Here is further support for Kohlberg's research paradigm.

Affective Perception of the Literal Meaning of 'Reconciliation'

Children felt very positive about 'making up'.

Table 5.9

Feelings Towards 'Making Up'

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 0 | |
| Comfortable | 26 | 52.0 |
| Neutral | 13 | 26.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 1.800 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.01015 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.28844 |

## Children's Perception of Their Faith Community's Connection with Penance

Cognitive Understandings of Faith Community's Role in Penance

In the interviews the term 'Church community' was used as a concept for the 'faith community'. The interview population was asked to define their 'Church community'.

Ann commented that her 'Church community' was 'the people from the Church'. Chad and Paul both told me the Church community was 'all the people in God's special

family'. Frank said, "I suppose it's all the people from the Church". Kristen similarly said "all the people at church". Emily felt that the Church community was "all the people I know around here." Su Lin and Daniel found it difficult to define Church community and Mike named the people from the school as the only members he could be certain belonged.[15] Throughout the interviews children mention the role of the school within their faith community.

When asked if they belonged to their faith community, Ann, Chad, Frank and Paul immediately recognised that they, and their families, were part of their faith community. Su Lin reported that she and her Grandmother and her mother were 'sometimes' part of their faith community.[16] This indicates that only half of the interview population recognises that they are part of a faith community. It may be practical for the school and Church communities to interact more in order to help children recognise the relationship between the two.

Affective Perception of the Role of the Community in Penance

The survey asked children to indicate how Kim felt when her parents didn't participate in Penance (see Table 5.10).

[15] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p. 138, Mike p. 143, Kristen p. 154, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

[16] See Interview Transcriptions Ann p. 124, Chad p. 128, Frank p. 133, Su Lin p. 138, Mike p. 144, Kristen p. 153, Paul p. 158, Emily p.162, and Daniel p.166

Table 5.10

Hypothetical Feelings About Parents' Non-Participation in Penance

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Very comfortable | 5 | 10.0 |
| Comfortable | 2 | 4.0 |
| Neutral | 13 | 26.0 |
| Uncomfortable | 24 | 48.0 |
| Very uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 |
| Total | 50 | 100.0 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Mean | 3.4800 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.09246 |
| Std. Error Difference | 0.31027 |

From this mean [3.4] we can assume that generally children believe Kim feels uncomfortable about her parents' non-participation in Penance.

This discomfort was further investigated during the interview component of the study.

The interview population was asked 'Who participates in Penance in your family?'

Ann: Everybody in my family because there's eight people. Except for my little sister because she's still too young.
Interviewer: How do you feel about your whole family going with you to reconciliation (Penance)?
A: It made me feel good.
I: Why?
A: Because I'd feel pretty sad if it was only just me going because if it was just me it probably wouldn't be fair to me.
I: Why wouldn't it be fair?
A: Because I'd be the only one.
I: Do you know any other people that go to Reconciliation(Penance)?
A: Yes. All my best friends go, and their families went too, except for our younger sisters cause they're only 5 and 6.
I: What did you think when all those people were going?
A: I felt really nervous but I was happy they went.

Chad: Everyone's been. They all came when I went.
I: How did you feel about that?
C: Good.
I: Why did you feel good?
C: Because everything's calm.
I: Do you know anyone else who goes to Reconciliation (Penance)?
C: Well, everyone in my class.
I: Any other adults that go?
C: Well, basically, my next door neighbours don't go to church and my other ones don't go either. I'm not too sure about anyone else.
I: So, you don't know many adults who go to Reconciliation (Penance), but all the people in your class did?
C: No, I think I might know some. There's a neighbour that does go to this school.
I: Are there lots of adults you know?
C: Not really.

Frank: Ah, my Dad's atheist, so Mum and I.
Interviewer: And how do you feel about that?
F: I'm OK with that. My Dad and I are different. He doesn't really believe in God. He believes in different things.
I: So do you know any other people who go to Reconciliation (Penance)?
F: Ah, Mum Grandma goes to church every week, so she would go. My Grandpa's part of a different parish, a Yugoslavian parish. Umm, next door neighbours.
I: How do you feel about that, that all those people go?
F: Ah, It doesn't really matter to me.
I: It doesn't effect you in any way?
F: No.

Su Lin: My Mum and not my sister yet, and my Grandma, and that's it.
I: How does that make you feel?
SL: Happy.
I: What about people who don't go to Reconciliation (Penance), how does that make you feel? Does Dad go?
SL: Happy. Cause he didn't go to a Catholic school. He doesn't know much about Catholics. He told me that and ... um nothing else.
I: So, do you know anyone else that goes to Reconciliation (Penance)?
SL: No.
I: Do you know any neighbours or people at school that go?
SL: Well, my friends did.
I: So all the other people in your class go?
SL: Yep.
I: Does anybody else at school go?
SL: I don't know.

Mike: My brother, my Dad and my Mum go.
I: So, is that the whole family?

M: Except my sister.
I: How does that make you feel?
M: I like them to go when I go, but if they don't, then I just feel the same.
I: So it doesn't really worry you whether or not they go?
M: No.
I: Why?
M: Because... it just doesn't make me feel anything.
I: Who else goes to Reconciliation (Penance) that you know?
M: Umm. No one else.
I: Do any of your classmates or school friends?
M: My best friend goes, my teacher goes, and a few of my friends go.
I: How do you feel about that?
M: Fine.

Brad: Just me.
I: Did Mum and Dad go?
B: No.
I: Does that mean anything to you?
B: I don't feel anything about it.
I: Who else do you know that goes to Reconciliation (Penance).
B: My cousin did 'cause I went to watch him and I know my friends did 'cause I was there.
I: Does it mean anything to you when you see all those people go to Reconciliation (Penance)?
B: No.

Kristen: My brother. I don't know about my Mum and Dad yet. That's all.
I: Does that mean anything to you at all?
K: It means I get the chance to go more often.
I: So why do you think they go – or don't go?
K: Because they might have committed some sins when they were younger and they might want to say sorry to God for something they've done or something they've said.
I: And why do you think they don't go?
K: Because they didn't go to a holy school.
I: Do you think adults commit sins?
K: I'm not sure...Umm, I don't think so.
I: Do you know anyone else who goes to Reconciliation (Penance)?
K: Um... My classmates and I'm not really sure, I don't think I know anyone else.
I: Does it mean anything to you about why those people go?
K: No.
I: So the sacrament is really just about how you feel and not about anyone else?
K: Yes.

Paul: I think Mum and Dad may have gone when they were younger.
I: Why do you think they don't go now?
P: (long pause) I don't know.
I: How do you feel about that?
P: I don't feel very sad or very good about it.

Emily: Well I don't really know if my Mum did, but I think she did when she was little.
I: OK. Why don't you think she goes now?
E: Well she works and she has to look after my sisters.
I: How does that make you feel?
E: Well I don't really mind because sometimes if I go then she will go.
I: So your Dad goes too.
E: Well, he used to go when he was little, but he'll go with me now if I go or my grandma.
I: Why don't you think Dad goes?
E: Well, my Dad has to work on the house and he has to do his job and stuff and sometimes he gets home late.
I: So, do you know anyone else who goes to Reconciliation (Penance)?
E: Well my friends do, and my cousins and the girl down the road.
I: Would you say that you know lots of people that go to Reconciliation (Penance)?
E: Yeah.
I: And are most of them kids or are they adults?
E: Mostly kids.
I: How do you feel knowing lots of people who go?
E: I feel kind of happy 'cause lots of people like to forgive their sins.

Daniel: My classmates and that. My sisters and my family.
I: How old's your biggest sister?
D: She's fourteen.
I: Did she go to Reconciliation (Penance) with you?
D: She stayed outside with her friend.
I: How did that make you feel?
D: OK.

Brad, Kristen, Paul and Emily said that their parents no longer participated in the Sacrament of Penance. Frank and Su Lin indicated that one parent – their mothers- participated. These children commented that their parents didn't attend because they were not of similar faith or because they were too busy. Some children didn't know why their families were non-participants, but felt no desire to question this. Six of the ten perceive their immediate faith community- their family- to have little or no use Penance.

## Children's Perception of their Future Use of Penance

The interview population was asked about whether or not they perceived themselves as participating in Penance again. Many children were asked, "How many times do you think you'll use (Penance) in your lifetime?"

Ann: Probably about 100.
I: Do you think you'll be going when you're an adult?
A: Yes.
I: Why do you think you'll go when you're an adult?
A: Because I have to owe (own) up. Even grown-ups have to owe (own) up sometimes.

Chad: Really as much as you want, and really I don't know if I'm gonna go again, but if I had a little brother then I'm sure I'd go again, because when he went to Reconciliation (Penance), I would do it.
I: Do you think you'll go when you're grown up?
C: Yeah if I had kids.
I: Why just if you had kids.
C: Well, when they made theirs, I'd go.
I: What about if you had no kids?
C: If I did something wrong.

Su Lin: (long pause) Three.
I: Three times? Why?
SL: I don't know. I just think three's a good number.
I: What about when you're a grown up? Do you think you'll go to Reconciliation (Penance)?
SL: Yes.
I: Why?
SL: Because sometimes I'll do something bad even when I'm an adult.

Mike: Around 500.
I: Around 500! That's a lot of times. Why do you think you'll go so many times?
M: Because I'm only eight and I might go every month.
I: Do you think you'll be going when you're an adult?
M: Yep. Because some adult never go, but I might want to go.
I: Why do you think you'll want to go?
M: To tell Father my sins.

Kristen: Well, I'll go when I do my Holy Communion. So about ... I think all the times you do your special things in school.
I: So, all the times you receive a sacrament?
K: Yes, and I might go once or twice when I'm older.
I: Why, do you think you'll go then?
K: Because I might make a few sins.

Paul: I don't know.
I: If you didn't go with your school would you go by yourself?
P: (nods)
I: Will you go when you're an adult?
P: I don't know. I might.

Interviewer: And if you didn't go to Reconciliation (Penance) with the school, do you think you'd go by yourself?
Brad: Hmm... Maybe.
I: Do you think you'd go to Reconciliation (Penance) when you're an adult?
B: Pass.

Interviewer: Will you go when you're an adult?
Frank: (long pause) Um...(long pause), no. Not if I don't have a child that goes to this school.
I: So, you'd only go to take your own child. Why's that?
F: Cos' I don't go to church a lot because I get bored in church.

Interviewer: So, you think you'll go outside of school hours.
Emily: Yes.
I: Do you think you'll go when you're grown up?
E: Yes, because everybody does sin and everybody wants them forgiven and wipe them away.
I: Why do you think everybody wants to wipe them away?
E: Because if you don't they get stuck in your head and it's really annoying and it makes them really sad.

Interviewer: Do you think you'll go when you're an adult?
Daniel: Yes.
I: Why do you think you'll go?
D: So I can get rid of most of my sins.
I: Will you let them all go?
D: Yes.[17]

[17] See Interview Transcriptions – Ann p. 125, Chad p.129, Frank p.135, Su Lin p.140, Mike p.145, Brad p.150, Kristen p.156, Paul p.150, Emily p.164, Daniel p.168

Of the children who see themselves as participating Penance, Frank and Chad speak of setting an example for their own children; Ann, Su Lin, Mike, Kristen, Emily and Daniel acknowledged that, even as adults, they may feel a need to confess.

Kristen and Su Lin commented on how their parents did not attend because they were not connected to a Catholic school. This idea of school being an integral part of Penance is an area of the study that could be further researched.

## Summary of Results

These results provide further evidence supporting the cognitive work of Kohlberg. Many of the children are strongly influenced by the authority figures in their lives, and show concrete thought processes in moral decision making. Most important is the evidence showing how the children have objectified sin, and described the confessional aspect of the sacrament in great detail indicating a heightened emotional state. There is also evidence that educators have applied the advice of Fowler and Montessori as the children showed a positive orientation towards their religious experience and towards God. The reasons for this positive orientation vary, but generally, the children felt positively about their first experience of Penance because it provides them with an opportunity for concrete reciprocal gain by impressing an authority figure or by erasing an objectified sin. It is also important that the children see the role of the school in this religious experience as imperative.

# CHAPTER SIX

## DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the theological and pastoral propriety of administering Penance to students at the age of reason considering cognitive research, and the affective responses of the children in year three regarding their first experience of Penance.

### Cognitive Understanding of Penance

There is evidence in this study to suggest that the work of Kohlberg regarding cognition and moral development is well founded. Kohlberg's stage one: "Heteronomous Morality" describes morality as a function of authority, reward and punishment. This concrete understanding of morality is reflected in the results of this study.

### Sin as the Focal Point of Penance

The results indicate that the children's focus in Penance was sin. Confession was described vividly, and eight of the ten children interviewed stated that the reason we use Penance was to eliminate sin. At some stage in their interview, all the children objectified sin. Many of the children failed to recognise the social nature of sin and the role of intent in sin. Most measured the seriousness of sin in concrete terms, often measuring it by the degree of punishment or the discomfort it created. This concrete focus on sin, according to Kohlberg, is developmentally normal.

Differing Rates of Moral Development

While many of the children in the study were showing evidence of being in the Heteronomous Morality stage, others indicated that they might be moving into Kohlberg's second stage, "Instrumental Exchange". This stage describes children co-operating with others for the sake of their own self-interest. This was most apparent when children in the interview were asked about the literal meaning of reconciliation. Many described situations where concrete reciprocal gain was the motivation behind making up, and described God's role in reconciliation as a mediating 'parental' figure whom the children wanted to please. Elements of fairness and reciprocity are also mentioned by some of the children in the interview when discussing which family members utilise Penance.

Comparing the different interviews is particularly interesting. While Emily reflected on sin in a very personal way (Interview Transcriptions, p.163), Su Lin appeared to think the interview was a test and often apologised for not knowing the contents of the 'test' (Interview Transcriptions, p. 138).

These differing levels of moral cognition are not recognised in naming an age of reason.

Even functioning at the higher level of moral cognition, "Instrumental Exchange", the egocentricity of the children calls into doubt their ability to commit serious sin. While they are showing signs of 'cognitive readiness' to grasp the role of sin in relationships, they still view God as an authority figure rather than an all loving Father.

Theological Presumption

Considering their immature cognitive skills, it is possible to say the children are incapable of committing serious sin. Sheed (1958) describes "serious sin" or "mortal sin" as "death-bringing". It is a sin involving a deliberate rejection of God. It is possible to say that while children are operating at these lower levels of cognition, in which they see God as an authority figure equivalent to a parent (Campbell, Kay and Francis, 1996), it is impossible for them to meaningfully reject God. Therefore, it would be possible to challenge the presumption of Canon 97.

Pastoral Concerns

As there is some doubt surrounding the theological concerns regarding the age of reason, the question of whether or not children should receive first Penance at the age of seven/eight becomes more of a pastoral concern. Are children adversely affected by receiving Penance early? Here, it is important to discuss the cognitive development of the child in relation to their affective development.

## Possible Adverse Effects of the Early Introduction of Penance

Emotional Cognition and Long-term Memory

Considering the research of Adolph and Buchanan (in Moore and Oaksford (Eds.), 2002), it is important to consider the long-term effects of affective perception on memory. The research mentioned in Adolphs and Buchanan's article (Bradley, Greenwald, Petry, & Lang, 1992; Heuer, & Reisberg, 1990; Hamann, Cahill, & Squire, 1997 [in Moore and

Oaksford (Eds.), 2002]) found that emotional arousal rather than 'pleasantness' contributed to the modulation of long-term memory. The data indicates that confession was the part of the sacrament described in most detail in the interviews. This could, therefore, be named as the part of Penance with high emotional arousal as it's the part the children remember vividly.

The emotional arousal regarding sin is reflected in the survey results for 'Feelings for while reflecting on sin prior to Penance'. The mean [3.46] indicated a high level of discomfort. An even higher level of discomfort, a mean score of 4.22, was recorded when the children were asked about how they felt when they perceived they had sinned.

It is important that the results show children's perception of sin at this level of cognitive development is quite concrete and egocentric.

According to Adolph and Buchanan (in Moore and Oaksford (Eds.), 2002), this heightened emotional arousal could mean the children are prompted to connect their immature cognition to Penance in later years. Consequently, they may always see its focus as confession rather than reconciliation. This may also mean they never recognise the social nature of sin and fail to see how Penance can be used as a developmental tool.

Pelagian Attitude

The abstract combination of a positive orientation towards God and metanoia may have some adverse consequences for the concrete thinking child.

The results indicated that children had a positive orientation towards God. When asked "Does reconciliation (making up) have anything to do with God?" most of the children in the interview described God as a mediating parent rather than an offended party. When asked about God's position on sin, their responses indicated that they saw him in a kindly parental role. Emily even commented, "Well, I don't think He really likes (sin) because it's bad and he brought the world up to be a good place..." (Interview Transcriptions, p.163)

They also reported that their sacramental preparation and experience were positive. The children surveyed indicated they felt positively about reconciling (making up), recording a mean score of 1.80 in the survey. A mean score of 1.92 was recorded for "Personal feelings post confession" indicating a high level of comfort. Prior to participating in Penance for the first time, eight of the ten children interviewed reported feeling nervous and excited.

While Fowler (1995) and Montessori (in Cavelletti, 1983) would concur that a positive orientation towards God in early years is important for spiritual development, this positive orientation does not necessarily mean that the children show the emotional maturity required to effectively use Penance. One could argue that an appropriate emotional response prior to participation in Penance is sorrow, even metanoia.

As previously mentioned, many of the children surveyed did indicate an uncomfortable feeling while reflecting on their sin prior to using Penance (mean score 3.46). But the

children interviewed gave further insight into these feelings when they described how they were nervous about the priest's reaction to their sins, rather than feeling sorrow for their sins or metanoia.

It is difficult to 'marry' this positive orientation with metanioa when children are at such a concrete stage of cognitive development. These results indicate that a positive orientation towards God coupled with cognitive immaturity when studying sin leads to an almost Pelagian attitude towards Penance. The general feeling amongst the children in this study was, 'God is a kindly parental figure who will wash away my sins to make me perfect', rather than 'I am in relationship with God/mankind and when I break that relationship I am saddened and seek to restore my relationship with God/mankind'.

Disabling the Ability to Respond

This understanding of Penance, and the Archdiocese of Perth's present practice of administering Penance through the school system, calls into question our teaching regarding children and their 'ability to respond'.

In "A Dictionary of Religious Education" (Sutcliffe, 1984) 'Knowledge' is described in four categories. The last category is named, 'The ability to respond'. The ability to respond is seen as an important part of religious education and, in fact, of the wider school curriculum. The Curriculum Framework presently being used in Western Australia features an overarching objective: 'Active Citizenship' (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 2000). All the children in this population saw the school/priest as the

starting point for Penance. From this data, it is possible to say we are presently teaching children that the impetus to participate in Penance comes from the school curriculum, rather than from any kind of sorrowful introspection or disciplined acknowledgement of "omnis utruisque sexus".

The Strong Influence of Authority Figures

Fowler's intuitive projective stage comments on the influence of chief storytellers in the lives of children. Kohlberg also mentions the importance of authority figures at this point in the development of the child. Interestingly, six of the ten children saw their parents (the chief storytellers in their lives) as only loosely connected to Penance. The survey population was asked how they felt, hypothetically, about parent non-participation in Penance. A mean score of 3.48 indicated that they felt significantly uncomfortable about this.

Considering Kohlberg's and Fowler's research paradigms, there is the possibility that this perception of limited participation in Penance by significant authority figures may influence children's future use of it. Generally, the children in the study indicated a strong desire to use Penance in later years, but the loose connection between chief storytellers and Penance could cause children to devalue it. Frank and Chad commented in the interviews that they would only participate in Penance as adults if they were parents supporting their own school-age children (Interview Transcriptions, p.130 & 135). Waiting until the children are less influenced by authority figures may help children to connect Penance with their own needs rather than the influence of storytellers.

## Suggestions for Administering the Sacrament of Penance

Recognising Early Childhood as a Time for Community Building

A large part of the reason Penance is introduced at such an early age is its association with the Eucharist. Fowler and Montessori recommend a positive orientation towards God during early childhood, and the Eucharistic sacrament nourishes this. It also fosters a sense of community in an appropriately concrete way. Penance, however, is confusingly abstract for children in early childhood.

Many writers have noted the importance of building a faith community (Champlin, 1995, Hesch, 1988, Westerhoff, 1976). Several suggest Vygotsky's 'scaffolding' as a practical way to introduce sacraments to children (Berk and Winsler, 1995). De Mesa's article (2002) is most relevant to this study because it highlights the importance of the Eucharist in community building and the irony of its association with Penance. De Mesa suggests that the Eucharist should be available from infancy, therefore making its association with Penance redundant.

There are those who believe that the early introduction and frequent use of Penance disrespects the practice of the ancients who only used it in situations of mortal sin (Bausch, 1983). Mette (in Collins and Power (Eds.), 1987) suggests that it is important to acknowledge other ways of reconciling our community and ourselves to God rather than using Penance, particularly in early childhood. While the Eucharist is known as a means

for reconciliation after venial sin, the children were unaware of this. This understanding could be made part of their preparation for Penance and Eucharist.

This study challenges the traditional order of administering the Penance and the Eucharistic Sacrament. The cognition required for Penance is still developing at the age of seven. During this time of developmental ambiguity, it would be more appropriate to introduce the Eucharistic Sacrament in order to foster a positive orientation towards God and a tangible means of belonging to a faith community. It would be more appropriate to introduce the Penance in later childhood or early adulthood.

The School's Role in Administering Penance

There is some evidence of the disadvantages to having sacramental program attached to the school. The children in the interviews made continual references to the school's connection to Penance. As previously mentioned, Chad and Frank commented that they would participate in Penance as parents attending the first experience of their own children (Interview Transcriptions, p.131 & 136). Kristen reported that she would chiefly use Penance in association with other sacramental programs at school (Interview Transcriptions, p. 157). Others indicated that their parents were not involved with the Penance because they did not attend a Catholic school (Interview Transcriptions, p.140 & p.155). There is an obvious association of the faith community with the school community. While these two communities are tightly linked, the children's comments suggest that they perceive school curriculum and faith to be inextricably linked.

This highlights the theological anomaly mentioned earlier in this study regarding the interruption of the sacraments of initiation with Penance. The children are called to reconcile with a faith community they have not yet been fully initiated into – or a faith community they cannot yet identify with. The results indicate only half the children interviewed recognize that they are part of a faith community. An introduction to the Eucharist prior to Penance may help to address this anomaly.

The involvement of the school does have some positive practical features for the administration of Penance. Champlin (1995) asserts that one of the factors considered in deciding to administer Penance prior to the Eucharist was that many of the children involved in the sacramental program would not return for penitential preparation after receiving the Eucharist.

However, if the sacramental program was attached to the school, children could automatically receive Penance in later years of primary school, after Eucharist. In Western Australia, they are unlikely to leave the Catholic system prior to Year Seven and, in later primary school years, they may demonstrate adequate cognition for receiving Penance.

## Conclusion

The reason Penance is introduced at such an early age is due to its historic link with the Eucharist. While at the time of the introduction of 'omnis utriusque sexus'(Catholic Church, 1983: Canon 989) there was concern regarding the child's ability to commit

mortal sin, recent research has shown the child's developmental ability calls that ability into question. The findings of this study support that developmental research.

The early introduction of Penance can take on a pastoral dimension. This study calls into question the assumption that a cognitively immature child cannot be harmed by an early introduction to the sacrament. There is evidence here to suggest that the introduction of Penance while children are cognitively immature but 'affectively' positive towards God and sacramental activity, could have adverse results. These include a long-term memory association with an immature understanding of Penance, an almost Pelagian attitude towards sin, a failure to recognise the role of the penitent's sorrow in Penance, the connection of authority figures with the impetus for participation in Penance and a reinforcement of the school as the sole means of faith development.

According to Fowler (1995), Kohlberg (in Duska and Whelan, 1977) and Montessori (in Cavalletti, 1983) the influence of childhood perception on spiritual and moral development is significant. Present practice in the Archdiocese of Perth may indeed contribute to individuals viewing Penance as a 'childhood sacrament'.

## Recommendations for Further Study

The writer suggests that a larger population be investigated with several changes to the administration of the study.

1. The population would include two groups of adults who received Penance at a young age: One group who recognises 'omnis utriusque sexus' (Catholic Church, 1983:

Canon 989) and another who does not. This population would be asked similar questions to the child population, but would also be queried about their adult perception of the sacrament.

2. Research questions would be extended to further investigate the distinction between children's sense of guilt (for sin) and fear (of the priest).
3. The population would investigate the cognitive and affective domains of a group of older children who receive Penance for the first time.
4. Traditionally, sacramental programs in Western Australia have been attached to Catholic schools. Presently, there are some Parishes experimenting with a parish-based sacramental program. A study to compare the children's understanding of 'community' in parish and school based programs could be useful.

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# APPENDIX 1

# ETHICS APPROVAL

Janine Sanzone
48 Brandon St
Kensington
WA 6151

CSESS 177

20 January, 2004

EDITH COWAN

HIGHER DEGREES OFFICE

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

2 Bradford Street
Mount Lawley
Western Australia 6050
Telephone (08) 9370 6416
Facsimile (08) 9370 6022

ABN 54 361 485 361

Dear Janine,

RE: ETHICS CLEARANCE FOR HONOURS/MASTERS RESEARCH

I am writing to confirm that the Faculty of Community Services, Education & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has approved your research for Ethical Clearance. This clearance was granted on the following date: 20/1/2004

The period of approval will be until December 31, 2004.

I wish you success with your future study,

[redacted]ours sincerely,

[redacted]

Sarah Kearn
Executive Officer
Higher Degrees Office
Faculty of Community Services, Education & Social Sciences
CC: Br. Luke Saker – School of Education

# APPENDIX 2
# LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal,

I am a teacher at St Michael's School in Bassendean studying a Bachelor of Education with Honours at Edith Cowan University. I am writing a thesis about year three children's perception of sin and reconciliation. I write seeking subjects for my research. I require the assistance of year three students who have recently been administered the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Presently, children in year three receive tuition to prepare them for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. My study aims to investigate the children's understanding of sin and reconciliation after receiving this tuition in order to comment on the developmental appropriateness of administering this sacrament in year three.

A Likert survey method will be used to measure the attitudes of 50 children (25 from two separate schools) who have recently been administered the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. The survey involves the choice of 5 responses to questions asked: very comfortable, comfortable, neutral, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Due to the age of the subjects, graphics rather than words will be used to indicate very comfortable, comfortable, neutral, uncomfortable, very uncomfortable (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The questions of the survey need to be read aloud to the group by their teachers and children will be asked to respond by colouring the face that indicates their

feeling towards each question. Each question has an overhead projector picture to accompany it. This is expected to keep the children interested in completing the questions. It is anticipated this will take ~25 minutes of school time. A copy of the survey and the accompanying pictures are attached.

Following the Likert survey method, an unstructured indirect method of interview will be used to further investigate 10 children's attitudes (5 from each participating school) towards sin and reconciliation. Children will be randomly selected from the larger group to participate in the interview component of this study. They will be asked a series of questions based on the interview schedule attached. Interviews will take ~ 30 minutes and are expected to take place on school grounds during school time.

All children participating in this research will require their parent or guardian's permission. This will be attained using a permission slip. Children will be made aware of their right to withdraw from the study if they so wish and will remain anonymous throughout the study. All material collected will be kept confidential and will be destroyed on the completion of the thesis.

Your school's participation is of great value as this study can help us to learn more about our students' perception of the Catholic faith.

If you have any further queries regarding this research, please contact Associate Professor Andrew Taggart on 9370 6806 or .

Please contact me on (08) 9367 2458 (h) or (08) 9279 5505 (work on Monday or Tuesday) if your school is able to participate in this study.

Yours faithfully,

Janine Sanzone

# APPENDIX 3
# LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I am a teacher at St Michael's School in Bassendean studying a Bachelor of Education with Honours at Edith Cowan University. I am writing a thesis about year three children's perception of sin and reconciliation. Your child's year group has been selected to participate in this study.

Presently, children in year three receive tuition to prepare them for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. The study aims to investigate the children's understanding of sin and reconciliation after receiving this tuition in order to comment on the developmental appropriateness of administering this sacrament in Year Three.

Children will be given a survey to complete in class with the direction of their classroom teacher. The survey is expected to take ~ 25 minutes.

After the survey, five children will be randomly selected from the larger group for an interview, which will take place on school grounds during school time. Interviews are expected to take ~15 minutes. They involve questions regarding the children's

perception of sin and guilt, and their experience of reconciliation. Interviews will be taped, and the tapes will be kept securely on the grounds of Edith Cowan University.

Children have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and will be made aware of this fact prior to the survey administration and interview. All children participating in the study will remain anonymous. Any material collected from the survey or interviews will remain confidential, and will be destroyed after the completion of the thesis.

Your child's participation is of great value as this study can help us learn more about our children's perception of the Catholic faith.

If you or your child have any further queries regarding this research, please contact Associate Professor Andrew Taggart on 9370 6806 or a.taggart@ecu.edu.au.

Please keep this letter for further reference and fill in the permission slip attached. Permission will need to be returned to school by _____.

Yours faithfully,

Janine Sanzone

I give permission for my child, _____ to participate in the survey and interview component of the research conducted by Janine Sanzone regarding sin and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Signed: _____

# APPENDIX 4
# LETTER TO STUDENTS

Dear Students,

This story is supposed to help you think about the sacrament of Reconciliation and what it means to you.

Your teacher will read you the story of Kim. You need to think about how Kim feels at each part of the story and colour the face that best shows HER feelings.

Some of the time you will be asked how YOU feel. You will see a question mark that looks like this  . When you see this, you need to colour in the face that best shows how YOU feel. You need to be honest about how you really feel. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS...THESE ARE FEELINGS QUESTIONS.

If you are having any trouble answering the questions, you may ask your teacher to read the question again. You do not have to complete the form if you are having too much trouble... but please try your best. Your answers will help us to know about what kids really think about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

After the story, some children will be asked to participate in an interview. I will ask questions about sin and guilt and how you feel about reconciliation.

Interviews will be taped.

All the information collected for the study will be kept private, and will be destroyed after the study has been complete.

Take some time now before you start to think about the last time you went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Yours faithfully,

Janine Sanzone.

I give permission for Janine Sanzone to tape my interview about Sin and Reconciliation. I know I can stop the interview if I am worried in any way. I know the tape will be kept private and will be destroyed after the study is complete.

Signed: _____

# APPENDIX 5
# LETTER TO TEACHERS

Dear Teachers

This study is designed to help children reflect on sin, guilt and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As this study measures attitude, it is important that children respond with their own answers.

You will need
*an overhead projector
*overhead projector graphic sheets
*surveys for each child and for yourself

To administer this survey, you need to read through the cover page with the children. You will then need to read through each question with the children and allow them time to respond to each question as you go. As you read each question you will need to show the children the corresponding overhead graphic.

If children request help, please re-read the question they need clarified and help them understand the meaning of the question. (E.g. The first question is about a character called Kim who is nasty to her best friend. The children are asked to indicate how KIM feels after she is nasty. Some children may think they need to indicate how the best friend is feeling.)

Children must be aware of the fact that it is not compulsory to complete this survey. This is mentioned in the cover page. Those who wish to withdraw are allowed to do so, but please encourage the children to complete the survey.

At the end of the survey, children are given the option of illustrating Kim's story. While this is not necessary for the research project, you may want to use it to discuss reconciliation with your class after the survey. Please be aware that children may ask for illustration time on completing the survey.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding survey administration.

Thanks,

Janine Sanzone

# APPENDIX 6
# SURVEY INSTRUMENT

**This is the story of Kim...**

1. At school, Kim sees her best friend playing with someone else so she calls her friend a name while they are waiting in line. How does Kim feel?

2. On the way home from school, Kim steals some red bubblegum from the local shop. She chews some and saves some for later. How does Kim feel?

3. Kim's Mum finds the packet in her bag and asks Kim where she got the bubblegum. Kim tells her Mum she won them as a Maths prize. How does Kim feel?

4. Kim's Mum congratulates her for winning a prize. She gives her an hour on the computer as a reward. How does Kim feel?

5. Kim's little brother realises Kim stole the bubblegum. He is about to tell on Kim. Kim says she will hit him if he tells. How does Kim feel?

*6. Think of a time when you have done something wrong. How did you feel?*

7. Kim's little brother is scared. He knows Kim can hit hard. He doesn't tell on her. He cries because he is scared. How does Kim feel?

8. Kim's Mum doesn't find out about the bubblegum. How does Kim feel?

*9. Think of a time you have done something wrong and no one found out about it... How did you feel?*

10. As Kim has just made her first reconciliation, her parents ask her the next day if she would like to go to reconciliation at the local parish. How does Kim feel?

11. At the church, Kim thinks of all the times that she has made wrong choices. Kim thinks about the bubblegum. How does Kim feel?

*12. How do you feel when you think about your sins before going to reconciliation?*

13. Kim walks over to speak to the priest. How does Kim feel?

*14. How do you feel as you go to speak to the priest?*

15. Kim tells the priest all about the bubblegum. How does Kim feel?

*16. How do you feel when you have told the priest about your sins?*

17. Kim's parents do not go to reconciliation. How does Kim feel?

18. Kim thinks about telling her Mum the truth about the bubblegum. How does Kim feel?

19. Kim thinks about saying sorry to her brother. How does Kim feel?

*20. How do you feel when you make up with someone?*

21. The next day, Kim's best friend calls her into the shop. She asks Kim to stand in front of her so she can take some chips. How does Kim feel?

22. Kim thinks about telling her friend about when she went to reconciliation. How does Kim feel?

# APPENDIX 7

# SURVEY DATA

# Frequency Tables

## Name-Calling

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| | comfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 14.0 |
| | neutral | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 30.0 |
| | Uncomfortable | 25 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 80.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Stealing

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 16.0 |
| | Comfortable | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 34.0 |
| | neutral | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 58.0 |
| | Uncomfortable | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 84.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Lying

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| | comfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 6.0 |
| | neutral | 19 | 38.0 | 38.0 | 44.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 24 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 92.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Feeling Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Reward is Involved Without Confession

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 30 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 60.0 |
| | comfortable | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 76.0 |
| | neutral | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 82.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 90.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Feelings Towards Personal Guilt

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| | comfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 |
| | neutral | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 24.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 48.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 26 | 52.0 | 52.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 42.0 |
| | comfortable | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 72.0 |
| | neutral | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 82.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 94.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Bullying

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| | comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 10.0 |
| | neutral | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 30.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 29 | 58.0 | 58.0 | 88.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Possible

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| | comfortable | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 24.0 |
| | neutral | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 38.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 20 | 40.0 | 40.0 | 78.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Hypothetical Opportunity for Penance and Reconciliation

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 26.0 |
| | comfortable | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 44.0 |
| | neutral | 14 | 28.0 | 28.0 | 72.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 94.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Hypothetical Feelings of Remorse Prior to the Sacrament of Penance

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| | comfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 6.0 |
| | neutral | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 20.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 62.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 19 | 38.0 | 38.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Personal Feelings of Remorse Prior to Penance and Reconciliation**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| | neutral | 28 | 56.0 | 56.0 | 60.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 90.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Hypothetical Feelings Pre-Confession**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 6.0 |
| | comfortable | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 28.0 |
| | neutral | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 50.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 20 | 40.0 | 40.0 | 90.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Personal Feelings Prior to Confession

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| | comfortable | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 38.0 |
| | neutral | 22 | 44.0 | 44.0 | 82.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 98.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Hypothetical Feelings Post-Confession

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 12 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| | comfortable | 18 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 60.0 |
| | neutral | 9 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 78.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 88.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Personal Feelings Post-Confession**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 23 | 46.0 | 46.0 | 46.0 |
| | comfortable | 15 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 76.0 |
| | neutral | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 90.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 3 | 6.0 | 6.0 | 96.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Hypothetical Feelings Re-Parents Non-Practice of Sacrament**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| | comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 14.0 |
| | neutral | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 40.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 24 | 48.0 | 48.0 | 88.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-Punishment Possible**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 8.0 |
| | comfortable | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 24.0 |
| | neutral | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 66.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 11 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 88.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-No Punishment**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 12.0 |
| | comfortable | 20 | 40.0 | 40.0 | 52.0 |
| | neutral | 16 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 84.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 7 | 14.0 | 14.0 | 98.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 1 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Personal Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 26 | 52.0 | 52.0 | 52.0 |
| | comfortable | 13 | 26.0 | 26.0 | 78.0 |
| | neutral | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 90.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 5 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Hypothetical Feelings Towards 'Re-Offending'**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 2 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 |
| | neutral | 6 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 16.0 |
| | uncomfortable | 32 | 64.0 | 64.0 | 80.0 |
| | very uncomfortable | 10 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Hypothetical Feelings Towards Discussing Reconciliation With Peers**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | very comfortable | 17 | 34.0 | 34.0 | 34.0 |
| | comfortable | 21 | 42.0 | 42.0 | 76.0 |
| | neutral | 8 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 92.0 |
| | Uncomfortable | 4 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 50 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

## Frequencies

| | | Name-Calling | Stealing | Lying | Feelings Towards Personal Guilt | Feeling Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Reward is Involved Without Confession |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Valid | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | 3.6400 | 3.0800 | 3.5400 | 4.2200 | 1.9200 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.19112 | 1.32234 | .83812 | .97499 | 1.38269 |

| | Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided | Bullying | Feelings Towards Personal Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided | Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Possible | Hypothetical Opportunity for Penance and Reconciliation | Hypothetical Feelings of Remorse Prior to Reconciliation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 2.1000 | 3.6600 | 3.3800 | 3.5600 | 2.6400 | 4.0800 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.24949 | .96065 | 1.19335 | 1.16339 | 1.25779 | .98644 |

| | Personal Feelings of Remorse Prior to Penance and *Reconciliation* | Hypothetical Feelings Pre-*Confession* | Personal Feelings Prior to *Confession* | Hypothetical Feelings Post-*Confession* | Personal Feelings Post-*Confession* | Hypothetical Feelings Re-Parents Non-Practice of *Sacrament* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 3.4600 | 3.2600 | 2.7000 | 2.5000 | 1.9200 | 3.4800 |
| Std. Deviation | .73429 | 1.10306 | .95298 | 1.29756 | 1.10361 | 1.09246 |

| | Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-No *Punishment* | Personal Feelings Towards Applied *Reconciliation* | Hypothetical Feelings Towards *'Re-Offending'* | Hypothetical Feelings Towards Discussing Reconciliation With *Peers* | Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-*Punishment* Possible |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | 2.5400 | 1.8000 | 3.9600 | 1.9800 | 3.1400 |
| Std. Deviation | .95212 | 1.01015 | .83201 | .91451 | 1.08816 |

## Crosstabs

## Name-Calling * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | |
| Name-Calling | very comfortable | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| | Comfortable | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Neutral | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| | Uncomfortable | 10 | 15 | 25 |
| | very uncomfortable | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Stealing * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Lsoc | hsoc | |
| Stealing | very comfortable | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | comfortable | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| | neutral | 5 | 7 | 12 |
| | uncomfortable | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Lying * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Lsoc | hsoc | |
| Lying | very comfortable | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Comfortable | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Neutral | 10 | 9 | 19 |
| | Uncomfortable | 11 | 13 | 24 |
| | very uncomfortable | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Feeling Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Reward is Involved Without Confession * High or Low Socio-economic School

Crosstab

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | |
| Feeling Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Reward is Involved Without Confession | very comfortable | 15 | 15 | 30 |
| | Comfortable | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | Neutral | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Uncomfortable | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | very uncomfortable | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Bullying * High or Low Socio-economic School

Crosstab

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | Totnl |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | |
| Bullying | very comfortable | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Comfortable | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| | Neutral | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| | Uncomfortable | 16 | 13 | 29 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Feelings Towards Personal Guilt * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | |
| Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Possible | very comfortable | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Comfortable | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| | Neutral | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| | Uncomfortable | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| | very uncomfortable | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Feelings Towards Hypothetical Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided | very comfortable | 11 | 10 | 21 |
| | Comfortable | 9 | 6 | 15 |
| | Neutral | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| | Uncomfortable | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| | very uncomfortable | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Feelings Towards Personal Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Feelings Towards Personal Guilt Where Punishment is Avoided | very comfortable | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| | Comfortable | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | Neutral | 10 | 2 | 12 |
| | Uncomfortable | 10 | 11 | 21 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Opportunity for Penance and Reconciliation * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Opportunity for Penance and Reconciliation | very comfortable | 8 | 5 | 13 |
| | Comfortable | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| | Neutral | 10 | 4 | 14 |
| | Uncomfortable | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| | very uncomfortable | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings of Remorse Prior to Reconciliation * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings of Remorse Prior to Reconciliation | very comfortable | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Comfortable | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Neutral | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| | Uncomfortable | 13 | 8 | 21 |
| | very uncomfortable | 7 | 12 | 19 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Personal Feelings of Remorse Prior to Penance and Reconciliation * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Personal Feelings of Remorse Prior to Penance and Reconciliation | Comfortable | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| | Neutral | 13 | 15 | 28 |
| | Uncomfortable | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Pre-Confession * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Pre-Confession | very comfortable | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Comfortable | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| | Neutral | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| | Uncomfortable | 11 | 9 | 20 |
| | very uncomfortable | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Personal Feelings Prior to Confession * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Personal Feelings Prior to Confession | very comfortable | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| | Comfortable | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| | Neutral | 10 | 12 | 22 |
| | Uncomfortable | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | very uncomfortable | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Post-Confession * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Post-Confession | very comfortable | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| | Comfortable | 11 | 7 | 18 |
| | Neutral | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| | Uncomfortable | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| | very uncomfortable | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Re-Parents Non-Practice of Sacrament * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Re-Parents Non-Practice of Sacrament | very comfortable | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| | Comfortable | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Neutral | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| | Uncomfortable | 13 | 11 | 24 |
| | very uncomfortable | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-Punishment Possible * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-Punishment Possible | very comfortable | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| | Comfortable | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | Neutral | 9 | 12 | 21 |
| | Uncomfortable | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| | very uncomfortable | 4 | 2 | 6 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-No Punishment * High or Low Socio-economic School

**Crosstab**

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation-No Punishment | very comfortable | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| | Comfortable | 12 | 8 | 20 |
| | Neutral | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| | Uncomfortable | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| | very uncomfortable | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Personal Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation * High or Low Socio-economic School

Crosstab

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Personal Feelings Towards Applied Reconciliation | very comfortable | 13 | 13 | 26 |
| | Comfortable | 6 | 7 | 13 |
| | Neutral | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| | Uncomfortable | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Towards 'Re-Offending' * High or Low Socio-economic School

Crosstab

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Towards 'Re-Offending' | very comfortable | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | Neutral | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| | Uncomfortable | 15 | 17 | 32 |
| | very uncomfortable | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

## Hypothetical Feelings Towards Discussing Reconciliation With Peers * High or Low Socio-economic School

Crosstab

Count

| | | High or Low Socio-Economic School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | lsoc | hsoc | Total |
| Hypothetical Feelings Towards Discussing Reconciliation With Peers | very comfortable | 9 | 8 | 17 |
| | Comfortable | 11 | 10 | 21 |
| | Neutral | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | Uncomfortable | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Total | | 25 | 25 | 50 |

# APPENDIX 8

# INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Interview Schedule**

NB. 'Reconciliation' is recognised as a rite within the Sacrament of Penance. The students are taught to refer to Penance as 'Reconciliation' in order to focus their attention on the importance of this rite. As the children refer to Penance as 'Reconciliation', the interviewer adopted this term in order to communicate more efficiently. Therefore throughout this appendix, Penance will be referred to as 'Reconciliation'.

**A. Questions about the sacrament itself**

1. When did you make your first Reconciliation?
2. What did you have to do?
3. Why did we have to go to Reconciliation?
4. How did you feel before/after going to Reconciliation?

**B. Questions about sin**

1. What does the word 'sin' mean to you?
2. Can you give an example of a sin?
3. Do you think sin is bad? Why/Why not
4. If you did do something nasty deliberately to another person how do you feel? Why do you feel this way?
5. How do you think God feels about sin?
6. How do you think your family and friends feel about sin?
7. What does the word 'guilty' mean?
8. If you ever feel guilty does it affect your relationships in any way?

9. In the story about Kim, Kim's little brother is about 2. When he went shopping with his Mum, he picked up a chocolate and later ate it without paying for it. Did he commit a sin?

**C. Questions about reconciling**

1. What does 'reconciliation' mean?
2. If reconciliation means 'making up', how do you make up?
3. Can you give an example of a time you experienced 'reconciliation'?
4. Do you feel you need to say sorry when you make up? Why?
5. Has 'making up' got anything to do with sin?
6. What does reconciliation (making up) have to do with God?
7. Do you think Kim Made up with any of the people in the story? Why/Why not?

**D. Questions about future use of the sacrament**

6. How many times have you been to Reconciliation?
7. If you didn't go to Reconciliation with your class at school, would you go alone or with your parents?
8. Will you be going to Reconciliation when you're grown up? Why/Why not?
9. What are some of the other ways in your life you can make up with God and others?

**E. Questions about how the child perceives significant others use the sacrament**

1. Who goes to Reconciliation in your family? What does this mean to you?
2. Who else goes to Reconciliation that you know? What does this mean to you?

# APPENDIX 9

# SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

## Sample of Interviews

This appendix contains samples from each interview that was conducted. The first page of each interview has been included.

'Reconciliation' is recognised as a rite within the Sacrament of Penance. The students are taught to refer to Penance as 'Reconciliation' in order to focus their attention on the importance of this rite. As the children refer to Penance as 'Reconciliation', the interviewer adopted this term in order to communicate more efficiently. Therefore throughout this appendix, Penance will be referred to as 'Reconciliation'.

**Ann's Interview**

Interviewer: Before we start, how old are you?
Ann: Eight years old.
I: When did you turn eight?
A: In July.
I: Okay, so you have been eight for 6 months now.
A: I think so.
I: I think so too. Now, I want you to know that if you can't answer any of my questions you can say 'pass' and if you want to stop because it's too hard, just let me know. OK?
A: OK
I: Right, now, can you tell me, What was your favorite part of Kim's story?
A: When her friend was going to steal the chips and she owed (owned) up and said about her bubble gum.
I: So why was that your favourite bit?
A: It's about doing the truth and truth is very, very important.
I: Why do you think truth is important?
A: Because it's the truth.
I: So, when did you make your first Reconciliation?
A: That was in this year in February I think.
I: At the beginning of the year?
A: Actually it could have been March.
I: What did you have to do?
A: Well, we had a little purple sheet and it said what we have to do on it, and all the priests had yellow ones just in case we forgot our sheet, and it had a special prayer on it that went in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and then it said now you have to say your sins. Father will do penance and then it said another special prayer and then Father said you can go now.
I: And when you went to Reconciliation, did you feel the same way that Kim felt?
A: Um... A little bit.
I: So what was different?
A: Well there wasn't the same faces as my expressions. Most of my expressions were nervous and feeling really excited.
I: So you felt nervous and excited when you went to Reconciliation?
A: Hmmm.
I: OK. What do you think the reasons are that we go to Reconciliation?
A: To say our sins so that we are free of bad things and things like that.
I: Right, so you feel free when you go to Reconciliation?
A: Yes.
I: How did you feel before you went to Reconciliation?
A: Very, very, very, very nervous.
I: Why were you nervous?
A: Because I didn't know what the priest would say and I might get it mixed up.
I: And how did you feel after?
A: Very, very good.

**Chad's Interview**

Interviewer: Today I'm going to ask you a few questions about Reconciliation, but before we start I want to let you know that if you don't know the answer to any question, you can say "pass" and if the questions get too long or too hard you can ask me to stop and we'll go back to class. Is that OK?
Chad: Yes
I: Before we star today can I ask you, how many people are there in your family?
C: I come from a family of five.
I: Where are you in the family?
C: I'm in the middle.
I: And how old are you?
C: Nearly eight. I turn eight in April this year.
I: Now, I'm going to ask you a few questions about Kim's story that's the story from class. What was your favourite part of Kim's story?
C: When the girl threatened the little boy.
I: Why was that your favourite?
C: I don't really know. It was the most interesting part for me.
I: Have you made your first Reconciliation like Kim in the story?
C: Yes
I: When?
C: This year in umm February.
I: And what did you have to do?
C: We had to tell our sins to the priest, and we had to say this little prayer.
I: Did you know the little prayer?
C: Yes. Something like for what I've done and for what I've failed to do – or something like that.
I: How did you remember it on the day?
C: Oh we had a little sheet with it on.
I: How very handy. Did you feel the same way as Kim about Reconciliation?
C: Yeah. I felt a bit scared.
I: And why did you feel that way?
C: Because, well, I don't really know. I just felt like that.
I: So you were a bit scared. What are some of the reasons that we go to Reconciliation?
C: Well, if you don't go to Reconciliation, your sins will never get forgiven.
I: What would happen to you if your sins never got forgiven?
C: Well, it wouldn't be very nice.
I: Why wouldn't it be very nice?
C: I don't really know. It just wouldn't be.
I: How did you feel before you went to Reconciliation?
C: Just normal.
I: How did you feel after?
C: It was really good.
I: So you thought it was good did you?
C: Mmm Mmm.

**Frank's Interview**

Interviewer: Hello. Today we're going to talk about Reconciliation. Before we start just a little bit about you. How many people are there in your family?
Frank: There are three. There's Mum and Dad and me. I've also got three pets. I've got a bird and a fish and a dog.
I: Wow. That must be a lot to take care of.
F: Mmm.
I: Now I also need to let you know that if you can't answer any of the questions today, you can say 'pass' and also if at any time you'd like to stop, just let me know. OK?
F: Hmm Mmm.
I: How old are you exactly?
F: I'm eight years and (counts on fingers) two months.
I: You're about the same age as Kim in the story. What was your favourite part of 'Kim's Story'?
F: I guess when she was thinking about telling her friend not to steal the chips.
I: Why was that part your favourite?
F: Because something similar had happened to her (Kim) and she was trying to teach her friend.
I: You've been to reconciliation, haven't you?
F: Yes in February.
I: What did you have to do?
F: Umm... I just dressed in good clothes and then, umm, the priest welcomed us all, and then we all go up one by one and Mr. B called us up family by family. I was the first to go up for Reconciliation and then just tell the priest what happened.
I: Did you have to say any special prayers?
F: No, they gave us all penance.
I: What's penance?
F: It's when they tell you to say a prayer or something.
I: Why do you say the prayer?
F: To say 'sorry' to God.
I: Did you feel the same way as Kim about Reconciliation?
F: No. Different.
I: Why did you feel different?
F: I felt a bit more happy.
I: Why do you think Kim felt sad?
F: Because she'd done a few things wrong.
I: So you hadn't done many things wrong?
F: No.
I: OK. What are the reasons we go to Reconciliation?
F: Because we've done stuff wrong and we need to tell people about it to get it out of our system.
I: That's an interesting way to describe it, 'To get it out of our system'. How did you feel before you went to Reconciliation?
F: Scared.

**Su Lin's Interview**

Interviewer: Today I' going to ask you some questions about Reconciliation. Before we star I just want to ask how many people there are in your family?
Su Lin: Well there's my Mum, my Dad, my sister and me, Grandma, Grandpa and my great Grandma.
I: Do they all live with you?
SL: Well, no. My Mum moved into her own house as soon as she got to Australian.
I: Right. So, how old are you again?
SL: Seven.
I: And when is your birthday?
SL: May 10.
I: So you've been seven for quite some time then. Now before we start, if there are any questions you can't answer, you can say 'pass', and if the interview gets too hard, you can ask to stop. OK?
SL: OK.
I: Now, I'm going to ask you some questions about Kim's story. What was your favourite part of Kim's story?
SL: Um. When she went to Reconciliation.
I: And why was that your favourite part of the story?
SL: I've forgotten it's hard because I made up a long sentence in my head.
I: So you can't remember why it's your favourite part.
SL: (pauses). No, I've forgotten. It's hard.
I: What about your Reconciliation. When did you make it?
SL: Last term on a Sunday.
I: On a Sunday...That's a different day to make it. What did you have to do?
SL: There was this piece of paper and I had to say when it said... It had Father on it and he had to say it. Um, there was this prayer in it. It's still in the classroom.
I: Can you remember the prayer?
SL: (shakes head)
I: How did you remember it on the day?
SL: I was on a piece of paper, so I just read it.
I: Was there anything else that you had to do?
SL: Say my sins, and then I went 'The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen'.
I: Did you have to do any penance?
SL: Yes.
I: Why?
SL: Because Father told me to.
I: Why did he tell you to?
SL: Because I did some sins.
I: Why do you do penance after sins?
SL: Because Father tells you.
I: Did you feel the same way that Kim felt when you went to Reconciliation?
SL: Yep.
I: Why did you feel the same as her?
SL: 'Cause, it made me feel happy again.

**Mike's Interview**

Interviewer: OK. We're talking about Reconciliation today. Before we start, can you tell me a bit about yourself? How many people are in your family?
Mike: My Mum. My Dad, my brother, my sister and I.
I: And how old are you?
M: Eight
I: When did you turn eight?
M: In February.
I: So, you've been eight for how long now?
M: For about a month.
I: Now before we get started on these questions about Reconciliation, if you can't answer any questions today, you can say pass, and if you want to stop at any time, just let me know. Now, what was your favourite part of Kim's story?
M: Umm. It was when she went to Reconciliation and she confessed all her sins.
I: Why was that your favourite part?
M: Because she was naughty and then she went to the priest and said she was naughty and then the priest forgived her.
I: So did you feel the same way as Kim when you went?
M: Yep.
I: And how was that?
M: Mmmm. I felt a bit nervous, but when I was done it was better.
I: Why was it better?
M: Because the priest forgived me.
I: What did you have to do at Reconciliation?
M: Well, we had to say a prayer and then Father asked me to say my sins and he gave me my punishment and then we had to say a prayer of sorrow.
I: So, what was your punishment?
M: I had to go back and say a prayer – no two – when I sat down.
I: So, you had to go back and say a prayer at your seat?
M: Two.
I: How did you feel about that punishment?
M: Yeah. It was OK.
I: OK. Now, you said before you felt nervous going in, how did you feel after?
M: Good.
I: Why did you feel good?
M: Because I told Father all my sins and he wasn't mad at me.
I: So you were relieved he wasn't cross?
M: Hmmm.
I: Why did you think he might be cross?
M: Because I'd done some pretty bad things.
I: OK. What does the word sin mean to you?
M: It means when you've done something wrong and you know it's wrong. And you just want to do it.
I: Now, in the story, did you remember Kim's little brother?
M: Mmm.

**Brad's Interview**

Interviewer: Hello. Today, I'm going to ask you some questions about Reconciliation and any time you feel a question is too hard, you can say pass, and if it's getting too tiring for you, you're allowed to say, 'Look, I'd like to stop now.' OK?
Brad: (nods)
I: These are some questions about Reconciliation. Before we start, How old are you?
B: Eight and a half.
I: And when did you make your first Reconciliation?
B: Umm. About three weeks ago.
I: What was your favorite part of Kim's story?
B: When she told the priest about (how) she stole the bubblegum.
I: Why was that your favourite part?
B: Because it's part of Reconciliation to tell the priest what you done badly.
I: What did you have to do at Reconciliation?
B: I had to go face to face with this priest and he asked me the questions about what have I done wrong, and I had to answer his question. And he told me to do an Our Father and a Hail Mary at Mary.
I: How did you feel before you went?
B: I felt a bit scared.
I: Why did you feel scared?
B: Cause I done lots of stu... 'Cause I'd done something wrong, and I didn't want to talk about my sins.
I: How did you feel afterwards?
B: Um really good.
I: Why did you feel really good?
B: Because all my sins were washed out.
I: Because they were all washed out? What does that mean?
B: They were all gone away.
I: So did you feel the same way as Kim when she went to Reconciliation?
B: Yes.
I: Why did you feel the same way?
B: Because um...pass.
I: OK. Can you tell me why we go to Reconciliation? What's the main reason people go?
B: To...pass.
I: So you don't know why we have to go?
B: No.
I: Why do you think Kim went?
B: To wash away her sins.
I: Do you think that's why we all go? To wash away our sins?
B: (nods).
I: When we go to Reconciliation, we sometimes do penance. Do you know what penance is?
B: Pass...No is that the prayer at the statue?

**Kristen's Interview**

Interview: What I'm going to do today is ask you a few questions about your Reconciliation and I want you to answer as honestly as you can. If you can't think of an answer to any of the questions, you're allowed to say 'pass', and if you're too tired to finish the interview, you can ask to go back to class. OK?
Kristen: OK.
I: Now, first question. What was your favourite part of Kim's story?
K: Um...When she went to Reconciliation.
I: Why was that your favourite part?
K: Because she confessed all her sins.
I: Hmm. How do you think she felt after confessing all her sins?
K: Happy.
I: OK. Did you feel the same way as her when you went to Reconciliation?
K: Yes.
I: Why did you feel the same way?
K: Because I confessed all my sins.
I: So that made you feel good. Why do you think it made you feel good?
K: Because I got all my sins out of me.
I: Right. Did that help you in any way?
K: Yeah.
I: How's it helped you?
K: Making my bad place where all my feelings go away.
I: So, when did you make your first Reconciliation?
K: Not long ago.
I: Was it this term?
K: I don't know.
I: I think it was this term, but how old were you when you made it?
K: Eight. I've just turned eight.
I: Now, what did you have to do when you made it?
K: I had to do two readings and then I went into the cubby, and then I got my certificate and then I went back and sat down and then we did something. Oh, we had a party.
I: What did you do when you were in the cubby?
K: I said to Father all my sins.
I: What did Father say back?
K: At the end he said that was very good.
I: How did that make you feel?
K: Mmm, good.
I: Why do we have to go to Reconciliation?
K: So you can get rid of all your bad sins.
I: What would happen if you didn't get rid of your bad sins?
K: You would still have them inside you.
I: What would they do if they're inside you?
K: They will keep going.
I: 'They will keep going'. What do you mean by that?
K: You'll keep doing the things.

**Paul's Interview**

Interviewer: Today, I'm going to ask you some questions about Reconciliation and any time you feel a question is too hard, you can say pass, and if it's getting too tiring for you, you're allowed to say, 'Look, I'd like to stop now.' OK?
Paul: And then I can come back in another time?
I: Well that will depend on your teacher, so maybe not. But this shouldn't take too long and I think you're up to it. OK?
P: (Nods)
I: Now before we get started, how old are you?
P: 8. 8 and a bit.
I: And how old were you when you made your Reconciliation?
P: 8 and a bit.
I: Alright. We just read about Kim's story in class. What was your favourite part of that story?
P: When she stole the bubblegum.
I: Why was that your favourite part?
P: Um, I don't know.
I: OK. Did you have any of the same feelings as Kim about the whole Sacrament?
P: Sometimes.
I: Why?
P: Because she lied and once I lied, and I had to tell the priest and I didn't want anyone to find out.
I: And how did you feel in that situation?
P: I was happy after reconciliation because I forgot all my sins.
I: What did you have to do when you made your first Reconciliation?
P: Um we had to tell Father all our sins and what we'd done wrong and we had this little book for a checklist. And we had to say a prayer.
I: Why did you have to say a prayer?
P: I don't really know, so our sins go up to heaven I think.
I: So, Why do you think we go to Reconciliation?
P: So our sins go away.
I: Do you know where they go?
P: (shakes head)
I: How do they go away?
P: Um. I don't know.
I: Did you do any penance after the sacrament of Reconciliation?
P: No, I don't think so.
I: Did Father ask you to do anything after the sacrament?
P: I said some prayers at Mary's statue.
I: Do you know why we say those prayers?
P: So our sins go up to heaven.
I: What does the word sin mean to you?
P: I don't know.
I: Can you think of an example of a sin?
P: When you did something to someone that wasn't very nice.

**Emily's Interview**

Interviewer: Now before we get started on these questions about Reconciliation, if you can't answer any questions today, you can say pass, and if you want to stop at any time, just let me know. OK?
Emily: (nods)
I: Now, what was your favourite part of Kim's story?
E: When she told the priest what she'd done with the bubblegum. Cause I would feel happy about that because you've told somebody and all your sins go away after Reconciliation.
I: So, you've made your first Reconciliation?
E: Yes, about three weeks ago.
I: So, what did you have to do?
E: Well, we had to go in and we had to do some stuff at the first part, then we had to go into a house and tell Father our sins, and then we all said the prayer, and Peter read something else out and then we went to the party.
I: Did you have to do any penance, like prayers after Reconciliation?
E: Yes, I had to go to the statue of Mary and say some Hail Marys and an Our father.
I: Why do we say those prayers?
E: Kind of like punishment?
I: Is it the right kind of punishment for your sins?
E: Yes, well Father would know.
I: So what was it like when you had to go and tell Father your sins?
E: I was a bit scared and a bit happy.
I: Why? What was the happy bit?
E: That I was gonna forget all my sins.
I: OK. Why do we go to Reconciliation?
E: To wipe away their sins.
I: And why was that important?
E: So that sins don't stay in our hearts.
I: What happens if they stay in our hearts?
E: We get really sad because we keep on remembering things and it keeps on building up and you keep on getting scared.
I: And so reconciliation stops that from happening?
E: Yes.
I: How?
E: Well, God and Jesus forgives you that for all your bad things that you've done.
I: What about if you go to Reconciliation and you keep committing sins after that?
E: You back and you go into the little hut and you forgive all those sins.
I: What does the word sin mean to you?
E: It's bad stuff that you or somebody else has done.
I: Can you give me an example of a sin?
E: Somebody bullying someone else and calling them names.
I: Why is that a sin?
E: Because you're calling someone a name and bullying them, and those people get really upset and then you get a bit sad because you've done something bad.

**Daniel's Interview**

Interviewer: Now I want you to know if you can't answer any questions today, you can say pass, and if you want to stop at any time, just let me know. OK?
Daniel: Hmmm.
I: So what was your favourite part of Kim's story?
D: When she stole the bubblegum.
I: Why was that your favourite part?
D: Because the shopkeeper didn't know.
I: Do you think she should've got in trouble?
D: No.
I: How did she feel when she didn't get into trouble?
D: Good.
I: Why?
D: Because she didn't get into trouble.
I: Did you feel the same as Kim in any parts of the story?
D: Nope.
I: Why?
D: I don't know.
I: Have you made your first Reconciliation?
D: Yes.
I: When did you make it?
D: Not last week but the week before on Wednesday.
I: OK. What did you have to do?
D: We had to practice for reconciliation and we needed to sing some songs and we needed to practice for when we went into the priest and all that.
I: Did you have any penance after Reconciliation, like a prayer?
D: Yes.
I: Why were you asked to say a prayer?
D: I don't know.
I: What did you have to do when you went into the priest?
D: We say some thing that you haven't told anyone before.
I: So, what sort of things?
D: Stuff that you've done wrong.
I: How did you feel before you went in?
D: Nervous.
I: And how did you feel when you came out.
D: Happy.
I: Why did you feel that?
D: Because I said a sin.
I: Why did saying a sin make you feel happy?
D: So I get rid of some sins.
I: What happens if you don't get rid of them?
D: Jesus will keep asking you them.
I: When does he ask you about them?
D: Mmmm... I don't know.

# APPENDIX 10

# LETTER OR THANKS

Dear (Principal),

This is a short note to thank you for allowing me to conduct my research regarding the Sacrament of Penance and the Rite of Reconciliation at your school. The children and teachers were most cooperative.

I hope to submit my honors thesis in July of 2004. It will be examined in the latter half of 2004. If you would like to view the completed work after examination, please contact me on 93672458.

Please pass my thanks on to staff and students for their participation in the study, and to parents for allowing their children to be involved.

Yours faithfully,

Janine Sanzone