

CHAPTER 6

RETRADITIONALISING MORAL
REGULATION: MAKING SENSE OF
CONTEMPORARY MORAL POLITICS

THE RETURN OF MORAL REGULATION?

The two previous chapters left the sexual purity and hygiene movements just after the First World War; from that vantage point moral regulation movements were on the wane. They did not disappear completely; indeed in one important respect they reached their single most important impact with the prohibition amendment to the American Constitution in 1919. Prohibition was in an important respect the culmination of the long nineteenth century; between 1890 and 1916 sixteen states had gone dry and it was the heightened wartime nationalism that was critical in tipping the balance in favour of prohibition. The focus on alcohol significantly deflected personnel and resources away from other moral reform projects, such that, when the prohibition experiment floundered in the 1920s and was ended in 1933, moral regulation had become increasingly conservative, concerned with a nostalgic 'good old days' of class deference, religious conformity, gender certainty and bourgeois respectability. The old legitimations for prescriptive moral codes couched in terms of social conformism no longer retained much influence over the working classes and sections of the middle classes were restless. In Britain the moral reform forces had dissipated during and immediately after the First World War. It would have been an eminently persuasive prognostication to conclude that such movements would fade away into the margins of conservative politics.

Moral politics did not disappear; rather it underwent a significant change in form. The trajectory was one in which issues of moral reform became deeply imbricated in the shift of social problems into the arena of state action. In this form moral reform became located within increasingly utilitarian discourses. For example, unmarried mothers

were still moralised, but their offspring were increasingly channelled into state-administered adoption regimes; they were stigmatised as illegitimate. The results of this socialisation of moralised social problems became encapsulated in 'the welfare state', which reached different levels and forms of state involvement in different jurisdictions. The extension of the range and scope of such governmentalisation of social problems expanded rapidly in the wake of the economic depression of the late 1920s and the exigencies of the Second World War.

To study these developments would require a much closer inspection of state practices, policies and institutions. Such an undertaking would disrupt the focus upon reform movements arising from within society. Accordingly the focus of this chapter is upon moral regulation movements from the 1970s onwards. Thus, as indicated earlier, the present chapter differs in important respects from those that precede it.

It does not purport to offer an analysis of the wide variety of moral regulation movements and projects that have appeared over the last three decades. Instead the focus is consciously restricted to pursue a comparison of recent movements with the sexual purity movements of the late nineteenth century.

By the 1960s 'social welfare' was being perceived by critiques, from both Left and Right, as a system of bureaucratic moralisation and disciplinarity. Welfare had become a profoundly paternalistic set of disciplinary practices operating to expand the production of disciplined bodies wedded to the requirements of the labour market and the reproduction of familial relations that generated useful citizens. In contrast to welfare's paternalism, the new hegemonic discourses of consumerism invoked 'choice', and the individual as 'consumer', to become the heart of the social imagination.¹

However, moral regulation did not remain encapsulated within this welfarist framework; to play a minor supporting role within the welfare apparatuses was not the final resting place of moral politics. This concluding chapter engages with the striking phenomenon of the rebirth or re-emergence of a vigorous and expanded realm of social movements pursuing a great diversity of moral regulation projects. Even as 'welfare' was undergoing its most rapid extension and expansion in the 1960s, there emerged 'new moralisations' from a fresh crop of social movements springing up from within civil society. At first many of these campaigns were attempts to reimpose sexual respectability, decorum and good manners on the cultural industries through campaigns to revitalise censorship or to implement self-censorship in films and TV, along with the more traditional battles over the theatre and literature. In the United States, Citizens for Decency Through Law pressed for tougher obscenity laws and initiated attacks on sexually explicit literature,

symbolised by the court battles over *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Tropic of Cancer*. Meanwhile in Britain, Mary Whitehouse and the National Viewers and Listeners' Association pursued a remorseless campaign against the BBC over 'bad language' and the amount of flesh exposed on screen. Such projects were instances of traditional conservative attempts to reinstate an old version of respectability. They sought to revalorise a sexuality confined within marriage that was private in the sense of something not spoken of and practised with the lights out. Explanations couched in terms of status anxiety or petty bourgeois repression are more than adequate to explain this genre of moral politics.

Yet less than two decades later these conservative projects were to re-enter the mainstream in the 1980s when they moved to centre stage as the radical politics of neo-liberalism, and in doing so reactivated the discourses of morality. This was classically exemplified by Margaret Thatcher's linking of individual responsibility and 'family values', which came to encapsulate a whole package of moral projects. In order to understand this revitalisation of moral politics, I draw on Clifford Geertz's interesting contention that such conservative moral ideologies are not simply a return to traditionalism, but rather involve an "ideological retraditionalism" that is "an altogether different matter" from 'traditionalism' (Geertz 1973: 219). Unfortunately he does not flesh out what is distinctive about 'retraditionalisation', but I hope to be able to amplify this concept. I suggest that it should be understood as involving two key elements. First, it involves efforts to provide fresh grounds and justifications for projects to reinstate traditional forms of social relations and to respond to new and disturbing social changes that were exemplified in the demonisation of 'the sixties' and the 'permissiveness' that refused deference to religious authority or to social hierarchy. Second, and I suggest more important, is that 'retraditionalisation' advances a new configuration of social values.

The operation of this mechanism of retraditionalisation can be illustrated by examining Margaret Thatcher's reintroduction of 'family values'. While this process can be observed in other neo-liberal discourses, Thatcher has the advantage of being more explicit than others in her politics. This retraditionalisation is particularly evident in Thatcherism, more so than in Reagan's politics, because of her explicit assault on the traditional institutional power located within the quasi-aristocratic rulers of the Conservative Party (Letwin 1992). It is in this context that her espousal of 'enterprise culture' highlighted individual responsibility rather than faith in the blind forces of the market. We can make sense of one of Thatcher's most famous pronouncements: "There is no such thing as Society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" (1993: 626). She constructs 'families' as the primary

social unit, voluntarily entered into by autonomous parties equally capable of exercising responsibility and capable of cultivating robust virtues and initiative. The family is counterposed to the bureaucratic paternalism of the welfare state. While Thatcher was no feminist, neither did she espouse a return to the traditional family constituted around a male 'breadwinner' with a non-employed wife devoted to maternal tasks. Rather she presumed that marriage partners could work out for themselves the complex mix of parental duties and economic activities. It should be noted that this analysis entirely omitted any recognition of structural features of gender orders or of labour markets. The key feature is that Thatcherism exemplifies a 'retraditionalisation' in that her politics of the family is not reducible to the reinvocation of a traditional family (Wilson 1987).

Matters become more complex when we notice that Thatcher also explicitly invoked the authority of tradition. "Victorian values aren't Victorian; they're really, I think, fundamental eternal truths."² The tendency which Thatcher exemplified involved an enfolding of new content within traditional discourses, thereby adding, I suggest, an important component to our understanding of the mechanisms of 'ideological retraditionalisation'. Its importance is that the plausibility and legitimacy of moral discourses were powerfully augmented by the admixture of 'new' and 'old' elements in such a way as to paper over tensions and contradictions. Thatcher's invocation of 'responsible families' and 'Victorian values' avoids endorsing the Victorian sexual division of labour, while at the same time adding the authority of tradition and continuity to her message. This tendency of recent moral reform projects to combine 'old' and 'new' elements that are ultimately incompatible makes it unwise, if not impossible, to impose unidimensional categories such as 'conservative' or 'progressive', 'pro-sex' or 'anti-sex' on these movements.

Nowhere is this political ambivalence more evident than with respect to perhaps the most distinctive feature of moral reform over recent decades. Movements emerged which deployed discourses of moral regulation in the register of 'social transformation'; these movements barely cast a glance backwards over their shoulders. Their organisational forms, political rhetoric and style were unambiguously 'modern'. Most significantly, these movements spoke uncompromisingly in the name of a reinvigorated feminism, its 'second wave', characterised by an emphasis on the limits of formal political equality and on the persistence of continuing inequalities that reproduce gendered structures resulting in the systemic subordination of women.

The main objective of this chapter is to explore the relationships between these different strands of moral reform. They sometimes

coalesce and at other times take different trajectories. In order to accomplish this task, I will not attempt to provide a detailed account of the multiple movements that form the topography of contemporary moral regulation. Instead of a detailed examination of a myriad of organisations, I will offer a comparative account of moral regulation projects over the last three decades. My reason, aside from the fact that a full mapping would itself require a book-length treatment, is that much of that map will already be familiar to readers and that this task has been undertaken by others.³

EXPLAINING MORAL REGULATION

In turning attention to our own period, we confront two distinct problems, which, though they appear different, are, I will argue, manifestations of the same difficulty. The problem is how to avoid the temptation to lapse into what has rather clumsily come to be called ‘presentism’, that is, the tendency to privilege the presumed uniqueness of our current circumstances. One aspect is the temptation, that is strongly represented throughout the tradition of social theory, that accentuates ‘our’ difference from that which has gone before. The most significant manifestation that impinges on my current concerns is the idea that the modern history of ‘developed’ societies has undergone a process of individualisation which has created the modern subject.⁴ The version that has been influential in accounts of the trajectory of projects of moral regulation suggests that there has been a fundamental shift from attempts to impose external codes of behaviour to projects that seek to stimulate self-governance. In short, this view argues for a long-run shift from the ‘governance of others’ to the ‘governance of the self’. Nor should we too readily accept another version of the presentist thesis that claims that the twentieth century has seen morality displaced as a disciplinary technique by the onward march of medicalisation and the ‘medical gaze’. As I have argued with respect to both the United States and Britain in the nineteenth century, medical discourses on sexuality did not simply replace moral discourses, but rather distinctive versions of medico-moral discourses came to predominate.

The opposite, but essentially similar, trend is one that focuses attention on the continuity and the persistence of what went before in order to trace it into the present.⁵ In its most influential form, such an account invokes the idea that there has been a return or historical reprise. This model takes the form of a thesis that moral regulation movements undergo a sequential transition from attempts at persuasion only to end by promoting coercion; such a model is exemplified by Blocker’s (1989) account of the temperance–prohibition movements in the United

States. With respect to accounts of the history of moral regulation, its most common expression is the contention that ‘second-wave’ feminism has ‘returned’ to the theory and politics of ‘first-wave’ feminism in so far as it has pursued a strategy that has revived the purity politics of the nineteenth century.

It is important to insist that neither of these two related explanatory strategies is ‘wrong’; there is much evidence that can be adduced to support both views. My point is a rather different one: the alternative approach which I will seek to amplify is one that refuses to adopt either of the two *a priori* explanatory models. Rather I will attend to the complex of ways in which human dispositions have been formed and conduct governed in different historical periods. This involves attention to the interaction between the different forms of authority, of expertise, of truth, and the techniques and tactics employed.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, I distinguish my position from two interpretations of the case being argued which I consciously seek to avoid. First, I am not arguing against any possibility of social explanation by espousing relativism, insisting that everything is contingent, that each and every event has its own unique contextual conditions. Nor do I want to be read as suggesting that ‘nothing changes’. Current moral regulation projects are, I insist, different from those of earlier periods. Rather I will defend the claim that they are different because they exhibit a different configuration of components, even though they share features of earlier Victorian movements. Thus, for example, I will stress that the greatly enhanced significance of recent projects of self-governance, which draw their resources from the psychological discourses, does not mean that self-governance is ‘new’. As I have stressed in previous chapters, a central feature of Victorian moral politics was less a matter of external coercion, but more significantly directed at the project of ‘self-control’ of the middle classes. The techniques employed and the discourses mobilised allow us to distinguish between different forms or styles of self-governance.

Projects of moral regulation involve participants who actively seek to chart and engage with social problems perceived and experienced as problematic or dangerous.⁶ Moral reformers are social explorers; this was especially the case in the nineteenth century, when they ventured out into the streets and, like their compatriots exploring the jungles of ‘darkest Africa’, they penetrated the hovels inhabited by the poor, the brothels of the prostitutes and the drinking establishments frequented by the lower orders.⁷ Today’s research undertakings are not experienced as so dangerous, although participant observation studies of the under-classes still retain a frisson of voyeurism. These explorations generate social topographies whose basic components map morals against the

central repertoire of class, gender, criminality and disease. For example, the diverse techniques deployed by the psy complex generate new topographies of conduct and disposition and also make use of new techniques of therapeutic intervention. These techniques of the expert governance of the self are reinforced by claims to scientific justification. The techniques are more extensive than those available to the Victorians, who had to make do with stern regimes of the reading of religious texts and practices of self-scrutiny and introspection that were coupled with doses of exhortation backed by warnings of dire consequences, as when the juvenile masturbator was threatened with insanity and early death. It is important to note that the social location of experts changes. The older forms of authority sustained by unitary professional bodies certified by the state have been undermined by a pluralisation of experts. This process is well captured by Bauman's contention that today's experts and intellectuals cease to be 'legislators' and are now merely 'interpreters' (1987). As a result, individuals are increasingly required to choose their own preferred 'expertise' and to take responsibility and for their own "self-constitution" (1992b: 201–4).⁸

Not only do the discourses and the techniques available vary over time, but so too does their relationship to formal institutions and the apparatuses of the state. It is by now clear that moral regulation has long been predominantly a field of voluntary action coming, if not from 'below', at least from the 'middle'.⁹ Such activities were rarely formally co-ordinated, but they were brought together and acquired a semblance of coherence through the generation of discursive formations: for example, in the nineteenth century through the networks formed by projects of 'character' and 'self-control', where the 'will' was trained to exercise restraint over conduct. The changes in the regimes of self-governance did not simply replace some earlier version, but rather injected or enfolded new forms of authority and expertise into the practices of the self. It is for this reason that I have insisted that moral regulation is not simply a matter of social control of the dangerous classes, by stressing that such projects significantly engaged with the self-formation of significant categories such as young middle-class men, professional women and respectable mothers. It should be borne in mind that these projects were far from homogeneous and coexisted with counter-discourses. Thus a plurality of moral discourses and voices is not only an attribute of the present. What is new is that the truths and techniques produced a shift from 'vice' and 'sin' to contemporary concerns with 'addictions' and 'abuse'.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries new authorities have gradually colonised the practices and rationalities of self-fashioning, self-formation and self-management.¹⁰ A key feature of the

twentieth century has been the 'governmentalisation' of the linkages between the governance of others and governance of the self. Rather than being alternative strategies of moral reform – disciplinary governance of others *versus* the self-reform of the will – the relation between these components is both intentional and linked: for example contemporary anti-smoking strategy employs self-help techniques for 'quitting', medical innovations, dire health warnings from experts, along with disciplinary practices that have shrunk the spaces that the smoker may inhabit. These techniques and tactics come together to produce an intense moralisation of tobacco consumption, one of the most salient features being a class moralisation which increasingly associates smoking with defective self-care and a lack of cultural sophistication. Every area of moral regulation exhibits a distinctive combination of techniques of governance. For this reason I counsel caution before adopting a one-dimensional explanatory model such as that offered by appeal to 'medicalisation' or 'psychologisation'.

More generally it is important to avoid the seductions offered by theorists of modernity. While such theories take a number of forms, a common feature identifies a shift in the form of relations between a deepening individualisation and a weakening or fragmentation of relations with others, an increasing distance between a sovereign individual and community. The most influential versions link modernity and individuality, embracing themes of secularisation, rationalisation, de-traditionalisation and reflexivity.¹¹ One version of this account pertinent to an understanding of the place of moral regulation is Baumgartner's (1988) thesis that modernism is associated with a "moral minimalism" of the suburbs ('Don't get involved', 'It's not my business'). Such a position makes it extremely puzzling how it comes to be that significant numbers of the relatively secure inhabitants of the suburbs have come to be mobilised by moral campaigns around such targets as child abuse, pornography and sexual choice. There is little mystery about how such issues become part of the lexicon of the modern moral politics of the conservative and fundamentalist religious wings as a manifestation of the revolt against modernism and secularism (Kepel 1994; Marty & Appelby 1991–94).

For this reason, I will focus my attention on the participation of sections of the intelligentsia and the professional and related strata. Not only is this more difficult to explain, but it is from these constituencies that new content and form have been injected into moral regulation projects. However, we should not rule out the possibility that such social groups are affected by some anti-modernist currents. For example, it may help to explain the attraction of the new moral politics for those women, now a declining minority, who are outside the labour market

and for whom mothering is a central component of identity, and who have responded to feminist valorisation of mothering since it defends and legitimises that self-identity (Chodorow 1978).¹² But significantly it valorises maternity in a 'new' form; it no longer seeks to ennoble the 'housewife', but rather links such women not only to single mothers, but more importantly to the economic and social interests of working mothers. However, we should, I suggest, rule out the idea that middle-class employed women have been experiencing a significant decline in their social status; thus 'status anxiety' accounts suggesting that declining social groups exhibit symptoms of *ressentiment* will be of little help.¹³ Similarly it leads me to reject Bourdieu's thesis that moral revolts can be explained as emanating from "declining fractions of the petty bourgeoisie" (1984: 435). This approach is unable to explain the part played by the core constituencies of what may be designated as the modernist moral reformers, the most important category being the radical feminists, who are so prominent in many of today's moral reform projects. While their rise in academic, administrative and business enterprises has not been without major battles, they are indisputably on the social and economic ascendancy.

These considerations lead directly to the question: what, if anything, is 'new' about current projects of moral regulation? And in particular, what does contemporary feminism contribute to these projects? As I have indicated above, my answer will require me to distinguish my position from a familiar line of thought which argues that the overtly anti-sexual current in contemporary moral politics represents a reversion to the doctrine of separate spheres and the maternal feminism of the late nineteenth century and as such amounts to a 'new Victorianism'.¹⁴ Moral reformers today, both conservatives and feminists, share with the Victorian purity reformers a view of sex as an inherently dangerous force and also share an anti-hedonism in so far as 'pleasure' is not valorised as a significant human aspiration. Relying on a rigid bipolar construction of masculinity and femininity, both strands have become increasingly hostile to liberal values of choice and diversity.¹⁵ This analysis comes in a variety of forms. Its two most commonly encountered variations are one that posits a 'grand regress', a *fin de siècle* rediscovery of Victorian virtues, and another positing an oscillation that has swung from Victorianism to the 'permissiveness' of the 1960s and is now, like a pendulum, moving back towards a period of restraint.

To avoid lapsing into some version of a cyclical account of moral reform projects, I will propose a 'crisis theory' in which the occurrence of an upsurge of attempts to institute moral regulation is a manifestation of some identifiable 'crisis' in some field of social relations or institutions. By crisis I understand the existence of strains or tensions within

some social field such that it becomes increasingly problematic for people to continue in the way to which they have been accustomed. This condition is likely to be both a 'crisis of governing', in which it becomes increasingly difficult to continue to rule in the same way, and a 'crisis of authority', in which existing forms of legitimacy of rule are questioned and challenged by those subject to them. The existence of a crisis condition involves a disruption of that which is taken for granted, or, in Gramscian terminology, manifests itself in a crisis of 'common sense' when that which 'everybody knows' is no longer stable. The existence of a crisis expresses itself at the level of the consciousness of social actors as a crisis of identity, since they are no longer able or willing to continue in patterns to which they were accustomed.

Some caution is needed in addressing 'crisis'; there is a risk of crisis inflation, of treating social features that exist in near permanent tension as being in 'crisis' so as to lose the distinctive sense of the periodic and convulsive nature of crisis. As a partial safeguard against this problem I will speak of 'crisis tendencies', disturbances that have the potential to give rise to crisis situations (Offe 1984). Such crisis tendencies will manifest themselves in full-blown crises where some combination of conditions amplifies their impact and where some specific circumstances provide the spark which mobilises social action. The circumstance which ignites action around a combination of crisis conditions may not itself be a direct manifestation of the underlying crisis. On the basis of these general reflections on the mechanism of social crises, it is now time to identify the more important crisis tendencies.

CRISIS TENDENCIES AND MORAL REGULATION

The period from the end of the Second World War to the present has witnessed a profound and wide-ranging reconsideration of the problem of government, one of whose major manifestations has been the crisis of the welfare state. This has been experienced much more sharply in Britain and much of Europe, where the welfarist system of governing had developed more fully, than in the United States. The crisis of welfare should not be understood, as much contemporary political discourse presents it, as a ubiquitously negative phenomenon. The crisis lies precisely in the clash between the aspirations to govern more and to govern less. The expansion of the realm of governmental action stimulated by demands that 'something should be done' is a manifestation of the technical possibility of bringing more aspects of life under attempts of conscious control. The crisis of the welfare state is an expression of the exponential social costs of providing for such an expanding sphere of intervention. This inflation of regulation is not readily reversible and

explains the meagre achievements of the political rhetoric of 'deregulation'. Yet strong counter-tendencies have come to the fore that are not reducible to a reversion to an unrestrained economic market. Their general features involve a desire for less bureaucracy and less centralism, for decentralisation, making services and resources more accessible to users, and for autonomy, for greater self-sufficiency and self-fashioning (Rosanvallon 1988). There is a crisis because, while it was once possible to provide an equal access by all to some essential but limited social goods such as health care and education, it is not possible to guarantee unlimited access for all to services that are both more extensive and increasingly expensive.

This crisis expresses itself in wide-ranging conflicts over the scope of social governance. A demand is generated to use the expanded capacity to govern in order to achieve greater social justice, for example, by acting against discrimination on grounds of gender, race or sexual orientation. Yet at the same time resistance manifests itself to such expansions of the aspiration to govern whose major expressions take the form of anti-taxation movements and the desire to restrict the scope and intrusiveness of regulation. In the arena of moral regulation the result has been the angry struggles over what has come to be called the 'culture wars' (Gitlin 1995; Hunter 1991). It needs to be emphasised that the contention that the reprise of moral regulation today is a manifestation of the crisis of governability does not imply that there is a crisis of social order; too often in both historical and sociological literature a 'crisis' has been equated with 'disorder', while in fact disorder is only one of many forms in which crises may display themselves. In late modernity the experience of increased security intersects with heightened perceptions of risk and the experience of anxiety. In this respect 'crises' become a 'normal' part of life, but take on distinctive forms.

The angry struggles of the cultural wars involve a significant distinction between today's moral politics and earlier varieties of moral regulation projects. In previous chapters I have attended to evidence of resistance or opposition to attempts to impose moral regulation. In general resistance was limited and largely inarticulate. Thus, Londoners in the 1790s may have impeded or even attacked the agents of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, but there was little persuasive criticism of their moral reform programme. Similarly in the Victorian period, in both Britain and the United States the ideals of chastity and purity were rarely disputed. But today projects of moral reform are contested and become arenas in which fierce political and cultural battles are fought out, often between erstwhile allies, the most striking illustration being the contest within feminists between pro- and anti-censorship positions. No sooner does a new panic emerge than it is

contested; as McRobbie observes, today "folk devils can and do 'fight back'" (1994: 201). One consequence of the contestability of moral regulation is that individual campaigns tend to be short-lived; they arise with often inflammatory and widely dispersed publicity before stimulating opposition and then receding into localised guerrilla wars.¹⁶

The contested life of recent moral regulation projects is well illustrated by significant phases of the movement around child abuse. Concern with 'cruelty to children' emerged in the 1870s as an offshoot of the cruelty to animals movement.¹⁷ Since then there has been an important shift from the focus on 'cruelty to children' to 'child abuse' (Hacking 1991; Jenkins 1992). The key feature of this transition was that 'cruelty' had been organised around a class moralisation; it was the uncivilised lower orders who were cruel to their children. In contrast, 'abuse' is stripped of class referents; it is a generic condition of relations between parents and children and, most often, between fathers and children. Action around child abuse has taken many forms. For example, in Britain during 1987, paediatricians in Cleveland using a new and controversial diagnostic technique claimed that a high percentage of young children passing through the health system had been subject to sexual abuse. They were backed by local social workers, who used their powers to remove the children from their parents. There ensued an intense controversy that was taken up in the national media in which local politicians, journalists, doctors, social workers and others lined up on opposite sides. Significantly the parents faced with the accusation of sexual abuse fought back and organised a counter-campaign. The controversy was significant because it generated multiple and incompatible targets: hostility was directed towards 'abusing parents', 'meddling doctors', 'do-gooding social workers' (Ashenden 1996; Campbell 1988; McIntosh 1988).

During the same period in the United States, the controversies over child abuse took a different turn. The controversy over 'multiple personality' syndrome, which had attracted considerable interest in the popular media, took a new turn when exponents alleged that 'multiples' had frequently been abused during childhood, adding a whole new moral dimension to the diagnostic debate by constructing 'abusive parents' as the target. Rival organisations battled for public attention, mobilising competing 'victims', so that 'abused multiples' and parents who were the 'victims of false memory syndrome' were forced to confront one another (Hacking 1995).¹⁸

These different trajectories in Britain and the United States were to converge for a period when the issue of child abuse merged with charges of 'ritual abuse' and 'Satanism' that reached their peak in 1989. Significantly these allegations were mobilised by a tacit alliance of Christian

fundamentalists and prominent feminists; in Britain the religious Right shared the platform with Beatrix Campbell, who had earlier been a highly visible socialist feminist (Jenkins 1992: Chapter 6). Children had long been significant in moralising discourses because the association between 'children', victimisation and innocence was deeply imbricated in popular culture. They still figure as classic 'innocent victims' in an expanding range of scandals that revolve around abuse of power such as the widespread abuses by Catholic priests, and those involving teachers and administrators in a variety of residential establishments in many countries, and a widening array of sports coaches, youth leaders and others. Most dramatically fitting the model of a 'moral panic' has been the near universal reaction against the possibility of sexual contact between adults and children that has concretised around the label paedophile.¹⁹

If today's moral reform projects are part of a deep ambivalence about the scope of governance, and this expresses itself in the contestability of such projects, it is not surprising that many of these conflicts will revolve around issues of sex and sexuality. The most important feature that provides a bridge between the late Victorian period and the close of the twentieth century is a profound crisis of gender relations and of family relations. It is around these linked relations of gender and family that the key differences between our two pivotal periods revolve.

CRISES IN GENDER RELATIONS

My account of the changing form of family and gender relations can best be presented as a reformulation of Lawrence Stone's influential periodisation of the family. Stone identifies a transition from a 'restricted patriarchal nuclear family' to a 'closed domesticated nuclear family', characterised by "strong affective ties" between husbands and wives, that comes to the fore in the eighteenth century (Stone 1977). My contention is that the closed domesticated nuclear family, although it existed as the ideal in the earlier period, could not establish itself even in the nineteenth century, because patriarchal relations still dominated family relations and furthermore the exclusion of women from public life was reinforced by the practices and ideology of domesticity. The Victorian crisis of the family involved dual challenges to patriarchal power and exclusion from the public sphere. The Victorian feminist challenge to patriarchy proved to be what Barrington Moore has termed a 'suppressed historical possibility', an unrealised project because it was fought out within the terms of a maternal feminism that accepted the very practices of the separate spheres and the valorisation of the maternal role that sustained familial patriarchy (Moore 1978). Purity feminism, as

we have seen, was incapable of mounting a viable challenge. Victorian feminism was much more successful in its challenge to the exclusion of women from the public sphere; painfully slow though those advances were, the struggles for educational and legal rights, and for suffrage, were decisive.

While second-wave feminism learnt that neither education nor the vote automatically ensured that public roles and spaces would open, the core of its struggles has been to explore the territory beyond a gendered 'closed domesticated nuclear family'. The ideal of companionate interpersonal relations between women and men required challenges to the persisting inequalities, structural and attitudinal, that stood in the way of providing the possibility of companionate relations for all.²⁰ The key substantive arena for feminist politics of the late twentieth century has revolved around an issue that was entirely absent from the discourses of Victorian feminism, namely, the question of domestic violence, sexual violence and rape (Walkowitz 1982). This silence was in itself significant; it certainly did not mean that such violence was absent, nor did it mean that it was simply taken for granted as a prerogative of patriarchal power. The issue that came closest to engaging with the exclusive rights of patriarchy was the question of the frequency of sexual relations within marriage. As we have seen, purity activists, feminist and non-feminist, urged that sex be severely limited and restricted to procreative functions. For the Victorians, the frequency of sex was not about 'marital rape', but was about the control of family size and the frequency of pregnancies, and thus about the assertion of female control of these issues.

The 'modern' question of domestic and sexual violence goes to the heart of the conditions of possibility for companionate relations between women and men. In an important respect it re-presents the question of 'purity' that had been posed by late Victorian feminism, but it raises it in a new form. It addresses individual self-governance by men, not only posing challenges about appropriate forms of conduct, but also problematising attitudes and values. The content of the Victorian purity discourses was about premarital chastity, extramarital behaviour and resort to prostitutes. Until recently the central issues revolved around behaviour within relationships; more recently this has been made more complex as one of the reverberations of the AIDS epidemic.

Feminist interventions have not always presented themselves in the form of challenges to male self-governance. While there has been much attention to the centrality of 'domestic' violence, this thrust has been undercut by the tendency to construct women as 'victims'. This has had two problematic consequences. First, it implies a retreat to the presentation of sexual danger as emanating from the anonymous stranger, the rapist, and this in turn is amplified by radical feminism's presentation of

all men as potential rapists (Russell 1993), or, as Robin Morgan famously put it, “pornography is the theory; and rape the practice” (1980: 139). Second, the victim status of women leads to a focus on ‘danger’ that incapacitates women from realising personal self-determination, whether it be in engaging in sexual relations with men or in being active in the complex array of public places and spaces. In its most significant form this trend beats a retreat from the transformative project of ‘liberation’ which was the central feature of the revival of feminist politics in the 1960s; instead it retreats to the same political space colonised by Victorian feminism, namely, that of a politics of ‘protecting women’. The polarisation within feminism that has resulted from the controversies over the content of liberation led to a similar retreat to the one that had earlier been travelled by purity feminism. This time the move was not back to the valorisation of female passivity and domesticity, but rather to a rejection of sexual liberation itself, as something that merely furthers male sexual licence. Thus one major strand of modern feminism has become profoundly suspicious of the sexual and erotic realm.

As a consequence, one of the most significant areas of contestation has been over sexual representations. Reflecting the changing technologies of reproduction and dissemination, the targets of moral regulation have shifted over time. The main targets had earlier been printed sexual images and words (designated by the term ‘obscenity’).²¹ These targets were superseded, first by photographic images, then by video films and more recently by electronic communications (with a corresponding shift to the term ‘pornography’). One of the key differences between the nineteenth-century battles over obscenity and the recent ones around pornography is that resistance to censorship has been vociferous and, in particular, has sharply divided the feminist constituency.

The feminist anti-pornography campaign both replicates and departs from the earlier censorship of obscenity. The replication manifests itself by treating the pornographic image as inherently dangerous. In Chapter 4 we encountered Comstock’s imagery of the dreadful consequences that befell the eye of the juvenile beholder; one glimpse of a sexual image would lead the observer into the depths of depravity. While such thinking still resonates in current conservative rhetoric, in the feminist anti-pornography movement there have been two distinct discourses surrounding sexual imagery. First, the danger of the image is rendered more plausible, one glance is no longer sufficient; instead – harnessing the wider preoccupation with addiction – it is a surfeit of pornography which is presented as leading the consumer towards the commission of sexual offences. Such a causal connection is notoriously elusive, its most significant effect – which some have been prepared to treat as confirmatory evidence – being that it has provided the sex offender with an

exculpatory discourse of blaming the pornographic image for the offence. A similar mechanism is at work with respect to the contention that pornography itself encourages violence against women; this is exemplified in the ‘snuff movie’ myth that arose in the late 1970s with claims about the existence of Mexican snuff movies in which women were killed in front of the camera. It was the publicity which this attracted that resulted in a low-budget horror movie that had been made some years earlier being released under the title *Snuff* (1975), with extra scenes depicting the murder of an actress.

The second feminist anti-pornography discourse centres on the claim that the very existence of pornography is degrading and thus damaging to women. It is interesting that the rhetoric of degradation deploys an old theme that sexual desire is itself a degraded condition. This theme is given a supplement with the idea that sex is especially degrading to women. Thus to be an overtly sexual being is degrading; to give and to receive sexual pleasure is to be degraded. The radical feminist discourse provides a modern encapsulation of this theme with the contention that brands heterosexual practices as inherently degrading. In this scenario oral sex has a special place; it is presumed that oral sex is inherently degrading for women.²² This is, of course, a return to a very ancient view that specific acts can be classified as innately right or wrong. These discourses imply that women share a single sexual nature. As such not only does this misrepresent female sexuality, but it displays a hostility to sexual diversity that amounts to an insistence that ‘good girls don’t’ (watch sex videos, wear high heels, dress sexily, etc.). The rhetoric of degradation is significant in that it operates to create a climate of sexual shame. Carol Smart demonstrates the rhetorical reliance on ‘testimony’ of experience of pornography of the form: ‘after he started using porn, my husband wanted me to do disgusting things’. This naturalises the sense of sexual shame by reinforcing the presupposition that the visual representation of genital sexual conduct is inherently degrading (Smart 1992).²³

The policing of sexual diversity reached new heights with the ‘discovery’ of sexual addiction, which renders deviant everything but monogamous sex (Irvine 1995). It is thus not surprising that lesbian feminism exhibits a marked polarity between those whose main focus is to attack heterosexuality and those concerned to celebrate sexual diversity. It is for this reason that the controversy within lesbian feminism over sexual representations has been the most inflamed.

The campaign against pornography took a significant turn in the 1980s with the move, led by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, to secure municipal anti-pornography ordinances. In Minneapolis in 1983 an ordinance was passed in Council, but was vetoed by the

Mayor. In Indianapolis, a much more conservative purity movement in alliance with MacKinnon feminists secured a similar ordinance.²⁴ The ordinance strategy showed an awareness of the tactical disadvantages of the strategy of the older tradition of criminalising sexual representations. MacKinnon insisted that anti-pornography ordinances were not an attempt to impose moral laws (MacKinnon 1984). In an astute tactical move, she sought to link her proposed legislation to the influential civil rights discourses involving opposition to discrimination on the basis of race, religion or sex. The ordinances asserted that pornography discriminates against women on the basis of sex by promoting negative images and representations of women. Yet the substantive proposals marked a significant return to an earlier phase of 'abatement' laws that had been used at the end of the nineteenth century against brothels. The proposals would have allowed any female citizen to initiate actions against distributors of pornography. This legal tactic also served to reinforce the ideological claim that pornography was a harm to all women, hence any woman should be able to initiate legal proceedings. The rejection of such legislation by the courts in the United States, invoking the doctrine of free speech, turned the tide against these legislative projects.²⁵ There was a marked shift of opinion within most feminist constituencies against the censorship strategy. In 1991 the National Organisation of Women rejected a proposal to launch an anti-pornography campaign and Women Against Pornography collapsed.

Meanwhile in Britain, anti-pornography feminism acquired a rather different form of political influence. It secured some support on the left of the Labour Party, but at a time when Margaret Thatcher was at her strongest, Labour was in disarray and had little opportunity for legislative action. It is significant that Thatcher, who made much of the promotion of 'family values', seems never to have been attracted to the promotion of censorship legislation; but there were some minor legislative changes. For example in 1981 an *Indecent Display (Control) Act* was passed, imposing restrictions on the advertising of sexually explicit material and instituting warning labelling on sexual materials. In the late 1980s fresh attempts were made to promote anti-pornography legislation. A key role was played by Clare Short, a Labour MP with left-wing credentials, but the project foundered when her scarcely veiled alliance with the Christian Right became apparent.

In both Britain and the United States the major legacy of the anti-pornography campaigns was a pervasive and strongly moralised hostility to sexual representation. It has more recently sprung back into life, significantly with much more governmental involvement and legislative enthusiasm, over the issue of pornography in cyberspace. The distinctive element in the current anti-pornography movement is the invocation of

the protection of children. Appeals to the 'protection of innocence' now, as before, have created a more favourable environment for coercive forms of regulation. Of decisive importance is the fact that children are invoked as being in need of protection in a double sense: as both objects of pornographic depiction and as potential viewers of pornography. This is a classic instance of the power of convergence of multiple targets. Convergence occurs when two or more activities are linked in the process of signification so as, implicitly or explicitly, to draw parallels between them. Where convergence between two or more social elements occurs, the possibility is created for a process of amplification in which the significance of the threat or danger is increased or enhanced, with the result that:

One kind of threat or challenge to society seems larger, more menacing, if it can be mapped together with other apparently similar phenomena . . . As issues and groups are projected across the thresholds, it becomes easier to mount legitimate campaigns of control against them (Hall et al. 1978: 225–6).

The struggle over censorship has left unresolved important issues surrounding adult sexuality and its representation. Most importantly it has deflected attention from the future of heterosexual desire and its expression. This issue has remained alive within the left wing of feminism exemplified by Ehrenreich et al. (1986) and Segal (1997), and men strongly influenced by feminism such as Connell (1995) and Seidman (1992). A similar concern with what Connell calls the democratisation of sex is evident in the polemical voices of Rene Denfeld (1995) and Marcia Pally (1994), who have challenged the sexual conservatism of radical feminism. The crux of these debates is the conditions for the empowerment of women as agents of heterosexual desire. It is crucial to move beyond the misplaced concreteness of the anti-pornography feminist view that 'ending' pornography would end subordination and sexual violence (Snitow 1986). To do so requires a very different debate about the relationship between sexuality and sexual representation.

Yet the argument that the conditions exist for the democratisation of sex as an important component of the completion of the unfinished project of equality has to note the existence of a line of thought which presents a pessimistic vision of the future of intimacy. There is a bleak one-sidedness to the focus on the retreat into privatism, narcissism and the transitoriness of self-realisation within the monogamous family (Lasch 1975; Sennett 1974). Anthony Giddens offers a more nuanced vision, less bleak but attending to serious impediments to a positive outcome of the crisis of gender relations, whose general form is an

erosion and destabilisation of gender boundaries. Modernity produces a transformation of intimacy through the pursuit of and commitment to personal relationships.²⁶ While such relationships are arenas of doubt and anxiety, they are nevertheless the key to understanding current projects of self-fashioning (Giddens 1991: 186). He subsequently argues that sexuality, once separated from reproduction, is freed – in principle – from the rule of the phallus and the sexual control of women. It is this decline in male control that gives rise to a rising tide of male violence stemming from insecurity and inadequacy; this analysis rejects the idea that there has existed a seamless continuation of patriarchal dominance. Rather violence is a destructive reaction to the waning of female complicity (Giddens 1992: 122). Care is needed to ensure that this line of argument does not become a rationalisation for male violence.²⁷

This approach can perhaps most fruitfully be developed by focusing on the governmentalisation of gender boundaries. This requires attention to the multiple ways in which structural aspects of gender are viewed as becoming capable of being governed and are made objects of attempts at their governance by a variety of agents. For example, during the 1980s feminists were successful in both Britain and the USA in making rape and serial murder manifestations of sexual danger and proper arenas for governance action, ranging in scope from street demonstrations to ‘Reclaim the Night’ and the opening of ‘rape crisis centres’ to legislative interventions in the field of domestic violence. At the same time there has been a periodic eruption of concern over the link between serial killings and sexual violence. For example, in Britain the multiple murders between 1975 and 1980 of Peter Sutcliffe, the ‘Yorkshire Ripper’, heightened concern with sexual danger. Further amplifications have occurred because the police had an institutional interest in creating national structures focused on serial murders and child abuse which have led to the establishment of computerised data bases and special units. Such responses have constituted a significant process of the governmentalisation of sexual danger.

At the level of interpersonal relations, changes occur in what participants regard as acceptable expressions of gendered identities; of crucial importance here is Giddens’ point about the decline of complicity. This is complex because those limits, while constitutive of gendered identities, are themselves produced by unequal gendered relations. At the level of institutional contexts, the complex of behaviours that stretches from insensitive and blundering conduct to coercive harassment is central to the way in which gender relations are governed in workplaces and other public spaces. These fields have been subject to a long-running process of juridification as rules, procedures and hearings become more formal. The boundaries of what is acceptable and what

can be challenged mark out the shifting terrain of the governance of gender relations. It is important to insist that, with sexual relations being substantively divorced from marriage and procreation and from any sense of ‘natural’ sex roles, the result is that sexuality increasingly becomes ‘a mystery’ that is revisited and remade in everyday life.

It is only in the context of engaging with these issues of the governance of gender relations that Giddens’ hope of the possibilities of the transformation of intimacy involving a “wholesale democratising of the interpersonal domain” might be realised (1992: 3). While it is important to imagine what such relations could be like, we can observe that projects that are directed at the retraditionalisation of gender relations can only work within an already existing set of discursive components characterised by the maintenance of gendered polarities. For this reason many such efforts present themselves as anti-sexual and/or anti-heterosexual. Few have engaged in the transformative imagination which will resolve the content of democratised sexual relations.

CRISES IN FAMILIAL RELATIONS

Alongside and interwoven with the tensions that beset contemporary gender relations is a pronounced set of concerns about relations between adults and children, in particular between parents and their children. Unresolved and often unstable interpersonal relations are further compounded by a set of discourses invoking both a sacralisation and a demonisation of children. A profound paradox lies at the convergence of regulatory projects directed towards the ‘protection’ of the ‘innocence’ of children with a conjuncture in which the innocence of children has itself become increasingly problematic. These contradictory manifestations need to be placed within the context of some important social changes that have affected the relations between parents and children. There has been a return to a prolonged period of dependence with the extension of the time spent in education. Yet at the same time the expansion of youth consumerism and the elaboration of youth cultures has heightened the demand for greater economic and personal autonomy.

In the recent period the moral status of children has become more ambiguous. I shall take as emblematic of this destabilisation of childhood innocence the murder in 1993 of the two-year-old toddler James Bulger, who was captured on a shopping mall security video being led away from the vicinity of his mother by two ten-year-old boys; his beaten body was later recovered. The subsequent media and court trial of the two boys, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables, saw the mobilisation of a set of discourses that spoke of a generalised crisis of family authority,

maternal responsibility and, hence, of the moral fabric of society (Hay 1995: 206). The case counterposed 'innocence' and 'evil', attributing responsibility to broken homes, irresponsible mothers, the harm of 'video nasties' and the breakdown of traditional morality. A distinctively American version of such parables of innocence and evil is provided by the rash of schoolyard shootings of classmates and teachers by children using lethal weapons.

There is nothing new, as we have seen, in eruptions of social anxiety surrounding childhood and adolescence. It is of course significant that the targets for such concerns have become younger. Two distinctive features mark contemporary misgivings. First is a generalised concern that parents have lost either the will or the capacity to control their children. The second is that those who pose the source of danger to children are no longer dangerous strangers, but treacherous intimates, parents themselves and those in positions of trust such as clergy, youth leaders, sports coaches and the like.

Through a long series of shifting policies 'the family' has remained at the centre of social intervention and social anxiety. By the early twentieth century the state had become centrally involved in the regulation of the family (Donzelot 1980; Rose 1989). Particularly since the Second World War, a web of legal powers, social agencies and practices began to spread around troubled and troublesome families. The general process has been the 'familialisation' of social policy, the central feature being a set of policies that operate "by inciting the family itself to take on board the business of production of normal subjects" (Rose 1989: 156). While powerful social forces induce young people to assert increased autonomy, moralising discourses assert the responsabilisation of parents for the conduct of their children.

There is an inherent tension in projects of familialisation; the family can only serve the expanding objectives of health, education and welfare as a voluntary activity. It cannot work through coercion and compulsion. Thus the focus has shifted to enlisting parents, and in particular mothers, in positive projects of child-raising. On the one hand, the tension is embedded in a contradiction at the heart of social policy, namely, an unstable oscillation between the construction of children as being 'in need of care and protection' and, in contrast, 'beyond parental control'. On the other hand, the family is perceived as the root cause of delinquency because of the inability, unwillingness or refusal of parents to engage in 'proper parenting' – one of the sharpest manifestations being the persistent concern over single mothers.

The family in crisis is less and less reliable as the primary agency for the production of normal well-adjusted citizens. But the celebration of the private family carries with it the difficulty, if not impossibility, of

regulating the family through mechanisms of social control and discipline. The only available strategy is one which promotes the self-realisation of responsible families through the mixed techniques of the construction of pleasures and ambitions, and at the same time the activation of guilt, anxiety and disappointment. For those falling outside this capacity for self-government, there remains the increasing deployment of dividing practices which impose disciplinary constraints on those excluded from the 'new respectability'. The content of this new respectability departs from the rigidly prescribed rules of Victorian respectability which was epitomised, but not subsumed by, the dictates of etiquette. The rules of respectability were inviolate and unyielding as exemplified in the rule that illegitimacy damned both mother and her offspring from 'society'.²⁸

The modern crisis of familial relations cannot be protected by respectability, since the dangers that threaten it are not only external, but can reside even in the 'normal family'. Nikolas Rose labels the ideal of 'the autonomous responsible family' as the emblem of a new mode of government of the self (Rose 1989: 208). But we must add that the 'autonomous responsible family' is beset by dangers – dangers of 'abusive relations' and a whole expanded array of 'addictions'. This is precisely the significance of the distinctively American discourses about the non-class character of negative relations, epitomised by the feminist contention that both spousal abuse and child abuse are distributed through all segments of society. Some care is needed not to take this contention too literally. Many of the discourses of transgression have a very distinctive class content. Many of the contemporary fields that are subjected to moral regulation have a distinctive class dimension. It is possible to resist John Burnham's conservative normative assessment and yet agree with his observation that 'bad habits' continue to have a distinctive association with the lower classes. The use of tobacco and alcohol, the refusal or inability to restrict food intake, and many other practices of consumption have increasingly become predominantly associated with the lower classes.

It is this duality of the crisis of the family – an endemic crisis of the family institution and an intensified crisis along class lines – which provides the parameters within which contemporary projects of moral regulation need to be approached.

MODERN ANXIETIES AND MORAL REGULATION

There is a widely shared view that the escalation of moral politics at the century's end is an expression of an intensification of 'social anxieties'. Thus, for example, Todd Gitlin (1995) explains the American 'culture

wars' as a response to anxieties over American identity. Such arguments reflect a longer tradition, which explains outbreaks of moral fervour as responses to deep social anxieties. For example, Kai Erikson (1966) explained the Salem witch trials as manifestations of the response to intense social anxieties. Richard Hofstadter (1955) accounted for outbreaks of "moral frenzy" over alcohol and prostitution in late nineteenth-century America in terms of the 'status anxiety' of the participants; and this tradition informed Joseph Gusfield's (1963) now classic explanation of the prohibition movement.

Such accounts, offering explanations in terms of 'social anxiety' that stimulates attempts at moral regulation, are attractive, and often intuitively convincing, but suffer from a serious limitation in that they claim to offer more explanatory power than they are able to deliver (Hunt 1999b). Anxiety analyses can only point in the direction of necessary conditions for an upsurge in moral politics, in that they lay the ground for a moral reform project. But an anxiety thesis cannot by itself provide an explanatory account of either the timing or the specific configuration of a moral reform campaign. The limitations of the explanatory capacity stem from the endemic nature of social anxiety; social life in modern societies, if not more generally, is beset by anxieties. The ubiquity of anxiety is one facet of the widely agreed diagnosis that has labelled modern society as a 'risk society' (Beck 1992). Thus anxieties are persistent or background features of social life; they can manifest themselves in a variety of ways, but the important point is that they do not always give rise to projects of moral regulation. In order to explain such occurrences something else, some supplement, is required.

We can, however, learn much from anxiety analysis if it is approached with appropriate caution. Throughout I have been concerned to identify general background conditions of social anxieties, such as the strains or tensions generated by rapid urbanisation, mass immigration and changing gender relations. These strains create the conditions to stimulate and provoke attempts to intervene. But such projects, as I hope to have demonstrated, will not materialise without the presence of the necessary agents of moral reform in the form of some moral regulation movement. Even where such a movement comes into existence, it will make little impact unless it is able to mobilise a discursive formation which has what can be called a combinatory capacity, that of mobilising a combination of elements which bring together (over time, place and field) a number of different strands of moralised discourses and perceptions. It is this capacity to establish linkages between current anxieties and the common sense of the period to produce a strategy which makes sense to

a potential political community of activists or supporters. Whether the principal target is the prevalence of Sunday trading in early eighteenth-century Britain or the visibility of prostitution in late nineteenth-century cities in both Britain and the United States, the links between these phenomena and other troublesome features of contemporary life have to make sense to significant constituencies. Only then can moral regulation movements become activated. Moral regulation becomes possible where some specific social anxiety serves to mobilise an array of different issues and alliances of disparate social forces. Thus it would seem that the otherwise paradoxical alliance between radical feminists and religious fundamentalists that has been mobilised around moral reform projects over the last two decades is not some oddity or some betrayal, but is rather a condition of existence for this distinctive form of modern politics.

Moral regulation movements are manifestations of an anxiety of freedom that haunts modern liberal forms of rule. Large urbanised masses live with no evident mechanism of unification and no shared values. Traditional authorities are no longer able to rule in the old way and social deference, whether of class, gender or ethnicity, is fragile. There is no 'natural' system of order. Formal education is conceived within a narrowing remit; projects of Durkheimian 'moral education', whether in schools or the media, have become attenuated. What is perceived as essential is that mechanisms of self-restraint/self-discipline should be generalised and disseminated. The mechanism of first choice is the family, but as we have seen, the family is increasingly fallible, while increasing awareness of social diversity impedes state legislative efforts at producing a public realm capable of and committed to enforcing a moral order which is conceived as a necessary condition for social order. Any such state projects have first to create a sense of alarm and danger, epitomised in the state war against drugs, which itself undermines the sense of social and moral order. Another non-state version of the project of moral order is to be found in the retraditionalisation that marks the most visible face of contemporary feminist moral reform and, less surprisingly, in the authoritarian traditionalism of the political and religious Right. But such projects meet with increasingly vocal opposition that radically distinguishes them from the normative consensus which was the context for the purity politics of the late nineteenth century. However, there is, as has been injected into my account, another mechanism that engages with the goal of moral order, and one that is becoming increasingly important in both its scope and its impact. Modern moral regulation is increasingly embedded within the liberal governance of the self.

MORAL REGULATION AND GENEALOGY OF THE SELF

The distinctive form of contemporary moral regulation is not the high-profile and contentious regulatory projects of the plethora of moral regulation movements, even though they remain a significant force. Today the decisive form of moral regulation is to be found in the pervasive spread of multiple projects of self-governance. In order to grasp the connection between modern self-governance and moral regulation, it is necessary to track the emergence of new forms of self-governance. A decisive feature of the changes in the government of the self during the twentieth century has been a move away from the system of welfare which sought directly to stimulate the self-monitoring and self-governance of citizens (Dean 1991; Donzelot 1980; Rose 1993). The system of welfare has been gradually displaced by a complex system of links between expert knowledge, economic and social resources and the government of the self in which

the ethical valorisation of certain features of the person – autonomy, choice, authenticity, enterprise, lifestyle – should be understood in terms of new rationalities of government and new technologies of the conduct of conduct (Rose 1996: 320).

These diverse techniques span a range of resources from psychological and other therapies to self-help regimes of dieting and behaviour modification that have infused the practices of many experts and authorities, from school-teachers to marriage guidance counsellors. These in turn have cultivated the moral self-regulation of the modern citizen. In brief, moral regulation is alive and well. It relies less on theology, but is more likely to employ the language of self-health, nutrition, medical science and proliferating forms of expertise ranging from modern quackery to high science. It remains profoundly moral in that its target is focused on the ethical subjectivity of the individual (Valverde 1994: 218).

These changing patterns in the form of the content of the government of the self are intimately connected to major shifts in the forms of political authority and the rationalities of governing. By the end of the nineteenth century the projects of liberal governance were increasingly targeted at the socio-economic realm that was acted upon by techniques which operated on the ‘family economy’ in order to reform the habits and morals of men and women, to support its members economically over the course of their lives, and to stimulate the raising of healthy children with a respect for authority. Increasingly these projects were pursued through techniques of ‘governing at a distance’ (Rose & Miller 1992). Modern liberal forms of government rely less and less on govern-

ing through ‘society’, but rather seek to stimulate and activate the controlled choices of individual citizens. This ‘advanced liberalism’ involves “the calculated administration of diverse aspects of conduct through countless, often competing, local tactics of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement” (Rose & Miller 1992: 175). In the first half of the twentieth century it was the new techniques of the psychological sciences which introduced new forms of expertise such as child guidance, intelligence testing and personnel management into the governance of the population (de Swaan 1990; Rose 1989). My concern is to stress the dimension of moral regulation practised by these experts: for example, the instilling of a work ethic has constructed hard work as a moral and social good which supplements the disciplinary techniques of timeclocks and productivity measures. In the field of social welfare there has been an inexorable growth of surveillance over families, in particular over working-class families.

Valuable though the neo-Foucauldian research conducted under the sign of ‘governmentality’ theory has been in charting the changing interpenetration and enfolding of the government of others with the government of the self, there remains a major omission that must now be addressed. The agents that are active in these accounts are threefold: governments, experts and individuals. In their present form they provide little opportunity to incorporate the role of social movements. Yet such movements are of crucial importance if we are to grapple with the significant fact that moral reform movements play a decisive part in the marked volatility of the moral politics of our period. What this study has demonstrated is the key role played by organised social movements in advancing and sustaining projects of moral regulation. The important point to be made in connection with the prevalence of moral self-regulation is that here again organised movements continue to play a crucial role.

The new forms of liberal governance have emerged in a period when governing has become increasingly technical and governmentalised, vested in the hands of experts. This tends, despite formal space for participation provided by liberal politics, to effect the practical exclusion of non-experts. Yet expertise is persistently reintroduced through a variety of different mechanisms. Sometimes this involves ‘non-experts’ training themselves to become experts or hiring experts of their own, as when trade union officers acquire technical knowledge of job evaluation systems. Of particular importance for my present concerns is self-help literature which provides alternative knowledge, as in the case of alternative medicine which allows people to become ‘experts for themselves’. Or individuals become ‘experts for each other’ as in many self-

help movements where, for example, rape victims become counsellors; such acquisition and dissemination of expertise is particularly evident in the many versions of the Twelve-Step programmes first developed within Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) (AA 1976; Reinerman 1995).

While there has been much attention to 'self-help', there has been inadequate attention to its moral regulation dimension. Self-help involves an incitement to self-regulation. As I have stressed at each stage, regulation and moralisation march hand in hand. Thus in the nineteenth century philanthropy acted through moralisation; in particular it sought to instil the responsabilisation of men as 'breadwinners' and women as 'mothers'. In self-help movements the voice of the outsider non-expert is reinserted in the form of the 'moral voice' that is such a significant component of the plethora of self-help movements that populate the modern landscape of moral action. The moral voice was present in the discourses of philanthropy when middle-class women instructed working-class women on how to make 'nourishing soups'. Today it is present within the practical advice proffered by advice manuals and self-help movements; the injunction to monitor and record the amount of exercise taken or calories consumed is this quiet nagging voice of moral regulation. Self-help is one of the new techniques that has been invented, or perhaps more accurately, continuously reinvented, for the government of the self. The self-government of subjectivity is effected through the stimulation of sustained and intense self-scrutiny. In one of its simplest forms this self-examination is evidenced through the ubiquitous presence of weighing machines in our bathrooms (Schwartz 1986). More generally the self that is liberated through the exercise of self-control is obliged to live life harnessed to projects of its own identity, its normality, its weight, its mental and physical health.

Modern advice and self-help discourses can be distinguished from the long-lived tradition of 'conduct books', which began to appear from the earliest days of printing (Neuberg 1977). The early forms were dominated by what came to be called etiquette, the laying down of prescriptive rules of conduct to which the individual is exhorted to conform. Increasingly in the long march to modernity, the tone changes and the advice becomes less prescriptive, but rather seeks to engage in a reflexive project of the self which harnesses self-monitoring and introspection to the production of a personality in which authenticity comes to displace conformity. The inculcation of moral self-regulation requires slow, painstaking and detailed work upon ourselves, a continuous and committed self-scrutiny. "The self that is liberated is obliged to live its life tied to the project of its own identity" (Rose 1989: 254). Thus self-help operates through the mobilisation of self-esteem and self-respect. The

important point is that moral regulation has come to acquire a new and distinctive form.

Self-help moral regulation generates new forms of expertise. On the one hand, there is an increasing pluralisation of expertise such that individuals are required to choose their own experts; in health care, body maintenance or personal relations a plethora of experts bid for the allegiance and commitment of individuals; complex struggles take place over credentialism, professionalisation and official certification in which all forms of traditional authorities are challenged by clamorous rivals. In being required to choose their own experts, individuals increasingly must become 'experts for the self'. In so doing, subjects engage in a subjectification that is more profound since it seems to originate in an autonomous search for their own identities. Hence it becomes important to attend to the way these new and varied authorities become enfolded within the project of the self and to insert new forms of knowledge and systems of truth. For example, 'Twelve-Step' programmes emanating from AA require both a rigorous practice of confessionality geared to the exercise of self-control, along with an acknowledgement of a "power greater than ourselves" (AA 1976: 10). These diverse elements are melded into a complex regime for the governance of the self that is an ideological response to the pervasive individualism of modernity while, paradoxically, promoting an individualist vision of recovery (Room 1993). Such techniques coexist with those within the retraditionalisation model such as the promotion of marital fidelity by 'promise keepers', a late twentieth-century version of the earlier purity pledge, while on another front state-sponsored campaigns to 'Just Say No' in anti-drug programmes herald a return to the 'suppression' strategy of early purity movements. Such complex 'multi-track' modes of governance reveal a distinctive combination of different modes of moral regulation, bringing together a variety of forms of legal compulsion and of self-regulation.

Thus modern moral regulation can be understood as a combination of two general strategies, that of retraditionalisation and that of self-help. It is not that one form is superior to or more modern than the other, but rather that they exhibit different modalities of governance.

The outstanding question that arises from this identification of the modalities of contemporary moral regulation is whether they open up the possibility of any transformative political strategies capable of intervening in the crises of sexuality, gender and the family which form the core of the politics of moral regulation. My question generalises the issue that haunts contemporary feminism and which is perhaps most sharply posed by Judith Walkowitz (1983: 437): how can feminists

formulate a strategy against sexual violence without playing into the hands of the New Right? As I have sought to demonstrate, we have experienced a resurgence of the inherently repressive strategy that I have characterised as the retraditionalisation of sex–gender relations. Yet it remains far from clear that the strategy underlying the burgeoning self-help movement offers a potentially radical or transformatory prospect. These techniques of self-regulation and personality modification founder upon the construction of the individual as a morally autonomous agent capable of realising the emblematic slogan of the period: ‘Just Do It’. How can a strategy be formulated against ‘bad habits’ and ‘bad behaviour’, such as male sexual violence or the sexual abuse of children, without playing into the hands of conservatism and religious fundamentalism? How can moral self-regulation touch the most intractable recesses of sexuality within which the ‘return of the repressed’ harbours the dark secrets of civilisation?

It would be exhilarating if, at the end of this exploration of the social history of moral regulation, a solution to the tension between an intransigent authoritarianism and an implausible individual moral responsibility could be unveiled. But no such rabbit can be plucked from this hat. As Antonio Gramsci insisted:

The crisis consists precisely in the fact the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear (Gramsci 1971: 276).

Little has changed in the intervening decades to change this judgement. However, while Gramsci anticipated that social revolution would ease the birth of the new; we can have no such optimism. The most that can be sustained is an insistence that the contending projects of moral regulation be submitted to the processes of democracy, which itself can hold out no guarantee that morally sustainable or practically efficient outcomes will emanate. Contests over projects of moral regulation will continue to provide a significant part of the social and political agenda; the best that we can hope is to restrain the worst excesses while we continue to grapple with the intractable conditions of social life that generate the impulse to subject the conduct of conduct to moral governance.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The anti-comics campaign is interesting in establishing that projects of moral regulation do not always emanate from the political Right; in the period 1949–55 the British Communist Party was instrumental in launching an attack on American cultural influence.
- 2 For fuller discussion of the link between ‘character’ and the governance of the self and the displacement of social discourses of character by those organised around ‘personality’, see White & Hunt 2000.
- 3 Note that the specifically moral standpoint is frequently linked to some utilitarian claim that not only is some conduct wrong, but that it causes harm of some kind or another.
- 4 It is important to note that what is suggested here is a double moralisation of both the active social agents and their targets; for example, in the case of prostitution both moral reformers who sought to ‘save’ prostitutes and the prostitutes themselves are moralised.
- 5 It is today uncommon to find moral discourses that link ‘wrong’ and ‘harm’, but they are still to be found. The contention that homosexuality is wrong because it is ‘unnatural’ and that sexual relations with children are inherently wrong are two contemporary instances of exclusively moral discourses.
- 6 ‘Experts’ should be construed broadly at this stage: priests, social workers, doctors and psychoanalysts are obvious examples, but as we will see this role is also taken by a broader category of activists in the arena of moral regulation as, for example, in self-help movements in which participants become their own experts.
- 7 This idea of ‘umbrella effect’ emerged after reading D’Emilio and Freedman’s discussion of anti-prostitution movements in the United States; they draw attention to the fact that much of the significance of the anti-prostitution movement was that it secured support from a constellation that spanned from Protestant fundamentalism to socialist unionism (1988: 150 ff.).
- 8 Frequently the structures of rule and discipline that are imposed through employment institutions are particularly fragile in the most volatile urban areas, where employment is scarce or discontinuous.
- 9 For discussion of the weaknesses of the moral panic tradition, see pp. 18 ff.
- 10 For an important discussion of the genealogy of the concept ‘reformation of manners’, see Ingram 1996.