

Home from Home: UK civilising offensives in residential childcare

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Abstract: *Approaches to residential childcare within the United Kingdom incorporate processes that are ostensibly types of civilising offensives. The offensives are determined by political and media groups in an attempt to alter the behaviour of problematic sections of the population in alignment with populist notions about what constitutes civilised norms, values and activities. These policies are part of recurring child rearing and schooling offensives that were noticeable throughout industrialisation and colonialism. Contemporary approaches intentionally, or otherwise, are part of wider processes which are resulting in emergent and reinforcing spatial, dispositional barriers between the established and young outsiders. Interconnected weakening chains of mutual interdependence are enabling the disproportionate imposition of punitive measures against vulnerable members of society to either be supported or ignored. These fraying threads of relationships present further challenges for children and young people living in care and their carers who must seek to develop life chances against a backdrop of declining opportunities.*

Keywords: *Civilising offensive; established-outsider relations; informalisation; residential childcare; young people.*

Introducing Civilising Offensives in Residential Childcare

In the UK there are approximately 68,000 children and young people in the care of a local authority (GOV.UK 2013). The local authority has duties and responsibilities for care and duties can be met whilst the child is looked after at home through a supervision order, away from home in a community setting either foster care, kinship care or other, in a residential home or school or secure unit. Axford (2008) adds that care includes short breaks and specialist provision for children such as those with disabilities and psychological disorders. Hence the group is heterogeneous and generalisations can be problematic. However as Audit Scotland (2010), Axford (2008), Department for Education and Skills (2007) explain there are some commonalities. The Scottish Government (2013) explains:

The vast majority of looked after children have become “looked after” for care and protection reasons. Some will have experienced neglect or mental, physical or emotional abuse. Some parents are unable to look after their children because of their own substance misuse or poor parenting skills.

For the affected children and young people, educational qualifications are much lower with only 12 per cent achieving five grades A*–C grades at GCSE compared to 59 per cent of all children (Department for Education and Skills 2007). Health is poorer with 45 per cent of children in care assessed to be suffering from a mental

health disorder compared with 10 per cent of the general population (ibid.). Morris and Wheatley (1994) have reported on the prevalence of children describing their loneliness, physical and sexual abuse, bullying, feeling unloved and personally responsible for their situation. Offending is

frequent, leading to exclusion from the wider community, as are educational deficits with significant numbers excluded from school (12%) or waiting to be allocated to a new school (9%) [...] and on leaving compulsory education as many as two-thirds of children leaving care in one study struggled to establish a stable employment pattern (Axford 2008: 9).

9.6 per cent children in care aged ten or over have been cautioned or convicted for an offence in the previous twelve months which is almost three times the rate for all children at this age (Department for Education and Skills 2007). Compared with other children and young people, transitions into adulthood for residential childcare leavers are more likely to commence aged sixteen. Subsequently these looked after children are more likely than their peers to face low paid, insecure jobs or unemployment and experience teenage pregnancy, drug dependency, mental health problems and imprisonment (Parliament 2009), in other words what Wacquant (2008) described as 'advanced marginality'.

Residential childcare programmes are designed to overcome these stark statistics and improve the life chances of children and young people. Yet despite the dedication, contributions and life changing interventions of social work professionals, the above data is indicative of the deep rooted difficulties care workers face in improving prospects for the majority of the residents while wrestling with long standing tensions between development and control. In this paper it is argued that one of the biggest obstacles for residential childcare professionals has been a shift in emphasis towards greater control of the institutions, their personnel and of the children against a backdrop of diminishing secure, longer term post care opportunities. The outcome has been that individual developmental interventions are being implemented alongside the wider imposition of punitive measures. These are government policies that are designed to target sectors of the population that are deemed to be increasingly financially, socially and legally problematic. In short, these measures disproportionately disadvantage the life chances which care workers are simultaneously striving to improve. Such ambivalent civilising offensives are being introduced within cultures of containment that are intended to control behaviour. Instead of integrative and more extensive penetration of 'civilised' codes of conduct, boundaries that the offensives are intended to overcome are being reinforced. Social distance between populist and political moralists and children and young people in care is increasing, not least because threads of mutual interdependence have frayed, snapped or were never woven. Consequently in this paper it is argued that levels of empathy, warmth and trust in the relationships between children and childcare professionals and wider opinion formers are reduced and a significant number of young people are not (re)integrated.

The concept of civilising offensives is derived from long-term rather blind, unintentional and unforeseen civilising processes and is being applied within residential childcare as active, intentional attempts by established, [1],[#N1]powerful groups to change the behaviour of residents through the implementation of 'civilising' norms, values and habits. Following on from Elias (2012) typically the process is not a completed, unilinear and irreversible state. Indeed residential childcare and post-care life highlights that there are numerous pockets that have escaped the most pervasive elements of behavioural control. The failure to incorporate weakly integrated groups throughout modern history has led to the introduction of civilising offensives. Unlike the absence of deliberate steering within civilising processes, offensives have been deliberately planned with specific intended outcomes; namely to 'civilise' and control problematic groups. Despite, or perhaps because of, planning for civilising campaigns, many of the outcomes have proved to have

unintended and unwanted consequences. Today's UK coalition government is at the focal point of altering the conduct of children and young people, aided and abetted by populist media and law and order advocates. Although the ordering of the powerful may have changed over generations, they share a tendency to generate policies which are underpinned by moralising sentiments based upon an understanding of what civilised behaviour is and should be. Such certitude is based upon a portrayal of what Elias and Scotson (2008) described as 'the minority of the best' from among their own established group. Yet as Powell (2007) outlines, civilising offensives can be ambivalent. The following sections highlight that this is certainly true for childcare policies. Throughout modern British history institutions have offered social support, trust mechanisms and welfare against a wider policy for restraining behaviour, connecting into processes of stigmatisation and increasingly all-encompassing nets of containment. Hitherto, as discussed below, the different social work arrangements and emphasis upon the Children's Hearing System has meant that Scotland has been considered to have avoided the worst excesses of the English model (Law and Mooney 2011).

The implemented policies have struggled to overcome tensions surrounding the elongation of childhood and balancing approaches to protect children both from adults and other children. Perceptions of the nature and duration of childhood, allied to shifting demarcations surrounding appropriate behaviour have, van Krieken (2005) suggests, contributed to longer transitions into adulthood for the children of established groups. By comparison, their peers with outsider status, such as Gypsy-Traveller children (Powell 2011) and looked after children, enter adulthood abruptly, frequently with limited life chances (Axford 2008; Hendrick 2003; Morris and Wheatley 1994; Smith 2009). That these outcomes continue despite a backdrop of generations of shifting religious, philanthropic, political, bureaucratic and academic interventions requires consideration. In this paper it is argued that some policies devised for residential childcare have ostensibly been civilising offensives. However the failure to position the offensives within individual, conceptual and institutional longer term social processes and wider societal influences have meant that they are often inappropriate and/or doomed to fail or even be counterproductive. Many of today's contradictions can be understood better from the perspective of their historical roots. Hence the remainder of the paper commences with an exploration of the history of care for children and young people and its contemporary significance. Focus then shifts to processes of socialisation experienced by those in care which contribute to diminished life chances before exploring processes of demonisation that have seen reinforced portrayals of problem children. Building upon these processes, the paper draws to a close by accounting for the decline in middle-class empathy which has contributed to the physical and psychological detachment from children and young people in care. Collectively these developments help to explain looked after children and young people's bleak experiences and prospects.

Modern history of caring for the lost legions

From the onset of the industrial revolution emergent Western European secular and religious authorities sought to inculcate their standards for behaviour upon the newly emergent industrial outsider groups and recently acquired colonial subjects. For instance, Kruithof (reported in Powell 2013) outlines how middle class Protestantism, child-rearing practices and education combined in attempts to create a 'virtuous nation'. Achieving such virtue was considered to be possible through repressing and eradicating the 'traditional rural mentality' and the moral improvement of the lower classes. Within the UK, evangelical motives were prevalent within the 'child-saving movement' (Parker 1990), mixing compassion and self-righteousness. Parker (1990) argues that child saving in the nineteenth century was often indistinguishable from child salvation as the spiritual and physical well-being became firmly intertwined. Within Britain, evangelical motives were prevalent within the 'child-saving movement'. Schooling of the poor was introduced by

philanthropists as part of this wider civilising mission. Members of the burgeoning middle classes provided support for institutions such as the ragged schools which tended to include religion within four 'R's to help physical, mental and moral well-being and to counterbalance secularism (Smith 2001). Sectarianism also pervaded child care, heavily influenced by anti-Catholicism, and rivalry between convictions and denominations for the minds of young children (Parker 1990).

The emergence of what De Swaan (1990) described as 'scientific philanthropy' in the nineteenth century [2] [#N2] proved to be indicative of a shift in approach towards the poor which continues to resonate today. The emergent emphasis on helping the needy to help themselves has been accompanied by different expectations of the capacity of the poor. De Swaan explains that fear of the poor had been influenced by the limited availability of jobs. Without universal welfare, the poor could be temporarily incorporated by providing some paid employment or alms. Alternatively individuals could be discouraged from remaining in the neighbourhood and the implicit threat of their poverty was transferred to another district. The gradual interweaving of lives and complex specialisations and differentiations brought about the narrowing of social distance which helped achieve greater integration of the poor within the lengthening social interdependencies. Nevertheless the drawing together of social groupings was not equitable across different groups of the population. Although greater interdependency was to result in the introduction of national welfare provisions this did not translate universally into inculcation of the established's normative codes and standards. Pockets continued to behave outside the 'civilised' parameters and arguably, following economic, legal and political shifts, these pockets grow and become entrenched.

The roots of today's institutions can be traced to voluntary church bodies which provided some shelter for destitute children. The Poor Law Relief Act (1601) established the state's responsibilities towards paupers. Pauper's children were to be instructed to work or be placed as apprentices (Heywood 1959). During industrialisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, philanthropic trusts and charities were established, in part to cope with the rapid migration of families to urban areas. Programmes were directed at work and morality amongst the threatening, threatened, dispossessed and dislocated. Notions of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor were formulated under the 1834 Poor Law (Colton 2002) [3],[#N3]. In order to deter access to workhouses, the doctrine of 'less eligibility' was introduced so that staying in an institution was considered to be less desirable than living outside (Parker 1990; Smith 2009). Alongside the 1834 Act, the Factory Acts, such as those of 1802 and 1901, were implemented to progressively restrict children's working hours within industrial processes. In the short term, the well-intentioned campaigns led to children begging or stealing to substitute the loss of industrial earnings. It was not unknown for young children to be imprisoned for such activities. [4],[#N4]. Following the changing nature of industrial labour, mass urbanisation, weakening social controls and concomitant visibility of children on the streets, the latter half of the nineteenth century became known as the 'reformation-rescue period'. With no free, compulsory education available until 1870, many families were viewed as contaminating influences and children needed to be removed and protected from the degradations (Smith 2009). Parker (1990) suggests that although the children needed to be brought under control, they were largely considered blameless and malleable. Hence the potential for reclamation was greater than for adults and as such children's 'souls' were targeted by religious organisations.

By the end of the nineteenth century there were 58,000 children in homes and residential schools. Work was integral to reform programmes providing habits, routine, virtue, discipline and, often standardised, clothing. The dual purpose of caring for the abandoned and destitute 'whilst protecting society from the perceived threat to social order posed by "dangerous" children' (Colton 2002: 37) contributed to children being viewed as both victims and threats (Kendrick 1998). [5],[#N5]. Holman declares that 'All these children bore what was called "the badge of shame" for to come under the auspices of the Poor Law was to be associated with failure,

shame and inferiority' (1996: 2). Unlike today, there was no encouragement or enabling programmes for children to return to the family home; a decision influenced by perceived familial degradations, poverty and the fecklessness of lone mothers. In short, care regimes did not want to return children to the temptations and degradations from which they had been 'saved'. Separated children could remain so for life, exemplified by the thousands who were transferred to new lives and families in the colonies, particularly Australia and Canada (Parker 1990). [6],[#N6]

Prior to the Second World War, there was a shift away from the Poor Law and voluntary organisations to the Home Office and local authorities for what became known as 'children deprived of a normal home life' (Holman 1996: 5). A number of pieces of legislation were introduced in the first part of the twentieth century. [7],[#N7] However the extent to which provision remained dangerously inadequate only became widely known during the Second World War. There were a number of reasons for the changes including the evacuation of largely urban working class children to rural and suburban, middle-class fostering residences then known as 'boarding out'. 'Difficulties were encountered with the latter [foster parents] often complaining about the former's [children's] head lice, bed wetting, eating habits, bad manners and behaviour' (Holman 1996: 6). Reformers were to successfully campaign for fundamental changes to the care system. 'These former Poor Law children seem to constitute a kind of lost legion [...] they are nobody's children' (cited in Holman 1996: 8).

Significant post-war changes were made to the duty of care yet residential children continued to be stigmatised based in part on the perceived flawed morality of their parents, including the ongoing concern about illegitimacy. Subsequent policy changes tended to be indicative of shifting priorities that stretched from improving residential homes to keeping children out of care. These examples are indicative of debates around the 'best interests of the child' which Van Krieken explains are 'part of a much broader and deeper set of processes of social change' (2005: 26). The Children and Young Persons Act 1963 and Children Act 1975 in England and Wales were introduced to avoid the need for children to go into care and to ease procedures for fostering. Parker (1990) has argued that, unlike the nineteenth century, in the 1960s the solution was to address problems within the family through social services rather than the removal of the child. Smith (2009) has also positioned changes during the 1960s within the re-location of residential childcare into the broader social work profession. Tensions between different approaches within the emergent profession, particularly the more dominant anti-institution approach, which pervaded much of the rest of social work discourse, contributed to a movement away from residential care with greater emphasis placed upon substitute families. Residential care became increasingly viewed as a staging post in preparation for a substitute family or the last resort for the most problematic and/or those least likely to be adopted. This view continues to be espoused. [8] [#N8] For instance, despite declaring in the 2007 White Paper 'Care Matters' that 'local authorities too often treat a placement in a children's home as a "last resort"' (Department for Education and Skills, 2007: 111) the government proceeded to state that, 'our expectation is that most children will benefit from being in a family setting [...]. Nevertheless, residential care has an important role to play as part of a range of placement options' (ibid.: 57).

Despite these observations the post-war period to 1970 was one of optimism both within residential childcare and programmes to maintain children with their families. The optimism was based upon the capabilities of public intervention in children's lives (Corby et al 2001). However incidents of physical child abuse became more prominent in the 1970s and contributed to a significant increase in the number of children in care. By comparison sexual abuse rarely featured until the late 1970s and early 1980s when allegations were no longer considered to be matters to be dealt with by the institution. Abuse was to become symptomatic of the ongoing tensions within the history of child care between the aspirations of protection and restoration to the familial home (Parker 1990). Moreover local government reorganisation was also to initiate the onset of

managerialism. Greater professionalism was encouraged which resulted in more detached shift arrangements which, allied to greater emphasis upon procedures and child protection, resulted in more unfamiliarity and increasing physical and psychic distance (Smith 2009).

The Children Act (1989) in England and Wales and the 1995 (Children) Scotland Act stressed parental rights and the concept of 'children in need' became a formal classification for the provision of local authority services. In essence, the growing prevalence of child protection allied to financial constraints resulted in the intentions for family support and active intervention with children in care not being realised. Moreover Smith (2009) argues, the concept of care became marginalised. Although the change in terminology was put forward in order to improve rights and reduce stigma, over the longer term the rhetoric has accorded with the retraction of the welfare state and consumerist version of care. 'Corporate parenting' became an integral concept within programmes with the legal and moral duty placed upon the local authority and partners. The UK Department for Education and Skills stated that 'it is with the corporate parent that responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects of children in care ultimately rest. A good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would, including stability' (2007: 7). In essence, parenting within families is replaced with parenting by multi-agency partnership or childrearing by committee. Hence government intentions to address 'both the difficulties which the children experience and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services' (Department for Education and Skills 2007: 19) can prove to be the source of considerable tensions, not least as the difficulties can stem from dealing with parenting by partnerships.

The UK Government's most recent approach has been incorporated with the intention to improve the adoption system (GOV.UK 2013). Specific reference to services for looked after children are arguably lacking in ambition. To summarise, the government intends to overcome the huge emotional, educational and occupational problems encountered by the individuals in care by maintaining the current programme; councils should appoint a virtual school head post, and listen to the views of children in care. The main aim of improving the quality of care in children's homes is to 'make sure looked-after children receive better care and protection' (ibid.). Children and young people who return home can expect 'improved services' while the Government will 'keep the wellbeing of care leavers in mind' (ibid.).

This vacuous vision for residential childcare also needs to be set against the financial and philosophical targeting of the welfare provision. Creeping privatisation and commodification of services increasingly delivered for profit have become widely accepted. Employment consequences for temporary, insecure staff who work long, often anti-social, hours, in challenging conditions for low pay has similarly become routinised practice. Within the work environment, control has shifted towards external managers, who often lack experience of residential childcare, supported by pervasive bureaucratic systems and rigorous rules, procedures and risk assessment frameworks. Meanwhile staff members are supposed to replicate the external family experiences and opportunities while being bound by the pervasive emphasis on safekeeping and risk management (Hendrick 2003; Smith 2009).

Alongside the pervasive privatisation and managerialism, welfare institutions and clients have been encapsulated within the rhetorical attacks against benefit recipients which have accompanied coalition cutbacks and policy drivers. Whilst at one level, austerity was introduced following the 2008 banking crisis in order to reduce the massive budget deficit, the rationale for welfare cutbacks has often been directed at recipients who become implicated or blamed for their poverty or associated misfortunes (Wallace 2014). Wouters (2007) notes similar processes in the preceding recession when governments defended and instituted budget cuts through reference to general interests and the need for commercial and employment stimuli through de-regulation. Arguably people who did not fit within this agenda became positioned against the common good. Residential childcare is obviously firmly located within welfare provision and is therefore

subjected to the political and populist expectation of lessening the financial burden while overturning failing processes in order to produce the requisite good citizens. Hence although staff remain committed to improving lives, contemporary financial, social and political restraints are restricting possibilities for positive transformative interventions.

Inculcating through socialisation

A number of agents have been involved in transferring affects, providing behavioural boundaries and exerting pressure for political and populist parameters to be maintained. In so doing, family, friends and schools have been integral across society by encouraging, often unconsciously, shifts from external restraints which are placed upon a child to the self-discipline of maturing and mature individuals (van Krieken 1998, 2005). Within portrayals of the 'normative' family, there remains what Elias described as 'the anachronistic insistence on an idealised conception of the parent-child relation' (1998: 210). The large-scale onset of high divorce rates and growth of single parents have contributed to feelings of nostalgia which are intertwined within politics and mass media. For instance, Slater (2011) outlines how marriage and stable two parent family life were pivotal factors in the 2010 Conservative Party General Election and were widely supported by much of the tabloid press. Following the election Slater (ibid.) argues that these beliefs provide the undercurrent for public policy exemplified by the Prime Minister David Cameron's assumption that many of the 2011 rioters in England were from homes lacking fathers and male role models. Subsequently a widespread and vocal sense of loss has emerged over the weakening, and dispersal, of the nuclear family which overlooks the longer term processes which lead to the changes. As Elias (1998) and Kitchens (2007) explain, the apparent weakening of controlling relations within the family is only possible because both parents and children have inculcated greater patterns of self-restraint. Instead the gradual reduction of unequal power relations both between parents and between parents and children have been attributed with responsibility for much that is perceived to be wrong. However Elias (1998) explains how notions of the unconditional authority of parents and unconditional obedience of children have changed within longer term unplanned 'civilising processes'. Less rigid power differentials have enabled greater engagement by children within familial relationships and decision making within the liberalisation of the family (Kitchens 2007). As Wouters (1986, 1999, 2007) has outlined, processes of informalisation have entailed a relaxation of standards of modesty and sexual restraints and codes of etiquette and behaviour between social hierarchies. As such, the blurring of the demarcations between parental authority and children's acquiescence is indicative of the decline of traditional symbols of respect between individuals and authority figures and institutions. This kind of respect came to be seen as unduly excessive and undeserved. Deserved respect was to earned, based upon warmth, confidence and trust. Recently however there has been a growing consensual opposition from across the political spectrum and within populist media against informalisation and associated outcomes. A typical solution to these feelings was the introduction of Parenting Orders which would provide 'help and support [...] in addressing a child's offending behaviour' by restoring 'a proper relationship between the child and its parent or guardian' (UK Government 1999: 181). Parents were provided with instruction on 'how to set and enforce acceptable standards and behaviour' (ibid.). Failure to adhere to the terms of the Order could result in parents being liable for sanction and punishment. Ultimately as Powell and Flint (2009) explain, with regards to housing based interventions, across a historical framework civilising offensives are interwoven with unintended de-civilising processes.

Within residential care, socialisation occurs against a backdrop of children and young people's preceding experiences. Throughout the modern history of residential childcare, the UK government's emphasis has been placed upon the residents' differences from the normative template for what a child's experiences should be.

To quote from a more forthright period, Elizabeth Bremer, a Home Office tutor, ‘They all have some handicap – be it social or emotional, physical or intellectual’ (1965: 16). Bremer goes on to observe that:

occasionally the young person has to re-think and re-evaluate his own life, has to be helped towards a different attitude to life, towards different moral standards. The residential worker sets the tone, the example for the community life and for the individual [...] all these children must be helped to see that their handicap does not exclude them from life in the community, that they will have to go back to their place (ibid.: 17).

The emphasis on ‘character training’ was the main aim of institutions, especially prior to the Children’s Act in 1948 (Henry 1965). Such training was a requisite for personality development, vocational opportunities and the ability to cope with their problems. This is compared with the normal family and Henry draws reference to the role of two parents. Applying stereotypical characteristics from the era, the husband is the ‘breadwinner’, the mother ‘turns the sticks and stones provided by the father into a true home’ and collectively they provide emotional balance (Henry 1965: 54).

Since these instructions were issued, relative equality and the sharing and integration of roles have improved considerably within the processes underpinning societal emancipation of women and children. Nevertheless the lives of residential children and young people continue to be measured against an idealised benchmark, namely what the Department of Education and Skills in its 2007 White Paper described as ‘a normal childhood’. For instance:

children in care are necessarily subject to interventions in their lives which other children do not experience [...] we want to see such interventions delivered in as normal a way as possible to minimise the sense of difference which children in care often feel (2007: 47).

The theme continues as the:

children should, as far as possible, be granted the same permissions to take part in normal and acceptable age-appropriate activities as would reasonably be granted by the parents of their peers, and we would expect carers to behave as any other parent would in such situations (ibid.).

The White Paper goes onto declare, ‘we cannot wrap children in cotton wool and prevent them from enjoying a normal childhood. This applies equally to children in care’ (ibid.: 47–8).

Against this backdrop of the normality of mainstream family life and the ontological insecurity it is likely to contribute towards, is the parallel debate about problematic families and whether irresponsible parents should be punished for the actions of their offspring (Rodger 2008). Blame becomes detached from wider social, economic, political and cultural processes to be concentrated within familial relations, lack thereof or, as Gaskell (2008) suggests, individuals can be viewed to have become responsible for their own failings. A combination of these explanations became prominent during particular social disturbances, such as the 2011 urban riots in England. For example, in a survey of the general public’s perceptions of important and very important causes of the riots, the most popular responses were poor parenting, criminality and declining morals (The Guardian and LSE 2011). In this regard, it might be expected that blame will also be apportioned to the state as corporate parent when looked after children become ‘troublesome’. However as the following

explains, the state and structural factors are becoming increasingly detached from the recognised causes of problematic behaviour.

Demonising and reformalising problem children

The disproportionate representation of looked after children and young people committing crime, truancy, being diagnosed with mental illness (Axford 2008; Barter 2003; Shaw Report 2007), and the ongoing tendency for the normative majority to assume that children in care are in there, at least in part, because of their behaviour, has meant that the characteristics of ‘the minority of the worst’ (Elias and Scotson 2008) are applied to all residents. Processes through which these classifications are occurring must also be positioned within the wider debate about anti-social youth behaviour. Although the discourse surrounding troublesome youths is not new, [91[#No] it is perhaps surprising when set against shifts towards greater informalisation of other relations. Moreover the identification of childhood as a distinct phase with different affective functions has enabled children’s behaviour to be considered against different expectations to adults. Hence the desire to satisfy drives and frequent emotional expressions has been viewed as part of a necessary stage en route to civilising. The defined, elongated processes lead Elias to explain how ‘currently it has come to be socially accepted that it is not simply an “evil will”, “disobedience” or “naughtiness” which brings children to do what is forbidden to adults’ (1998: 209). Yet the emphasis on problem children and young people as threats to normative values suggests a shift in attitudes, or to be more precise an overt reconnection with deep rooted pressures surrounding behaviour and a sense of a ‘broken society’ or ‘Broken Britain’ with spatially isolated segments therein. These children, and often their carers, are failing to meet idealised conceptions and are either rather immune to, or bypassed by, processes of civilising. These constructions are formulated within public policies such as New Labour’s Respect Agenda. Under the Respect umbrella, respect was promoted and the specific groups responsible for anti-social behaviour were tackled (Powell and Flint 2009). However as Gaskell (2008) argues, the initiatives disproportionately impact upon disadvantaged young people without addressing the underlying structural factors behind their behaviour. Hence children and young people are expected to evidence respect when their lived experiences lead them to feel disrespected or even ashamed. With political norms of citizenship offering little in the way of constructive forms of respect and self-esteem, young people create alternative frameworks for themselves where respect and control are recognised and achievable.

Scraton (2007) outlines processes of regulation and criminalisation of children and young people in the aftermath of the 1993 killing of the toddler James Bulger by two ten-year-old boys. The case was to radically alter visions of child normality/abnormality (Hendrick 2003) and both coincide with, and further justify, a wider retreat from welfare and a rethink of solutions to youth crime (Smith 2009). Complex psychological and community-based experiences and relationships which had led to the killings were displaced by emphasis on the act. When sentencing, the Crown Court Judge described the act, in terms that reflected and helped legitimise and reinforce the condemnatory tone, as ‘of unparalleled evil and barbarity’ (reported in Scraton 2007: 107). Scraton highlights how media reporting connected into this deterministic apportioning of blame as the populist national press ran headlines such as ‘Freaks of nature’, ‘Born to murder’ and ‘How do you feel now you little bastards’.

The subsequent legislative onslaught was underpinned by a populist backlash against children’s rights. A plethora of explanations for the troublesome children have been provided. These include failures of state such as unconditional welfare and lax school discipline and changes in relationships which had resulted in moral bankruptcy of ‘progressivism’ and bad parenting. Sexual permissiveness was considered to contribute to the rise in illegitimacy, while conversely female liberation to weaken commitment to the stabilising familial role

of the mother (Hendrick 2003). A moral panic was generated around 'feral' children who were known persistent offenders (Scraton 2007). The Bulger case was deemed to be at the extreme of a national problem stemming from a generation of poorly controlled children. Months after sentencing, Gerald Warner in the Sunday Times wrote of 'civilisation menaced by adolescents from hell' (quoted in Scraton 2007: 108).

The impact on child welfare has been considerable. Normative childish behaviour was reinterpreted through the sullied lens of adults for whom childhood had lost its innocence. Children were now positioned again [10] [#N10] as potential threats requiring greater surveillance and forms of constraint. At the same time Scraton (2007) notes that the concept of persistent young offenders was increasingly emphasised by the police and incorporated within political discourse. No-go areas were located within cities often against a narrative of the law-abiding few whose lives had been made intolerable by out of control locals. Anti-social behaviour became a focal point through which problem families and children could be targeted. Changes were proposed in family structures, single parents and, the Labour Party bemoaned the reduction in the 'disciplines of informal control' (reported in Scraton 2007: 127). As Law and Mooney (2011) observe in their study of urban working class youth in Scotland:

Instead of focusing on the structural disadvantages in the labor market, the blame for material and symbolic dispossession is laid at the door of genetically or morally flawed individuals, in ways not dissimilar from Victorian images of the "dissolute" and "undeserving" urban poor (2011: 107).

Scraton (2007) draws attention to connections between young people's familiarity with social service departments, paternalism and state over-indulgence resulting in derogatory scapegoating between social workers and the 'delinquent' children in their care. Some progressive educational and youth programmes which had been instrumental in rehabilitation were to be challenged and replaced by more punitive measures. [11]. [#N11]. New forms of advanced or neo-liberal governance emerged which connected the preceding welfare/justice framework with dependency while neglecting social causes of crime and poverty (Hendrick 2003). Such policies could have been anticipated during periods of Conservative government and accompanying law and order agendas. However as Law and Mooney (2011) outline, the post-1997 Labour government also sought to address perceived failings in the lower socio-economic groups, not least their lack of paid employment and civilly unacceptable behaviour. Belligerent youths, classified as 'Chavs' in England and 'Neds' in Scotland, became easily identifiable because of their ostentatious appearance and displays of perceived inappropriate consumerism, and became symbols of shock, embarrassment and contempt. Again it is possible to locate these distinctions within longer term processes. Across the white working class, Lawler (2005) has argued that the body shapes and adornments of the poor have been a source of middle-class repulsion and dispositional assumptions since at least the nineteenth century. Reported behaviour of the minority of the worst became caricatures within class dynamics which emphasised both a dislocated generation to be feared and repulsed and a normalised middle-classness imbued with taste and morality (Lawler 2005). Within Scotland, the moral targeting of problem youths was accompanied by more punitive legislation which sought to address anti-social behaviour through restricting the freedoms of the wrongdoers. Law and Mooney (2011) point out that this is against a legal backdrop that had prioritised the welfare of the child (Children and Young Persons Scotland Act 1932) and in the 1960s had introduced Children's Hearings to promote rehabilitation rather than retribution. However the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 has proved to be indicative of the shift away from youth welfare and towards offender accountability with the protection of the child as offender replaced by greater protection of the public as a victim (Law and Mooney 2011; Muncie 2011; Rodger 2008, 2012).

Hendrick (2003: 235) incorporated Jervis when stating that New Labour 'believes in its *duty* to make a new citizenship for its "project", which requires reshaped subjects who', as Jervis explains 'can carry this process through becoming "civilized" and "Enlightened"' (1998: 6). In short, children who exhibit anti-social behaviour must be transformed to conform in the interests of those affected by their actions, whether the deserving poor or middle classes. In failing to do so individuals can increasingly face lifelong relegation through residence whether within rundown estates or part of institutional conveyor belts that transport back and forth, between social housing estate and prison.

The denunciations were, and remain, part of a regressive approach to welfare which, partly through reinforcing government policies and media reportage helped both to stigmatise the local population while formulating consent for the punitive stance towards these problem families and individuals. Blaming families and youths for the problems they were encountering has helped weaken long standing commitments to an all-encompassing welfare safety net, in part, as Rodger (2008) argues, because of the post-emotional attachment to social problems and the periphery which ensues. As New Labour theorist Anthony Giddens declared, there were '*no rights without responsibilities*' (1998: 65). Welfare has become a reward for those who behave and is to be removed for those who do not meet requisite standards. This approach required a shift from supporting families to civilising parents through direction to become more explicitly responsible for their children. Accompanying the removal of accountability from wider social processes was the directed support for civilians (Scraton 2007). Policies were formed around urban regeneration, civic renewal and respect and which were to be rehashed in the Conservative Party's Big Society theme. These terms are intended to safeguard and encourage civilians who are in employment, or want to be, who accept family commitments and who are committed to steering their communities to more normative, 'civilised' forms of behaviour. In so doing they have become involved within community safety and crime prevention and as such provide extended multiple arms of securitisation policies which underpin the civilising offensives. Support and demand for such civilising offensives become mutually reinforcing, tying into and fuelling growing fears of crime and criminals. Garland (2001) outlines how the 1980s-onwards shift towards rising levels of fear and distrust connects into neo-liberal attitudes to success, lifestyle changes including increased car ownership, empty houses during working hours and growing distance between affluent consumers and marginalised groups. Under a pseudo-legal umbrella the long standing tradition of civilians becoming regulators is further transformed as they become formally involved in monitoring and reporting neighbours for civilly determined offences to the state authorities. These informal networks are interwoven within formalised procedures for social control and surveillance and provide civilising parameters for offensives which demarcate between the deserving and undeserving poor. Again it is possible to draw upon preceding examples. Croll (1999) highlights how, in the nineteenth century, local media and readers combined to provide surveillance which named and shamed culprits of what today would be described as anti-social behaviour. Today offensives continue to contribute to widening processes of dis-identification whereby the undeserving become detached from the middle-class and normative deserving poor habitus.

The anti-social agenda has contributed to children and young people being caught up within the widening nets of punitive justice alongside 'the jobless, homeless, beggars, drug addicts and street prostitutes, and immigrants from the former colonies of the West and from the ruins of the Soviet empire' (Wacquant 2009: 2). For Wacquant (2009, 2010) this is part of an ideological campaign that is designed to encourage the poor to accept responsibility for their structural inequalities and restricted life chances which occurred through the deregulation of financial markets and concomitant increased regulation of the 'urban outcasts'. Simultaneously this 'centaur state', with a liberal head and authoritarian body, continues to espouse liberal norms and values for the middle and upper classes. Their consent to the application of coercion is secured as a price to pay for protecting their properties, sensitivities and right to freedoms. Altruism, tolerance and respect for others diminish when the same people are viewed to be the source of insecurity. Hence the state's

left hand protects and expands life chances in conjunction with the right-handed regulatory forces through intrusive policing, surveillance and justice. The associated civilising offensives therefore contain elements of welfare and of warfare – as the term offensive indicates – of support and of processes of stigmatisation, isolation and control. As Standing (2011) argues, contrary to the widespread belief that globalisation was symbolised by de-regulation, the reality has been one of re-regulation with swathes of new laws introduced and implemented. It was within such widening divisions that Sennett (1998) described the ‘corrosion of character’ and the declining levels of mutual trust, loyalty and commitment, accompanied with rising paranoia, resentment and acquiescence to the securitisation agenda to protect against fears, threats and caricatures, and are discussed in greater depth below. This emphasis, which can also be noticed within British and American counter-terrorism policies (Vertigans 2010) [12][#N12], has led Lea and Hallsworth (2013) to suggest that rather than Wacquant’s reference to the penal state, a more fitting description would be a security state that revolves around the dynamic of neoliberalism and the self-determined fate of the individual. And this creates intensified ambivalence with institutions having caring roles in an ambiguous position; namely carers are expected to interweave securitisation within the formal role of controlling children and young people while simultaneously providing a ‘normal’ childhood and improving life chances.

Hence, although large swathes of the population continue to be interwoven within the arteries of Wacquant’s ‘liberal head’, young outsiders circulate poorly in the ‘authoritarian body’. To understand why this exclusion not only continues, but becomes more embedded, it is important to review some of the processes which have resulted in growing spatial and emotional barriers and reduced interdependencies and empathy.

Explaining the liberal headbutt

With social interactions and experiences, both real and virtual, heavily influencing individual frames of reference, empathy between established and outsiders can only emerge through levels of interaction and exposure. For care residents and leavers stigma continues to feature, something which authors have argued originally stems from the poor law aid, the rejection of the poor house in Scotland for needy children and the prevailing view that only ‘problem’ children are institutionalised (Corby et al 2001; Kendrick 2003). Colton (2002) outlines how the abuse suffered by children and young people in residential care further reinforces social attitudes and perceptions. That this is happening when the distance between socio-economic groupings had previously narrowed through rising levels of interdependency requires investigation. By applying processes around formalisation and reformation (Wouters 1999, 2007), it becomes easier to understand why the middle-class ‘liberal heads’ are complicit in control of the authoritarian body. Heads are able to look away while state legislators and enforcers implement laws ostensibly for the protection of the established’s rights, freedoms and the material benefits of occupational and consumer success. Costs of this protection include the authoritarian bodies being head-butted in the nether regions.

Within social relationships between classes and social groups, Wouters (1990, 1999, 2007) outlines how decreasing power inequalities, allied to enhanced social integration of former outsider groups within the welfare state, have resulted in processes of informalisation and a relaxation of social codes and rising levels of trust. Less rigid divisions, increased interdependencies and more pervasive functional differentiations provided the basis for higher levels of empathy for social groups entwined within broad normative behavioural parameters. At a formal level, as Pratt (2011) explained with regards to penal bureaucracy, welfare bureaucracy and managerialism has contributed to longer chains and denser interdependencies within welfare agencies. Centralisation, standardisation, regulation and pervasive risk and performance management frameworks create shared ways of working across organisations and regions. Individual expression becomes more subservient to corporate procedure. Pratt’s (ibid.) observation that while

interdependencies within the bureaucracy had strengthened, the chains with the general public had become shorter, can also be applied to welfare. A number of factors help to explain this reduction, which draws upon the preceding sections. In particular, the ostracisation of some welfare recipients; rising fears over crime and welfare connected with criminals; the demonisation of problem children; and the targeting of the public sector as an unproductive, even counter-productive, drain on strained national resources (Lawler 2005; Lea and Hallsworth 2013; Scraton 2007; Wacquant 2009).

Across Western societies, functional democratisation, which had hitherto occurred over generations, has been weakened in the wake of neo-liberal policies. Wouters (1999, 2007) draws attention to the impact of the 1980s and the high levels of unemployment, loss of swathes of industrial and manufacturing companies, and the resultant decline of the appeal and impact of trade unions. Jobs have either long since moved to other parts of the world or are replaced by inferior terms and conditions, with little or no job security, organisational loyalties or interconnected membership opportunities (Shildrick et al 2012). The menial and transferable nature of many of these jobs has meant that these temporal workers are no longer integral to processes of functional democratisation. Moreover, Lawler (2005) points out how the decline of heavy industry has been connected to the decline in the worth of the working class. Hence the contraction of power differentials has been reversed and distinction shifted from the blurring of hierarchical forms of mutual identification to clear demarcations between the downwardly mobile and the rest. As Wouters (ibid.) explains, populist forms of mutual identification narrowed as people sought to distinguish themselves from individuals and groups diminished by the ravages of neo-liberalism. Civilian narrowing around the established's norms, values and legal arrangements reduced dissonance and strengthened the consensus over the requirement to protect the underpinning morality and discourse. Subsequent increases in formal social controls, punitive measures and populist support for further restraints were indicative of fears of a potential surge of new criminals, and crime being committed by the demarcated outsiders.

In essence, Wouters (ibid.) argues that during this period, policies directed towards rehabilitation and self-restraint were changed to accord with the diagnosis that weak inner regulation was to blame for rising crime levels. No longer able to trust the outsiders to control their own behaviour, the solution was to be found in the re-formalised imposition of restrictive rules, regulations and punishments which have become increasingly prevalent for children and young people in care. With reduced functional democratisation, the appearance of the minority of the worst at particular times and locations becomes symptomatic of wider problems. Political reactions to the 2011 riots in England typify these causal connections. For instance, the British Prime Minister David Cameron argued in the aftermath that 'these riots were not about poverty', but rather 'about behaviour [...]. People with a twisted moral code,' which has been part of a 'slow moral collapse that has taken place in parts of our country over these past few generations' (Number 10 2011).

Today, opportunities to bridge the widening and reinforcing demarcations are restricted because of the wider contraction of working-class opportunities and relationships allied to factors specific to local after children. For instance, when children and young people are removed from family homes and their wider communities, it contributes to what Colton (2002) describes as an 'out of sight out of mind' mentality. On account of their hierarchical positioning and relatively weak levels of power and opportunity to be able to re-shape popular opinion (De Swaan 1990), care residents and leavers struggle to gain the necessary skills and emotional controls to break through the post-1980s narrowed consensual boundaries which disaggregate the undeserving poor from the law abiders, regulators and shapers. Moreover, the limited levels of mutual interdependence and functional democratisation shared between themselves and the liberal head means that the latter's low levels of empathy contribute to disinterest in outcomes unless those outcomes appear to threaten security and possessions. Within the law and order agenda these fears translate into more punitive measures in order to further isolate or remove the threat. As part of the wider demands for greater inclusion

within, and respect towards, normative behavioural parameters, residential children and young people are being encouraged to integrate in circumstances which can prevent their incorporation, contribute towards disrespect and anger, and for which they are subsequently likely to be blamed and often punished. Instead of steering young people towards middle-class values and attitudes, civilising offensives are, Gaskell (2008) argues, contributing to young people gaining respect and self-esteem through anti-social behaviour.

Conclusion

The history of looked after children is riddled with ambivalence and tensions between the control and development of children and young people who are to be protected or need controlling for the protection of others. Civilising offensives designed to achieve 'normality' are being applied in conditions which are implicitly considered to be 'abnormal' and through processes which reinforce or fail to overcome that distinction. Children and young people are encouraged towards normative manners and emotional regulation in transitory, insecure, under-resourced environments which constrain the likelihood both for internalising deep rooted self-restraints and acquiring the requisite economic, educational and social capital which would enhance post-care prospects. This is not to declare bleak outcomes are inevitable. However care leaver successes can largely be attributed to relationships with social care professionals rather than government campaigns. Instead, much of the blame that they direct at the victims of re-formalisation can be attributed to governments. Ambiguous civilising offensives which stress normality cannot be achieved alongside punitive measures, surveillance, inadequate resources, impersonal managerialism, overbearing regulations and persistent reluctance to overcome the tendency to view residential care as the last resort. Inevitably care residents living in these environments struggle to positively apply their experiences against the idealised template for family life.

The problems encountered today can be tracked throughout the last couple of centuries of British history and extended across other young outsiders and those deemed capable of anti-social behaviour, such as older generations of the undeserving poor. The fears and concerns of the rest of the population have meant that these weakly integrated groups have regularly been subjected to periodic forms of civilising offensives. New Labour's Respect Agenda and the Coalition Government and media reactions to the 2011 riots are recent examples of attempts to transform behaviour without addressing the underlying causes. For care children, young people and carers, post-1980s developments have arguably created further difficulties, and diminished levels of empathy from the middle classes, some of whom might otherwise have challenged the re-formalisation of controlling the young outsiders. Middle class engagement and support which was so noticeable during nineteenth-century attempts at child saving has diminished, while determining the poor to be tasteless, uneducated and immoral continues and is arguably more pervasive through extensive media intrusion and 'poverty porn'. Instead cultural, economic and political developments have increased power differentials, diminished functional democratisation and weakened mutual identification. Today there is greater emphasis upon residential children and young people's heightened emotions and spontaneity, within sweeping generalisations about 'problematic youth'. Tying these fears into a wider, longer term perceived trajectory of moral decline and welfare dependency has enabled the civilising offensives to be directed at reinforcing social constraints which will help offset failures at individual and social institutional levels. Recent shifting political patterns and allegiances have reinforced these divisions with few signs of forthcoming progressive change.

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Notes

1. Application of established-outsider relations draws on Elias and Scotson (2008).[♣][\[#N1-pt1\]](#)
2. De Swaan (1990) points out that a shift to more worldly concerns and self-help approaches had already happened prior to the nineteenth century.[♣][\[#N2-pt1\]](#)
3. Poor law care differed in Scotland where no poor relief was provided for those deemed able bodied. For children the preceding establishment of parish systems of education allied to the limited institutionalisation contributed to more children being provided with formal schooling (Parker 1990).[♣][\[#N3-pt1\]](#)
4. Smith (2009) provides an example of five- to seven-year-old children regularly appearing before the court for stealing during the 1840s. The judge was not inclined to imprison them but felt he had little option with a seven-year-old recidivist.[♣][\[#N4-pt1\]](#)
5. Parker (1990) argues that some voluntary religious organisations were aware of this and sought to overcome problems stemming both from the children's environment and the Poor Law.[♣][\[#N5-pt1\]](#)
6. In the 50 years prior to the First World War, Parker (1990) reports 80,000 separated children were believed to have left Britain, mainly for placements on farms. The practice of childhood emigration was to continue until 1970, particularly for gypsy children (Humphreys 1996).[♣][\[#N6-pt1\]](#)
7. For example, The Children Act (1908) and the Children and Young Peoples Act (1933), and in Scotland similar legislation was adopted in 1937.[♣][\[#N7-pt1\]](#)
8. Although this perception continues to dominate, studies have shown that some children and young people prefer residential over foster care (Sinclair and Gibbs 1998).[♣][\[#N8-pt1\]](#)
9. Pearson's (1983) study of concerns about the behaviour of children and young people over 400 years highlights that there is nothing unique in normative fears and expectations.[♣][\[#N9-pt1\]](#)
10. In this regard there has been an intensifying ambivalence concerning children's innocence and their threat to the maintenance of adult codes and respectability which Ariès (1996) and Elias (1998) have reported since the late sixteenth and seventeenth century.[♣][\[#N10-pt1\]](#)
11. Alongside the contraction, some policies continued to provide support such as Family Intervention Projects and Nurse Partnerships.[♣][\[#N11-pt1\]](#)
12. The application of counter terror legislation in order to safeguard common interests has resulted in ethnically profiled communities' freedoms being reduced and residents subjected to invasive surveillance with the support or disinterest of the majority of the British population.[♣][\[#N12-pt1\]](#)

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Biography

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