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CHILDHOOD AND THE EMOTION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT
IN BRITAIN: 1938- 1986



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PhD

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STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree. However, the thesis incorporates, to the extent indicated below, material already submitted as part of required coursework for the degree of Masters of History which was awarded by The University of Sussex.

Parts of chapter two – p.89, p. 92 & pp.99-116 - is based upon sections of my MA dissertation “The Emotions of Evacuation and Corporal Punishment: 1938 – 1945”

Signature:.....

For Sophia, Amelie
& Lily

ABSTRACT

This research explores attitudes towards, and experiences of, corporal punishment in public and private spheres in Great Britain 1938-1986. It explores the 165 responses to a collaborative directive for this research with the social research organisation Mass Observation Project on corporal punishment in 2014, which included questions asked of the original Mass-Observation panel in 1942, the responses to which are also analysed. It examines the relationship between local sites of resistance, documented in the Mass Observation surveys, to broader movements that sought to banish corporal punishment across the century, some of which were formed by children. It asks how and why the public practices of corporal punishment fell across twentieth-century Britain, and it examines why children were significantly disadvantaged in the hierarchy of attaining rights which sought to protect from bodily harm. It asks why parents', and not children's rights were privileged in the foundation of laws which prohibited the public use of corporal punishment, and why the private use of corporal punishment escaped relatively untouched by legislation.

It argues that the cultures of public corporal punishment began to shift long before the 'permissive' moment of the 1960s when the child-centred approaches of the 1930s emphasised the need to recognise the emotional landscape of childhood and the relationship between the physical and the emotional. It recognises that children across the twentieth century opposed corporal punishment in many ways and this thesis explores the role that children themselves played in liberating themselves from corporal punishment in British schools. Children's feelings, for a time, were at the centre of the corporal punishment debate, but their voices were not amplified on the subject for long. As Thatcher challenged the post-war consensus by which childhood provision had been expanded, the shift from child-centred approaches to a state of increased parental responsibility meant that it took an intervention from the European Court of Human Rights in 1982 to end corporal punishment in the public sphere in 1986, and it did not fall willingly. Legislation by governments across the twentieth century, which gradually eroded the centuries-old practice of public corporal punishment, came as a result of a cooperative effort between grass-roots activism and more traditional routes of political change, and that change often jarred with public opinion. Corporal punishment fell messily from public use, and any shifts in public opinion towards its use were as likely to be related to individual experience as they were to contemporary prescriptive approaches to parenting. Resistance to corporal punishment grew from experience, and change came through reciprocal efforts made on the streets, in institutions, and in Parliament.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
LCC	London County Council
M-O	Mass-Observation
MOA	Mass-Observation Archive
MOI	Ministry of Information
MOP	Mass Observation Project
MOH	Ministry of Health
SAU	Schools Action Union
STOPP	Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment

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INTRODUCTION

'I don't believe you should criminalise parents for a light smacking. I mean, if you beat up a child, obviously. But a light smacking is all part of perfectly normal discipline. I don't have any problem with it at all, and above all, I don't think it is for the state to interfere. It is for the state to protect, and if someone is seriously hurting a child, that is the business of the state. It isn't for the state to tell parents how to discipline their children.'

Ann Widdecombe - 2017

'...it is about losing temper. It's about a lack of discipline. Good parenting will always mean you will find another way other than teaching your child that the way of resolving problems is physical violence. We're only one of four European countries which hasn't criminalised smacking. I think: let's move into the twenty-first century. You shouldn't use any form of violence against a child, let's be clear about it.'

Owen Jones - 2017

On 3rd October 2019, Scotland became the first country of the United Kingdom to abolish all corporal punishment on children, two years after a coalition of parties announced their intention to introduce legislation into the Scottish Parliament.¹ The announcement to abolish the corporal punishment of children on 19th October 2017 received widespread media coverage and sparked debates both in the news studios that evening, and considerably more so across social media and daytime television shows the next day. Ann Widdecombe, former Conservative MP and Minister for State Prisons appeared on the ITV London programme *After the News*, alongside *Guardian* journalist and author Owen Jones where they battled it out on the question of abolition. Widdecombe argued that there should be a distinction between a 'light smack' and beating children and that the former was a legitimate and 'normal' form of discipline. Underpinning her argument was the notion that parental punishment was not the concern of that state unless it crossed into 'seriously hurting a child'.² Owen Jones, however,

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-49908849> [Date last accessed: 02/03/2020]

The legislation was introduced by a Scottish Greens MEP, John Finnie, with support from the Scottish National Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrats.

² *After the News*, (ITV, 19th October 2017).

gave an entirely opposing stance, stating that people ‘shouldn’t use any form of violence against a child’. He situated his argument within the history of the majority of European countries which had long been abolitionist, as well as the history of the burgeoning children’s rights movement, from which the state enacted specific child-centred safeguarding policies.³

Jones’ acknowledgement of the social movements behind safeguarding policy was an important one because the shape of the debate that was held that night was in many ways a product of that historical activism. Widdecombe’s response was very close to, and in the spirit of, the law as it now exists. Parents in the United Kingdom can still today employ ‘reasonable’ physical chastisement without an implement. Before 2003, however, parents could legally choose to chastise their child with an implement. Until 1986 so too could that child’s teacher. The journey from public corporal punishment to one confined to the last bastion of private practice - the home - can be viewed through the parliamentary struggles across the century which helped to shape expectations of care in both public and private institutions. Yet behind each piece of legislation that passed through parliament was the labour and activism of numerous movements and many individuals who were demanding the establishment and extension of children’s safeguarding rights. This increasingly involved children themselves as agents in their own liberation. In many ways, the parameters of Widdecombe’s argument had been shaped by that activism as much as had Jones’.

The arguments that Widdecombe and Jones made in 2017 are reminiscent of how the corporal punishment debate had played out from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. In 1938, when this thesis begins, the Report of the departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment recommended the abolition of the public use of corporal punishment – applied by the law courts. Underpinning this recommendation was the notion that corporal

³ *Ibid.*

punishment should only be applied in an environment where the recipient feels ‘affection or respect’, which echoes Widdecombe’s statement that corporal punishment remained a legitimate and normal ‘life lesson’ in a mutually ‘loving home’.⁴ Conversely, psychoanalysts John Bowlby and Susan Isaacs were arguing in the late 1930s and throughout the Second World War that children had an ‘emotional landscape’ that was distinct from that of their parents, and that the use of corporal punishment encouraged children to respond in kind with violence.⁵ Although there are clear connections between these arguments from 1938 and those made in 2017, this thesis will demonstrate that the arguments against corporal punishment were very much a peripheral intervention in the years before the Second World War. Indeed, as we will see in chapter one, Isaacs purposefully omitted to address the subject of desisting practices of corporal punishment in her advice column because people simply were not listening.⁶ By 2017, these arguments are at the forefront of the corporal punishment debate, reflecting a shift in how the emotional and physical wellbeing of children has been conceptualised and guarded.

As Deborah Thom argued in her influential chapter on corporal punishment, despite significant activism and changes in the law, the corporal punishment debate never really went away, and nor has there been a significant shift between precept and practice in the private sphere, even as public corporal punishment gradually fell across the century.⁷ Corporal punishment is the lens by which this thesis will explore how children gained recognition and rights across the twentieth century. It is a history of the safeguarding of children and the reconstruction of childhood, and it examines the extent to which children were active agents

⁴ Home Office. *Report of the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment*. (HMSO, 1938) p.199.

⁵ See Mayhew, B, ‘Between Love and Aggression: The politics of John Bowlby’ in *History of Human Sciences*, Vol. 19 No. 4 (2006), p.19 and Isaacs, S, *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey: A Wartime Study of Social Welfare and Education*, 1st ed. (Methune & Co. Ltd, 1941).

⁶ See Chapter one and Aktar, L, M, ‘Intangible Casualties’: The Evacuation of British Children During World War II’, in *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 37:3 (2010) p.242.

⁷ Thom, D. “Beating Children is Wrong”: Domestic Life, Psychological Thinking and the Permissive Turn’ in Delap, L, Griffin, B & Wills, A (eds.) *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.227.

and participants in their own liberation. It will ask why parents' rights and not those of children were more often upheld in the shifting relationship between the public and private use of corporal punishment. Although child-centred approaches dominated the post-war progression towards establishing children's rights, ultimately it would be the rights of parents over their children that won out against the rights of the state to corporally punish children and not those of the child. This thesis will explore the implications of the debate for the state and the familial unit more broadly.

Cultural representation was and remains an important and complex part of the corporal punishment debate. How corporal punishment was depicted from the late 1930s to the mid-1980s shifted dramatically. Corporal punishment had long before had its critics in popular culture: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) opened with a brutal and cold narrative of physical punishment and bodily deprivation. More commonplace in the mid-twentieth century were more humorous and entertaining explorations of hitting children. This tendency to see corporal punishment as a conduit for light entertainment was increasingly challenged as writers found new ways to convey a more critical exploration of the debate, and as the corporal punishment debate shifted, a visible yearning and sense of nostalgia emerged from those who missed a more frivolous view of the increasingly contested practice. Corporal punishment was not only commonplace in practice, but it once existed as a cultural staple of light entertainment, with tropes such as husbands 'spanking' wives and buffoonish children getting their 'just deserts' being broadcast to both children and adults. As we will later see in chapter one, when the Mass-Observers were asked by me if they could provide any examples of representations of corporal punishment in books, films or on television, *Jane Eyre* was by far the most cited example. Over the span of this thesis, nearly thirty screen adaptations of Brontë's *Jane Eyre* were made, and how faithfully they adapted the corporality of the novel's opening shifted dramatically across the century. The corporal punishment detailed in the text was all but

ignored in the first televised adaptations in the 1930s, whereas the *BBC's* adaptation in 1983 faithfully included each stark example of the punishments of the past. Such adaptations of historical novels helped contemporary audiences to believe that the severity of corporality in the past was quite distinct from the relatively tame culture of the present. As Deborah Thom has demonstrated, there is a trend throughout the twentieth century of people seeing the present as a tamer, more civilised extension of a more brutal, primitive past.⁸ And yet, the death of Peter Connelly – known contemporarily as ‘Baby P’ – in 2007 was a stark reminder that the horrors of abuse and neglect are ever-present.

Using cultural representations as signifiers of social change has its complications as the road to abolition was complex, and at times could be deeply problematic. The 1969 film *Kes* gave audiences a brutal portrayal of both domestic and institutional violence against children in a South Yorkshire mining town. It is a film that pays close attention to how adults recognise, control and repress children’s agency in both the public and private arenas that they inhabit and is inherently critical of that use of power. And yet, many years later the children who were employed to convey this narrative revealed that they had been promised by the film’s director, Ken Loach, that he would call cut before the actor wielding the cane in the school discipline scene hit their hands:

We were assured that we wouldn’t be caned. When it came to the point where we held out our hands... suddenly we were in extreme pain... and we decided that we wouldn’t continue, and we went on strike.⁹

Loach had misled the children because, as he explained in an interview in 2013:

You can’t imitate that expression, you know. You can’t imitate the point where the cane meets the hand. So we just caned them really! I gave him a few bob, so within a few minutes he was very happy to be on his way to the piggy bank with an extra ten bob.¹⁰

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.227.

⁹ *The Guardian*, 17th October 2017, p.9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Culture may convey to us opposition to corporal punishment by bringing a gritty realism to the excess of the practice, but these messages could be constructed by deceiving children and beating them. Loach wanted a real reaction so that people could feel the children's betrayal. The hurt, shock and tears that were captured in that moment were real. What had been hidden from audiences for over forty years was that realism had been reality. Hidden too was the children's resistance to their beating which Loach details that he eventually paid off. Just as the film's editor brushed away the unwanted scenes, it is only within the recent years that the more uncomfortable details of the film's history emerge.

The secrets of the way children were treated in the recent past are emerging in a culture where approaches to and criticisms of corporal punishment are also far more prevalent in public discourse. In 2001 the *BBC* broadcast a documentary about parental discipline called *A Good Smack*, which placed a childcare expert in the houses of three families who used corporal punishment on their children, showing their transformation from violent, rebellious behaviour, to one of routine, reasoning and reward.¹¹ Three years later, *Channel 4* launched their programme *Supernanny*, which ran on much the same format until 2011, providing hours of instruction that eschewed corporal punishment in favour of more child-centred approaches to discipline.¹² This burgeoning exposure and access to the corporal punishment and wider safeguarding debate in the twenty-first century now extends to television series like *The Slap* (2015), which charted the social and legal fallout of an adult slapping a friend's child at a barbeque to, most recently feature films, such as *The Children Act* (2018) where children's rights are considered against religious beliefs.¹³ And yet, as present culture ever explores the debates and legal responsibilities around safeguarding and the corporal punishment debate, the historical record simultaneously becomes more opaque. As the legal implications of 'historic'

¹¹ *A Good Smack*, (BBC, 2001).

¹² *Supernanny*, (C4, 2014 – 2011).

¹³ *The Slap*, (2015) & *The Children Act*, (2018).

child abuse continue to unravel, the official records such as punishment books which detail the extent to which corporal punishment was used across the twentieth century and which were previously open to research, now sit closed in Britain's archives.

The closure of punishment books to researchers in most UK archives reflects the shifting landscape in which the historical treatment of children is being exposed and re-evaluated. For example, the Manchester Central Library details that their punishment books, open to research until 2012, have now been closed for 100 years 'as these items contain sensitive information about individuals'.¹⁴ At the same time that light is being shone into the previously more opaque history of how children were treated in public institutions, the previously transparent public records are made more opaque. Research had, of course, already been conducted by historians such as Stephen Humphries, who concluded that corporal punishment in late nineteenth and early twentieth century school happened as much (if not more) off-the-record as it did on them.¹⁵ This thesis will question the motives of the teachers who elected themselves as the purveyors of physical punishment, even if the extent of their actions remains temporarily closed to us. Moreover, this thesis will argue life history suggests that even if these punishment books were open to us, teachers were far more likely to employ punishments, such as slaps with rulers or clips or twists of the ear than employ the official punishment of the cane. All punishments other than caning or the use of the tawse were 'off the books', and therefore records of only one method of punishment limit our understanding of both the extent and nature of experiences.

When the *BBC's Timeshift* (2011) considered if it were conceivable that corporal punishment could be brought back into public use in Britain, the acceptance of the ruling of

¹⁴ https://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/23142/school_records_guide.pdf [Date last accessed: 15/02/18].

¹⁵ See Humphries, S. *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth 1889–1939*. (Basil Blackwell, 1981).

the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) into English, Welsh and Scottish law underpinned the reason that Tom Scott - one of the lead campaigners against corporal punishment - gave that it could not return. Professor Joanna Bourke, however, threw caution to saying ‘never’, citing the likelihood of torture returning before the Iraq ‘war on terror’.¹⁶ In the wake of the 2016 EU referendum vote, and with membership of the ECHR currently on the ‘Brexit’ negotiating table, Bourke’s warning was an astute one. If corporal punishment remains a present practice in contemporary private homes, as this thesis argues and the framework by which children’s rights had historically been attained is removed, the prospect of future attempts to return corporal punishment into the public sphere would be considerably more likely given the present trajectory. Many would argue that the tasers, CS spray and batons that are deployed on our streets are already evidence of the continuum of the corporality of the public sphere. The numerous attempts to bring back hanging since its abolition, particularly during Margaret Thatcher’s premiership, and the strength of public opinion for its return echo the numerous calls to reinstate the cane since its abolition. When leave voters were polled in February 2017, the return of corporal punishment in schools (42%) was second only to a return to imperial measurements (48%), blue passports (52%) and the death penalty (53%).¹⁷ Including remain votes, 27% of those polled stated that they would like to see the return of corporal punishment in state schools (Table 1.1). This thesis will ask how changes to the public use of corporal punishment happened, even as the public could demonstrably be seen to be against its limitation. For the most part of the twentieth century and beyond, corporal punishment has divided public opinion, and that divide, this thesis will argue, has helped to ensure its continued use in the last bastion of the private home.

¹⁶ *Timeshift: Crime and Punishment – The Story of Corporal Punishment*, (BBC, 2011).

¹⁷ *Yougov*, February 2017.

YouGov Survey Results @joetwyman

Sample Size: 2060 GB Adults
Fieldwork: 21st - 22nd February 2017

	EU Ref 2016		
	Total	Remain	Leave
Weighted Sample	2060	810	880
Unweighted Sample	2060	825	881
	%	%	%

Do you think the following things should or should not be brought back once Britain leave the European Union?

[Percentage who say 'Should be brought back']

The death penalty	36	20	53
Dark blue passports	31	16	52
Selling goods in pounds and ounces	30	16	48
Corporal punishment in schools	27	14	42
Traditional incandescent light bulbs	19	9	30
Smoking in pubs and restaurants	9	3	11
Pre-decimal currency - pounds, shillings and pence	7	3	9

Table 1.1: Yougov Survey 22nd February 2017

Childhood and Emotion

We were all once a child, and most of us can identify with some degree of certainty when our ‘childhood’ was, and when it ended. Our definitions of childhood may vary dramatically to our contemporaries, and yet we tend to define our childhood as a past experience: perhaps even a past self. As Claudia Jarzebawski states, the commonality of life and death ‘obscures a complexity of meanings and interpretations’ embedded within our understanding of childhood.¹⁸ Although we may understand childhood through the fact of biological development, such as the typically western construction of childhood ending at an age of sexual ‘maturity’, our own meanings of childhood and how we understand them are historically specific and vary comparatively throughout time and location. Throughout history the proposed divisions within the human lifecycle, and childhood’s place within this segmentation, have varied dramatically. These differing demarcations of the lifecycle can seem arbitrary and idiosyncratic, revealing more about the differences between the societies and cultures from which they originate than many of the emotional commonalities shared between them.¹⁹

¹⁸ Jarzebawski, C & Safley, T (eds.) *Childhood and Emotion: Across Cultures 1450-1800*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2003), p.1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

One commonality of experiences and emotions that is particularly active during my research period stems from both the public and private use of corporal punishment. Its use throughout the twentieth century was for a time applicable to both those within and outside of a rapidly shifting boundary of childhood, with adults subject to judicial birching as well as young persons and infants. After the Second World War, courts were no longer able to physically punish, and yet institutionally, in domestic, punitive, and educational environments, corporal punishment continued to shape the emotional and physical landscape of both childhood and adulthood. However, the only institutions which remained able to legally practice after a decade dominated by Thatcherism were the seemingly stalwart private school and the increasingly contested boundary of the private home. Recent sociological research suggests that although the abolishment of public corporal punishment was deemed a victory by those against its use, its retention and continued use within the private sphere suggests a shift in context – from a public to a far more private arena – and not a significant shift in its practice in that arena. Corporal punishment remains a present feature of many childhoods, and its use has likely been shaped by either or both of those children’s parents’ experiences of corporal punishment as a child.

My research into corporal punishment sits between childhood and emotion, two emerging fields within both social and cultural history. Emotion and childhood were forged as a primary focus by Philip Ariès in his canonical work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962).²⁰ His contention that notions of childhood shifted according to historical context has underpinned all subsequent enquiry into this field. Primarily through visual art and culture, Ariès reasoned that childhood emerged in the fifteenth but blossomed in the eighteenth century; the middle ages had no concept of the child, and childhood was created by the rising bourgeoisie, the separation

²⁰ Ariès, P. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York, 1962).

of work and education from the household limiting children's access to the adult world.²¹ As many of Ariès' critics have suggested, this particular hypothesis suggests a continuous path toward civilising childhood; a point which sits particularly in contrast with discourses emerging within the history of emotions. The foundations of the history of emotions lay with the early twentieth century Annales School – a historical movement that sought to 'chart the daily experiences of ordinary people', and the 'slow rhythms of change that gradually altered lives and cultures.'²² Annales historians such Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel, and, more recently, Roger Chartier, studied the history of daily activity, private life, and the mentalities of earlier generations.²³

The so-called 'father' of the history of emotions, Lucien Febvre, called for the inclusion of emotions into historical thought and study, and the application of theories and methods of sociology and psychology to history. Arguing that societies were a conglomerate of different forces, structures and interests, he stated that emotions were a primary interest 'due to the role they play in shaping people's attitudes, perceptions and behaviours'.²⁴ Febvre proposed that emotions transformed individuals into masses that could be blindly manipulated by political powers. Reason, the implied opposite of emotion, therefore emerged as a defining characteristic of modernity. Working within both Ariès and Febvre's parameters, Jean Delumeau argued that the irrationality by which the emotion of fear pervaded early-modern society suggested a society akin to an amorphous mass, rather than as a collective of individuals differentiated according to their origins, interests, incomes and situations.²⁵ Subsequently the history of

²¹ *Ibid*, pp.143-145.

²² Matt, S, 'Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out' in *Emotion Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (January 2011) pp.117-118.

²³ *Ibid*.

²⁴ Febvre, L, "Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past" in Burke, P (ed) *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (New York, 1973), pp 12-26.

²⁵ Cited in Jarzebawski, C & Safley, T (eds.) *Childhood and Emotion*, p.9.

emotions became something of a retrograde subject, because it was seen to have ‘played no essential role in – was a hindrance to – human progresses’.²⁶

It has been proposed that, despite its historical decline, its resurgence from the 1980s until now has created an ‘emotional turn’ within historical analysis.²⁷ The 1980s saw a highpoint of emotional focus, which emanated from a post-war emphasis on history from below, or as Susan Matt states, ‘writing histories from the inside out’.²⁸ The history of emotions has since explored the histories of lust and love and nostalgia and grief, by attempting to recover the history of subjectivity. As Matt argues, ‘in doing so they uncover intention, motivation, and values that might be invisible if only external behaviours (the traditional subject of history) are traced.’²⁹ Within this framework it is possible to begin to recover the boundaries between public and private feeling toward corporal punishment. As Claire Langhamer’s work on capital punishment has demonstrated, the reconfiguration of emotion in the public sphere towards a greater expressiveness was exemplified in debates about and reactions to the hanging debate.³⁰ Langhamer adds considerable weight to Adrian Bingham’s sense of the 1950s as a ‘pivotal decade during which the boundaries between public and private began to crumble’, and provides an important axis for the central period of my own research topic.³¹

This thesis owes much to the recent scholarship in the burgeoning field of childhood and of childhood and emotion. Louise Jackson and Angela Bartie’s study *Policing Youth*, and Mathew Thomson’s *Lost Freedom* have helped to shape my ideas on sexuality, the complex

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.5.

²⁷ Plamper, J. ‘The history of emotions: An interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns’ in *History and Theory*, 49, 2010, pp. 237–265.

²⁸ Matt, S, ‘Current Emotion Research in History: Or, Doing History from the Inside Out,’ *Emotion Review* 3, no. 1 (January 2011): p.118.

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ Langhamer, C. “‘The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour’: Capital Punishment and the Politics of Emotion, 1945–1957’ in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 2012).

³¹ *Ibid*, p.429.

nature of the shifting meanings of home and neighbourhood, and the particular ways that local cultures of criminality can be defined differently according to the gender of the child found wanting. Jackson and Bartie's study challenges the often argued notion that 'punitiveness' and 'liberalisation' were successively applied but, rather, can be seen to co-exist in post-war approaches to youth delinquency.³² Their forensic attention to overlaps as well as the shifts in penal reform reveals a less coherent narrative of extensive systemic change and one rather of incremental intersection and synergy.³³ How I recognise that the landscape of childhood shifted in the latter half of the twentieth century owes much to these studies, particularly in their assessment of the subordination of youth according to the advances of modernity.³⁴

Children's subjectivities have been the subject of two studies by Hester Barron and Claire Langhamer, who have utilised children's essays collected by the Mass-Observation organisation during the interwar period. Their work has demonstrated that children were able to negotiate and carry often complex demands and expectations, even if they were, at times, contradictory ones. They also demonstrate that children could grapple with divergent emotional codes between different social arenas, and were 'reflexive and observant life writers, able to manage complex emotions and able to narrate movement between different spaces and different relationships.'³⁵ Their research is part of a much broader movement by historians to develop ways that we can trace and explore children's feelings and experiences and, in particular, how these relate to more normative concepts of adulthood and adult power.³⁶ This

³² Jackson, L. A. & Bartie, A, *Policing Youth: Britain 1945 – 70*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 220-221.

³³ *Ibid*

³⁴ See Jackson, L. A. & Bartie, A, *Policing Youth: Britain 1945 – 70*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 2014) and Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement*, (Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁵ See Barron, H. & Langhamer, C. 'Children, Class, and the Search for Security: Writing the Future in 1930s Britain' in *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 28, Issue 3, (2017), pp.367–389; and Barron, H. & Langhamer, C. 'Feeling through Practice': Subjectivity and Emotion in Children's Writing' in *Journal of Social History* vol. 51 no. 1 (2017), p.117.

³⁶ For a comprehensive analysis of current trends in the history of childhood and emotion see: Barron, H. & Langhamer, C. 'Feeling through Practice', p.104, and Vallgarda, K. Alexander, K and Olsen, S, 'Emotions and

thesis is then situated within this movement to recover and explore children's subjective understandings of the landscape of their world just as it began to shift both physically and conceptually.

The works of Susannah Wright and Hester Barron have both recently challenged and repositioned the role of the teacher as being far more in communication and collaboration with their community, as opposed to working against it.³⁷ Their research marks an important move away from conceptualisations from earlier studies, such as those posited by Stephen Humphries, which framed the school and teacher as a place and purveyor of class-based oppression.³⁸ Barron also highlights that parents in the inter-war years can be seen to be as more active agents in their children's education, demonstrating that their increasing familiarity with an interventionist state, and their ever more engaged position within that system, played a role in generating a greater sense of prerogative on behalf of parents to regulate the way their children were treated in schools.³⁹ This increased trend of a 'fluidity' of interactions between parent and teacher is also found in the works of Siân Pooley.⁴⁰ Laura Tisdall's research recognises a shift away from the more radical, 'progressive' inter-war approaches to education during her study of post-war schooling: a shift from a traditionally 'progressive' approach to a

the Global Politics of Childhood,' in Olsen, S (ed) *Childhood, Youth and Emotions in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, (Basingstoke, 2015).

³⁷ See Wright, S, 'Teachers, family and community work in the urban elementary school: evidence from English school log books, c.1880-1918,' in *History of Education*, vol. 41, (2012) and Barron, H, 'Parents, Teachers and Children's Well-Being in London, 1918-1939,' in Barron, H and Siebrecht, C (eds.) *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870-1950*, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

³⁸ Humphries, S. *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939*. (Basil Blackwell, 1981).

³⁹ Barron, H, 'Parents, Teachers and Children's Well-Being in London, 1918-1939,' in Barron, H and Siebrecht, C (eds.) *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870-1950*, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp.153-154.

⁴⁰ Pooley, S, "'All we parents want is that our children's health and lives should be regarded": child health and parental concern in England, c.1860-1910', in *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 23, issue 3, (2010), pp.528-548 and Pooley, S, 'Parenthood, citizenship and the state in England, c.1870-1914', in Barron, H and Siebrecht, C (eds.) *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870-1950*, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) pp.25-48.

‘child centred’ one.⁴¹ It is with a mind to these more complex interactions between parent and teacher, in an educational environment shifting between approaches that I situate my own research.

Corporal Punishment

My research will question how historically specific notions of childhood affect the subjective narratives of corporal punishment from the late 1930s to the mid-1980s. Although many historians have addressed the subject of corporal punishment, it is surprising, given the ‘emotional turn’, that the lens of emotion has been overlooked in this area. Similarly, the latter half of the twentieth century is scarcely addressed in historical endeavours. The full impact of the Second World War has been largely absent from historians' research into corporal-punishment, just as the more institutional histories of this subject have mostly dominated the field. When studies have considered the early years of the war, such as Meyer's survey of corporal punishment in Leeds schools between 1902-1944, they do so between the axis of education reform dates, and subsequently through the lens of institutional records.⁴² Life histories have played a relatively minor, yet significant, role within this field's historiography. In *Hooligans or Rebels?* Stephen Humphries influentially used oral histories to reconstruct parts of the working-class experience of education not addressed in these more traditional, institutional histories. His research, however, focused on the period from 1889 to 1939; ending upon the eve of war.⁴³ The work of Jonathan Rose and W.R. Meyer largely supported

⁴¹ Tisdall, L. ‘Inside the ‘blackboard jungle’, in *Cultural and Social History*, 12:4, (2015), pp. 495-496 and Tisdall, L, ‘Education, parenting and concepts of childhood’ in *Contemporary British History*, vol. 31, (2017), p.25.

⁴² Meyer, W.R. ‘School Vs. Parent in Leeds, 1902–1944.’ in *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 22, no. 2 (1990).

⁴³ Humphries, S. *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working Class Childhood and Youth 1889–1939*. (Basil Blackwell, 1981).

Humphries' thesis, that bodily punishment in turn created conflict within working-class communities.⁴⁴

More recently, Jacob Middleton has criticised their methodologies – primarily Humphries and Rose's use of oral histories, stating that the 'emotive issue of corporal punishment' renders 'autobiographical accounts unreliable'.⁴⁵ Citing the relative distance from experience to composure, he adds that 'feelings do not necessarily lead to an accurate representation of facts'.⁴⁶ His study marks a return to a more traditional source base – such as punishment books – which were a common feature of earlier studies in this field. It also makes an assumption that 'facts' are reasoned without emotion, which as my research will demonstrate, is as problematic to assume today as it was at varying points throughout my time period. Rather both inconsistencies and continuities between official institutional records and personal memory can be understood as invaluable markers to explain how individuals negotiate areas of significance in their past, particularly emotive ones, when composing narratives.

It is perhaps not surprising that corporal-punishment has long been subject to institutional histories, as many of the forms of corporal-punishment that exist have been devised, implemented and administered by courts and in institutions such as schools, prisons and workhouses for many centuries. The Young Persons Act of 1933 had defined the boundaries of legal physical punishment as:

to wilfully assault or ill treat a child in a manner likely to cause him unnecessary suffering or injury to health. Nothing in this section shall be constructed as affecting

⁴⁴ Rose, J. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*. (Yale University Press, 2001) and Meyer, W.R. 'School Vs. Parent in Leeds, 1902–1944.'

⁴⁵Middleton, J, 'The Experience of Corporal Punishment in Schools, 1890–1940,' in *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, (2008) p.256.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

the right of any parent, teacher or other persons having the lawful control or charge of a child or young person to administer punishment to him.⁴⁷

By 1938, however, the propriety of such practices was a question for institutional debate, and the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment (Cadogan Committee) was ready to publish its findings. Appointed in 1937 to review the 'application of corporal-punishment', the committee stated that the physical infliction of pain had been abolished for criminal offences by adults in every 'civilized country' in the world, save for those whose criminal codes had been influenced by British criminal law – that is, in a number of British dominions and American states, where corporal-punishment could be legally imposed for offences by juveniles and for cases relating to violations of prison discipline.⁴⁸ The Cadogan committee recommended, in this light, that corporal punishment should be abolished as a judicial penalty in England. It stated that whilst the impersonality of 'cold-blooded' court-ordered punishment was undesirable, the key justification for maintaining it within the home and in educational institutions was the emotional impact that bodily correction offered:

The Committee made it clear that their recommendation that corporal punishment by order of the courts should be abolished was not intended to reflect upon the use of corporal punishment in the home or in the school....If administered in the home or in the school it is carried out by someone for whom the boy feels affection or respect.⁴⁹

Lena Aktar suggests that Geoffrey Gorer's later survey of 1955 demonstrates a continuity between the 1950s and the 'attitudes reflected by parents of the 1930s and 40s'.⁵⁰ My research,

⁴⁷ Quoted in Newall, P, *A Last Resort? Corporal Punishment in Schools*, 1st ed. (Penguin, 1972) p.25.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Home Office. *Report of the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment*. (HMSO, 1938) p.199.

⁵⁰ Aktar, L, M, 'Intangible Casualties', p.226.

using hitherto unused Mass-Observation material from 1942 questions this sense of stability in mid-twentieth century Britain.

Lena Aktar's research locates the first half of the twentieth century as a 'turning point for legislative and cultural attitudes' toward the physical treatment of children in Britain. She argues that 'new ways of thinking about the child' were born from 'breakthroughs in psychoanalysis and discoveries by psychologists' which were coupled with 'greater legal protection' for children.⁵¹ This, she argues, was a departure from the attitudes and conditions of the late 1800s, when 'legislators were reluctant to pass laws that infringed on the rights of parents to discipline their children in their homes as they saw fit – even when discipline walked the line between punishment and abuse.'⁵² My research will question to what extent these legislative and prescriptive advancements were realised in practice. More recent research by Laura King has suggested shifts in the use and severity of corporal punishment in the private home during the latter half of the twentieth century. Using oral histories, Laura King's persuasive research into fatherhood argues that there were two discernible shifts in the decline of corporal punishment during the twentieth century; shifts away from 'beating' to 'smacking' as a mode of discipline were observed both in the 1950s and in the 1970s.⁵³

King's research sits apart from that offered by Deborah Thom who, like Aktar, identified the early interwar period as the key turning point in terms of the use of corporal punishment in both the home and judicial arena.⁵⁴ Citing a decline of judicial birching after the First World War and the psychological debates held around the compilation of the Plowden

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.234.

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ King, L. *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.73-76.

⁵⁴ See Thom, D. "Beating Children is Wrong": Domestic Life, Psychological Thinking and the Permissive Turn' in Delap, L, Griffin, B & Wills, A (eds.) *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 261-236, and Thom, D, 'The healthy citizen of Empire or juvenile delinquent?: beating and mental health in the UK' in Gijswijt-Hofstra, M and Marland, H (eds.), *Cultures of Child Health in Britain and in the Netherlands in the Twentieth Century*, 1st ed. (Editions Rodopi B.V., 2003), p.189.

Report published in 1967, Thom argues that ‘parents and most local authorities had begun to abandon school punishment before the permissive 1960s.’⁵⁵ This thesis questions Thom’s timeline of decline, as it demonstrates that judicial birching significantly increased during the Second World War, discussed in chapter two. It also draws upon the significant evidence base gathered by the anti-corporal punishment pressure group STOPP, which clearly demonstrates that the practice of corporally punishing children continued long into the latter half of the twentieth century, discussed in chapters five and six. Andrew Burchell’s compelling recent research into corporal punishment similarly argues that there is ‘ample evidence for a much longer continuation in frequency and severity than previous research has acknowledged.’⁵⁶ Exploring the cultural and social responses to school corporal punishment in relation to debates around teachers’ *in loco parentis* position in post-1945 English schools, Burchell persuasively argues that although ultimately a result of an ECHR ruling, the abolition of corporal punishment is allied to a much longer shift in the position and form of parental rights across the twentieth century in Britain.⁵⁷ Indeed, he argues that in the years before corporal punishment fell in state schools, the issue had emerged as less concerned by the restriction of state power over children than ‘limiting professional power.’⁵⁸

Research Questions

My research asks three key questions about corporal punishment and its emotional history. First, I ask what the balance was between the public and private use of, and opinion toward, corporal punishment across my time period. The sources by which I will do so will include the discursive and subjective materials gathered by Mass-Observation, which I will shortly discuss. This question will also be evaluated with a wide range of other source material

⁵⁵ Thom, D. “Beating Children is Wrong”, p. 236.

⁵⁶ Burchell, A, ‘*In Loco Parentis*, Corporal Punishment and the Moral Economy of Discipline in English Schools, 1945-1986, in *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2018), pp. 552-553.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.564.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

including evidence relating to the Departmental Committees and educational reform, held at The National Archives, cultural representations, sociological studies, life histories, popular culture and the wider print media. Whilst qualitative approaches underpin my research methodology, quantitative methods will be utilised where appropriate, not least in the analysis of large-scale survey evidence. It is within this thick, discursive and subjective material that we can better understand the ‘why’ behind the binary of opinion polls, and better understand how that opinion has been shaped, moulded and how malleable it has been over time.

Second, I ask how understandings of the emotional and rational affected people’s attitudes toward state control of the body. Here, Mass-Observation’s material will be invaluable in discerning the levels of complexity within author’s subjective understanding of their beliefs and will allow me to draw out patterns and changes emerging across my time period. My collaboration with the Mass-Observation Project in commissioning a directive facilitates access to such subjectivities within the life histories of respondents who lived throughout my period of enquiry. Crucially, this new directive gives voice to the latter half of my time period, which has thus far evaded a thorough historical enquiry. By dedicating one of my directive questions to a verbatim transcription of the original 1942 Mass-Observation directive, I can measure continuities and changes in behavioural and emotional experience.

Third, I ask how shifting definitions of child abuse – both physical and sexual - impacted upon the corporal punishment debate, as concerns surrounding children’s rights and safeguarding burgeoned across the century. I will ask if shifting understandings of child abuse was a determinant of change within the corporal punishment debate. My contention is that corporal punishment may well be found parallel to other forms of child abuse, and in locating the existence of one form of abuse it may become easier to find the other. As Louise Jackson’s research has demonstrated, recognition and discussion of child abuse was incredibly rare pre-twentieth century. The number of prosecutions were extremely small, and the rare occasions

that child abuse were mentioned were typically conveyed through euphemisms.⁵⁹ This span of this thesis will, therefore, run through the re-emergence of child abuse in public discourse which, as it will demonstrate, became far more pronounced in the latter half of the twentieth century. I focus upon debates at the time of state-school abolition in the mid-1980s, when child-abuse became exposed to an unprecedented level. Particular attention will be paid to media discourses that emerged from the mid-1960s to the 1970s pertaining to child abuse, and popular culture which in turn questioned and shaped the boundaries of conceptualisations of punishment and abuse during the 1980s.

While many cases studies are explored, they are naturally limited for the economy of this thesis. This is by no means to suggest that those omitted from this study are inconsequential. An example of omission is the case of the physical abuse and resultant death of Dennis O'Neill in 1945, the two enquiries into which have widely been recognised as a contributory factor leading to the Children Act of 1948.⁶⁰ The 'Moors Murders', for example, while already widely studied have been privileged as a case study in this thesis for two key reasons. The case loomed heavily in the minds of parents who featured in subsequent psychological research into child rearing conducted by John and Elizabeth Newson in Nottingham in the late 1960s, and, as I argue, the case also had a profound impact in shaping the idea of 'stranger danger' in later decades.

⁵⁹ Jackson, L. A., *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England: 1870 – 1908*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2013), pp.68-69.

⁶⁰ For further discussion on this case, see Cretney, S, *Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*, 2nd ed. (OUP, 2005), pp.673-679 and O'Neill, T, *Someone to Love Us*, 1st ed. (Harper Collins, 2010).

Methodology

A wide range of sources has been utilised in this study as a method by which to access narratives of corporal punishment across the twentieth century. These include court records, parliamentary debates via Hansard, ephemera collated by pressure groups, and children's games. None of these are unproblematic as a source base, however some may be less familiar, and as such I will now briefly outline four of the key types of sources that I have drawn most heavily upon throughout this thesis: Mass Observation, memoirs and oral history, newspapers, and cultural representations.

Mass Observation

One of my key source bases comes from the Mass-Observation Archive, which had been established in 1937 by three 'left-leaning intellectuals': Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge, and Humphrey Jennings. Mass-Observation was a social research organisation that sought to explore and unpick the largely unheard fabric of British social voice; a thread that, when woven amongst other such materials, would document an 'anthropology at home... a science of ourselves'.⁶¹ By consulting the diaries from their national panel, the discursive responses to their monthly open-ended questionnaires (known as directives), and by conducting interviews, ethnographic studies and employing 'observers' to record everyday practices, Mass-Observation documented many contemporary feelings towards children during and after the Second World War. These feelings can be traced within several file reports and in their 1940 publication *War Begins at Home*. My research will draw upon their hitherto unused survey of

⁶¹ Quoted in Sheridan, D. 'Using the mass-observation archive as a source for women's studies' in *Women's History Review*, (2006) 3:1, p.109.

physical punishment, conducted in December 1942. It provides a unique insight into detailed feelings about the public and private use of physical punishment.

Dorothy Sheridan, who played a significant role in re-establishing the Mass Observation Project in the early 1980s, has called the Mass-Observers 'a kaleidoscope of voices across the country.'⁶² The connection between Mass-Observation as an organisation and their panel of writers, which in many cases spanned several years, 'facilitated a degree of frankness which would be difficult to find in any other kind of survey.'⁶³ These feelings, according to Claire Langhamer, were held by the Mass-Observation organisers to be an instrumental part of gaining access to the subjective understandings of the panel of observers; the 'relational nature' of Mass-Observation 'facilitated the narration of such private worlds and intimate thoughts.'⁶⁴ Annebella Pollen astutely warns against the drawbacks of 'mining' one of Mass Observation's directives for quantitative data, emphasising that the strength of the project's method lies within it engendering 'complex, variable, subjective material solicited so as to access experience, opinion and feeling.'⁶⁵

In order to account for the extent of the responses to the directives that I will use, and to highlight the margins and variances between experiences and feelings, I will approach the analysis of this material with both a quantitative and qualitative approach. As I will later demonstrate, by accounting for the shape and extent of the feelings toward the subject of the directive it becomes much easier to locate and explore those whose feelings were mixed, or who simply refused to make a distinction between what they felt about the subject and the

⁶² Sheridan, D, 'Listening to Britain': <http://www.bigissue.com/features/1090/listening-britain> [Date last accessed: 13/09/14].

⁶³ Sheridan, D. 'Using the mass-observation archive as a source for women's studies', p.109.

⁶⁴ Langhamer, C. "The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour": Capital Punishment and the Politics of Emotion, 1945–1957' in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 2012), p. 424.

⁶⁵ Pollen, A. 'Research Methodology in Mass Observation Past and Present: 'Scientifically, about as valuable as a chimpanzee's tea party at the zoo'' in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 75, p.224.

reasoning they gave. Although Mass Observation's directives are not unproblematic in representing 'public opinion', they do give us access to a substantial number of contemporaneous outlooks and feelings that would otherwise be unavailable to us.

Mass-Observation's survey problematises Aktar's sense of continuity with regards to a 'firmly entrenched belief that parents were entitled to complete and unquestioning obedience'.⁶⁶ It also demonstrates that alternative methods of child-rearing, as prescribed by psychologists such as Isaccs, were not necessarily 'radical notions' to individuals.⁶⁷ By applying a more nuanced approach than a contemporary newspaper opinion poll allows for – for example locating those who refused to simply dichotomise between 'yes' and 'no' – it becomes apparent that Gorer's survey, which showed that three quarters of the population supported physical punishment in 1955, demonstrated that people's opinions had somewhat hardened in favour of its use since 1942. This adds further weight to Langhamer and Nick Thomas' readings of the 1950s as a period of 'instability rather than continuity'.⁶⁸

Within the Mass-Observation community of writers, it is possible to read where dominant public opinion lay, or where the majorities viewpoint stands. However, because of the discursive relationship that Mass-Observation has with its panel, we can also better understand the emotions with which many different reasons were upheld. For example, in their 1942 directive on Physical Punishment, the majority who agreed with the use of corporal punishment did so with often contradictory reasons. Whereas a newspaper poll offers only a collection of statistical masses with monochrome precision, Mass-Observation's method complicates this methodology by exposing the subjective feelings behind its observer's reason.

⁶⁶ Aktar, L, M, 'Intangible Casualties', p.226.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.226.

⁶⁸ Langhamer, C. "The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour", p.421 and Thomas, N. "Will the Real 1950s Please Stand Up? Views of a Contradictory Decade," in *Cultural and Social History* 5, no. 2 (June 2008): 227–35.

In a survey of over one hundred and fifty individuals which focused on experiences and uses of corporal punishment and how attitudes toward the practice have shifted, we gain access to the life histories of large numbers of people who lived through and experienced corporal punishment across the twentieth century. When we look beyond the majority's viewpoint, it is again striking how similar some individual responses are in their reason for being against the use of physical punishment in comparison to those upheld by those for its use. These sources complicate the notion that experience necessarily leads to change: they reveal the complex nature of social and cultural constructions of childhood and how they shifted across time. This thesis will ask why the corporal punishment debate shifted across a century that remained divided on the subject and will ask how experience related practice against a shifting tide of prescript.

Memoirs and Oral History

I will also use retrospective accounts in order to recover experiences of corporal punishment in childhood that would otherwise be unavailable to us. These sources include published and unpublished memoirs, oral interviews conducted for previous research alongside new interviews conducted for this research, with key former members of the children's activist group the Schools Action Union. Recent theories about the 'cultural circuit' and dis/composure, particularly those proffered by Penny Summerfield have been of particular use in understanding how, when and why when retrospective accounts have been composed.⁶⁹ 'Dis/composure' is used to elucidate the effect of dominant cultural narratives on how individuals can compose their own stories about themselves or their past. For example, if an individual can reconcile their experience with dominant narratives at the same time as producing their own account, they are able to achieve 'composure'. However, when this is not

⁶⁹ See: Summerfield, P, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', in *Cultural and Social History*, 1, 1 (2004).

possible, they experience ‘discomposure’ and are unable to successfully express their stories and experiences.⁷⁰ This method of understanding how and why individuals compose narratives has been particularly valuable when exploring how and why there are seemingly so many gaps in the archive when attempting to uncover experiences of corporal punishment and wider experiences of child abuse. By reconciling the emergence of cultural representations of child abuse against the composure of testimony that bore witness to analogous experiences, we can better understand the silences of the archive, and simultaneously trace when people were empowered to narrate their life histories.

In accordance with the recommendations made through the ethical review for this thesis, all names of authors of memoirs and of previously recorded oral interviews have been anonymised in this text. The Mass-Observers who were consulted as part of this research have also had pseudonyms attributed to the quotes that I have used, as anonymity is both guaranteed by the research organisation and, significantly, is a methodological imperative, for it allows respondents to be candid.⁷¹ The names of interviewees who were principal members of the Schools Action Union (SAU) with whom I conducted oral interviews for this research have, however, requested that their names are used with the quotes from their interviews. While the SAU has previously been written about, these efforts overwhelmingly focused upon the roles of the men (then boys) who were active in or around the Union, such as Ken Livingstone, Jack Straw and Tariq Ali.⁷² The role of the women (then girls) who played equal, if not more significant role in the Union has been virtually ignored. Actively writing women back into the

⁷⁰ Thomson, A, ‘Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia’, in *The Oral History Reader*, Perks, R, and Thomson, A (eds), 1st ed. (Abingdon, 2006) and Summerfield, P, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews’, in *Cultural and Social History*, 1, 1 (2004).

⁷¹ See Langhamer, C, ‘Adultery in Post-war England’ in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 62, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 89.

⁷² For example, Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, 2nd ed. (Open University Press, 1989).

narrative was a priority laid out by both interviewees, and therefore I have respected their wishes.

Newspapers

Another key source base for this thesis is the print media, with a particular focus on contemporary newspapers. The popular press is an invaluable, yet problematic source for socio-political contextualisation in my study. I have chiefly focused on the more popular morning newspapers, such as the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Mirror*, *The Manchester Guardian/ The Guardian*, and *The Times*. When focusing on specific case studies, however, I have also made use of local newspaper coverage. As well as contextualising the events and controversies that this thesis charts, another feature of the popular press that I draw heavily upon is their use of opinion polling in relation to the corporal punishment debate. For both contextual analysis of the press and its use of opinion polling, I draw heavily upon the meticulous analysis of the British popular press by Adrian Bingham, who argues that the British maintained “an insatiable demand for information about the habits and opinions of the public” throughout the twentieth century.⁷³ Bingham contests the notion that these publications were inherently and superficially ‘socially conservative’, demonstrating that they could often be significant distributors of complex and diverse knowledge.⁷⁴ As Mathew Thomson’s research argues, the media emerges as a vital arena for disseminating new ideas pertaining to child rearing, educational methods and modes of discipline although, as he qualifies, they were often discussed ‘as an object of critique rather than admiration.’⁷⁵ The use of corporal punishment was often upheld in the newspapers that were consumed throughout the twentieth century, and many of the moral panics surrounding the limiting of the use of corporal punishment that this thesis charts were

⁷³ Bingham, A, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life and the British Popular Press 1918-1978*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.97.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 265.

⁷⁵ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.8.

born in their pages. However, it is also the case that daily newspapers exposed those who exceeded the legal framework laid down in law with regards to the limits of the use of physical chastisement, and by doing so at certain junctures can be identified as playing a role in shaping that legal framework. In this regard, I analyse newspapers as both upholding and distributing socially conservative values and as a key vector of social change.

Cultural Representations

While I make extensive use of contemporary television documentaries, films and music that relate to the subject of corporal punishment, I have chosen to particularly focus on films and television dramas that were adapted from novels and memoirs, such as *Spare the Rod* (1961) and *Mommie Dearest* (1981). These films engendered controversy as cultural depictions of corporal punishment in and of themselves, but also were subject to criticisms from the authors of autobiographies and semi-autobiographical novels from which they were adapted for the screen. I argue that the controversies that surrounded the adaption of cultural representations of corporal punishment reveal much about the ways in which the corporal punishment debate was contested and understood throughout my time period. While corporal punishment remained a staple leitmotif of humour throughout much of the twentieth century, key cultural representations during the post-war period began to challenge this comedic trope by representing corporal punishment as a negative force on society; one that created more disruption and violence than it cured. Here I draw upon the work of Andy Medhurst whose influential work highlighted the imperative to look beyond the text into its cultural, historical and social context.⁷⁶ My use of cultural representations therefore straddles the two key paradigms within cultural analysis: one which focuses on the history of the film as a form of

⁷⁶ See Medhurst, A, ‘‘Victim’ Text as Context’ in *Screen*, vol. 25, (1984) pp.22-35 and Medhurst, A, *A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2007).

art, the other which recognises the product as a mirror of society.⁷⁷ As previously discussed, I also analyse cultural representations - such as *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1998) - to better understand how retrospective autobiographical testimonies are composed. Here I draw upon the works of Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird to illuminate the effect of dominant cultural stories on how audiences subsequently compose their own narratives about their own past experiences.⁷⁸

Chapters

While the broader themes of this are explored throughout its chapters, its structure is broadly chronological. This is in recognition of the fact that although the corporal punishment debate spanned the century, interventions against it came at distinct junctures. Although these interventions did not neatly coalesce into decadal intervals, each generational expression toward or against corporal punishment was constructed in relation to the context of previous generation's experiences of and reactions to the practice, and each struggle to intervene against its use was constructed against previous attempts to do so.

Chapter one explores the 2014 Mass Observation Project directive (open-ended questionnaire) that was commissioned for this project. It was my intention that the responses to this directive should almost holistically establish the themes that will be traced throughout the project, such as emotion, culture, resistance and the public and private spheres, and these themes were recognised as important lines of enquiry through both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the discursive material that each respondent provided in response to my questions. Mass-Observation has been championed as a tool that enables researchers to get

⁷⁷ Chapman, J, Glancy, M and Harper, S (eds.) *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.2.

⁷⁸ See: Summerfield, P, 'Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews', in *Cultural and Social History*, 1, 1 (2004), and Peniston-Bird, C and Summerfield, P, *Contesting Home Defence: Men, Women and the Home Guard in the Second World War*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 2007).

at the messiness of the subjective understandings and reasonings that ordinary people have for any given subject. Quantitative studies, such as opinion polls, have been held as inferior to this kind of thick, complex discursive reasoning as the latter necessitates that people choose one particular position, making that position, as Jennifer Purcell states ‘solidified and unchanging, reaching into the past and projecting into the future’.⁷⁹ My approach – of both analysing the material qualitatively and quantitatively – helps us to get at both the overarching answers and, crucially, the complex reasons that people provide for answering thusly. It also helps us to better understand how seemingly similar answers to the same question can be based upon radically different reasonings. This mixed methods approach is particularly appropriate for analysing this material, for Mass-Observation believed that ‘qualitative and quantitative approaches were necessarily reconcilable approaches’.⁸⁰ This method helps us to see how frequencies and trends emerge throughout a survey; movements that can then be interrogated through other methodologies, such as by analysing school records, newspaper archives and life histories, through diaries or oral interviews. The results of this chapter provided the basis and terms by which the subsequent chapters were researched and interrogated and is, therefore, the backbone of the thesis.

Chapter two interrogates the landscape of childhood throughout the Second World War, and it reveals that the dislocation of family life and schooling routines created a division between the public and private in profoundly contradictory terms. It examines the way in which the evacuation of civilian children exposed the fault lines between understandings of the duty of public care and the expectations of motherhood. It exposes how the burgeoning use of public corporal punishment throughout the war courts facilitated the notion that motherhood – profoundly reshaped by expectations of national service - was putting the ‘problem’ into

⁷⁹ Purcell, J, *Beyond Home: Housewives and the Nation, Public and Private Identities, 1939-1949*, PhD Thesis (University of Sussex, 2008), p.16.

⁸⁰ Langhamer, C. “The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour”, p.418.

impressions of the ‘problem child’. The battleground that was forged around public concerns about juvenile delinquency would foreground the impetus of post-war governments to secure family life, and to re-assert pre-war notions of family values with their linchpin – corporal punishment. However, as this chapter concludes with the aid of a Mass-Observation survey from 1942, many people simply refused to dichotomise between concepts of ‘reason’ and ‘emotion’ when articulating their feelings for and against corporally punishing children, and experience was cited as a legitimate basis for rejecting the practice. This chapter adds further weight to the Second World War being a watershed moment in the emotional revolution.⁸¹

Chapter three challenges the idea that the immediate post-war period was one of conformity and stability but, rather, should be seen as a period of tension and of significant change with regards to corporal punishment. The forging of a post war consensus saw the two major political parties come together to end the use of the birch in 1948. And yet, the abolition of public corporal punishment for children saw a significant public reaction against its loss. Moreover, rising public concern about juvenile delinquency meant that the private home became the more legitimate space for corporal punishment in post-war Britain. The post-war home, however, was being divided in often contradictory ways, and the fault lines between the prescription of child-centred approaches to motherhood and the home being idealised as a place where punitive mores were to be implemented began to emerge. The active reassertion of fatherly authority during the post-war centralised the private sphere as the more legitimate space for discipline over public control and, based upon further survey material, this chapter will argue that the immediate post-war period should be recognised as a more punitive period than the decade that preceded it.

⁸¹ Langhamer, C, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), p.9.

Chapter four will show how corporal punishment remained a significantly used mode of correction, refuting the notion that the ‘permissive turn’ so characteristically applied to the 1960s saw the erosion of punitive mores and the breakdown of social relations.⁸² The use of social surveys and life histories suggest that corporal punishment continued to be deployed across all classes and across all kinds of schools during the 1960s, even as public corporal punishment fell for adults. This chapter will question why, in a decade often defined by its permissive legislation, such as the abolition of capital punishment and the introduction of the Abortion Act, that children were significantly disadvantaged in the attainment of bodily rights. This chapter will ask why significant gains were made in favour of the private body, but why children’s and women’s bodies remained significantly more in danger of bodily harm than men.

Chapter five argues that the Children’s Liberation Movement which had grown from 1960s liberation movements, permeated into the counter-cultural liberation movements of the 1970s, and emerged as a vocal opponent to corporal punishment in Britain, who stood alone as the only flogging nation amongst the newly-entered Common Market. Moreover, it demonstrates that it was children, and not adults who were the drivers of the corporal punishment debate during the 1970s. It charts the actions of the Schools Action Union (SAU); a children’s movement that conducted a nation-wide campaign against corporal punishment from 1968 until 1974. It argues that the SAU were about as revolutionary as the corporal punishment debate got during the twentieth century, and their efforts were frustrated by an increasingly hostile government. Part of a growing shift in the expression of subjective feeling within political thought, the SAU embodied and, in many respects, realised the idea that

⁸² Thom, D. “Beating Children is Wrong”: Domestic Life, Psychological Thinking and the Permissive Turn’ in Delap, L, Griffin, B & Wills, A (eds.) *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.263.

children should participate in their own liberation; that children should gain participatory rights to facilitate their involvement in decision making.

The last chapter (six) traces the corporal punishment debate through Thatcher's Britain and demonstrates how corporal punishment in state schools fell from use despite the government's determination to keep the practice. Margaret Thatcher, a determined flogger and hanger would dramatically fail to prevent a vote that abolished corporal punishment in state schools across Britain. It demonstrates that significant progress was made by pressure groups such as the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP), who followed in the footsteps of the SAU and publicly and effectively campaigned for the abolition of corporal punishment. While the SAU had been dragged into the very adult world of conspiracy trials, and had suffered as a viable movement as consequence, STOPP made full use of the European Court of Human Rights and campaigned for legislative interventions that would end corporal punishment in Britain's schools. The corporal punishment debate was won because of the efforts of individuals who worked between the activism carried out on the streets, in classrooms and in the corridors of power. It was this synergy between grass-roots activism and more traditional routes of political power that brought the use of corporal punishment to an end.

Finally, in accepting certain parameters for the economy of this thesis I have had to make conscious decisions concerning the breadth and scope of its reach. Although case studies are analysed from across the United Kingdom, a great deal of the material considered in this thesis is drawn from English case studies; particularly those which concentrates on events, organisations, and activism in and around London. This is not to say that the organisations and movements outside of the centrality of London did not affect the ideas and understandings of the time. Both the Schools Action Union - founded from groups in Manchester, Bristol, and Cardiff and which had branches across Britain - and the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment, had broad roots across the United Kingdom. For the economy of this

study, I have limited my focus as a necessary consequence of the heavily municipal focus of these cornerstone movements. Similarly, class, sexuality, and ethnicity remain intentionally in the shadows of this thesis, although they are evaluated and discussed when they feature in conjunction with gender. This is by no means because they are inconsequential to the study of childhood, emotion, and corporal punishment, indeed I argue that the opposite is true. The study of how class, sexuality, and ethnicity intersect with the history of corporal punishment is significant for study alone. It is only due to space restraints that they are not prioritised in this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

OBSERVING DISCIPLINE: FEELINGS, EXPERIENCE, AND
MASS OBSERVATION

Even now the thought of this incident upsets me. I remember it from time to time, and I cry, and I regret that I never thanked the little boy who asked, 'Are you all right now?' even though I shall remember his kindness as long as I live. I cried as I wrote about this, even though it happened fifty years ago.⁸³

The emotions associated with corporal punishment are not universal; they are dependent on time, place and the dynamics of power in which they occur. Corporal punishment is the point in which the physical and emotional collide. At the point of impact, feelings and pain seeps across the already complex emotional canvass of the recipient, perhaps flecked with resentment and fear. There is no controlling that pain: the agency of the person inflicting the punishment dominates the power dynamics between them, and they ultimately control in that moment the emotional levers of the recipient. Even when we forget the 'reason' for that moment of pain, it is not unusual to recall the feelings that flooded our younger body when struck. For those who haven't felt the physical pain of corporal punishment, the feelings evoked when witnessing others being punished or indeed when experiencing cultural representations of the act can colour our opinions of the practice. Although experiencing and/or witnessing corporal punishment had the potential for children to reject the practice, overwhelmingly those subject to corporal punishment go on to repeat the practice on their own children in their own homes. Overwhelmingly, feelings about and experience of corporal punishment are often central to people's opinions on the practice. How varied and disjointed the relationship between experience, precept and practice is, speaks to a complex set of negotiations that individuals traverse which are calibrated by the cultural, social and political climate they inhabit. Corporal

⁸³ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', A2212.

punishment is ostensibly about breaking children's agency. How willing or able that child is to resist this pattern of dominance depends largely on time, place and the power dynamics between the child, its parent and the state.

This chapter will explore some of the central themes that emerged from a survey on corporal punishment that was conducted in collaboration with the Mass Observation Project for this thesis and will explore how opinions about the practice changed across the twentieth century in relation to people's experiences. After mapping out the shape of people's opinions, I will then begin to tease out how experience relates to people's feelings on the subject. As this chapter will show, although the respondents were ostensibly divided on whether corporal punishment should be practised, there is also a clear divide between generations on the subject. Those born before the 1960s were far more likely to support the use of corporal punishment today than generations thereafter. This chapter will demonstrate just how complex contemporary attitudes toward corporal punishment were, before these key themes are explored across the further chapters of this thesis. This chapter gives the sweep of experience and feelings toward corporal punishment – as expressed in 2014 – against which subsequent chapters will be situated. Although incidents of corporal punishment fell by degrees at various junctions throughout the century – beginning with the recommendation of the abolition of public use of corporal punishment of children in 1938 and ending with the abolition of corporal punishment in state schools in 1986 - the private use of corporal punishment on children persisted throughout British society long after the public use of corporal punishment fell. This thesis will ask why.

In 2014 I collaborated upon a directive – or open-ended questionnaire – with the Mass-Observation Project (hereafter MOP). Originally, Mass-Observation (M-O) was a social research organisation that existed from 1937 until the mid-1950s. Since 1981, MOP has been continually collecting new discursive material, partly with questions being put to the panel in

collaboration with researchers. My own collaboration with MOP allowed me to ask their voluntary, self-selecting panel of writers to document their feelings about corporal punishment from across their lifetime, and to reflect upon how these feelings may have been shaped and changed across their life cycle. As Claire Langhamer has noted when working in collaboration with the project, the ongoing nature of MOP has nurtured ‘relationships of trust over a period of many years with its volunteer writers’ which makes MOP a particularly fruitful organisation to collaborate with on a topic as sensitive as people’s experiences and use of corporal punishment.⁸⁴ Many ‘mass-observers’ have developed relationships with MOP for over thirty years, and, ‘offer their views and experiences of even the most emotionally sensitive life events in significant detail and sometimes in an overly confessional manner.’⁸⁵ It is this thick, candid and discursive approach that enables us to use MOP to explore the thoughts, feelings and histories of the everyday lives of ‘ordinary’ people on any given subject. As corporal punishment is an inherently personal topic, the anonymity assured by the project and the trust built between observer and project helps to break down the long-acknowledged barriers that exist between subjects of a sensitive nature that exist in the broader life-history method.⁸⁶

In firstly establishing the shape of the responses to the survey, I will introduce some broad statistics which will help to visualise the curve of shifting attitudes toward corporally punishing children across the twentieth century. This is by no means an attempt to unproblematically approach the survey as an opinion poll, for as Anabella Pollen’s research attests, this panel of observers is not wholly representative of society at large. Nor would such an approach help us to explore the complexities of the variable experiences, feelings and opinions that is so evocative of the thick and descriptive responses that observers provide.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Langhamer, C, ‘Adultery in Post-war England’ in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 62, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 89.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Pollen, A. ‘Research Methodology in Mass Observation Past and Present: “Scientifically, about as valuable as a chimpanzee’s tea party at the zoo”?’ in *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 75, p.224.

This mapping of the shape of the responses will accompany a qualitative analysis to better understand the scope of the complex, subjective material, and to highlight contested boundaries and variations in experience and feelings. The survey shows that although there has been a shift in attitudes towards corporal punishment, opinions are malleable, and change does not necessarily neatly coalesce between decades. With 151 detailed discursive responses, this chapter cannot seek to represent the full complexities of each response, but rather it aims to highlight the common threads of continuity that run throughout the survey, as well as examples that indicate discord or change.

Experience of Corporal Punishment

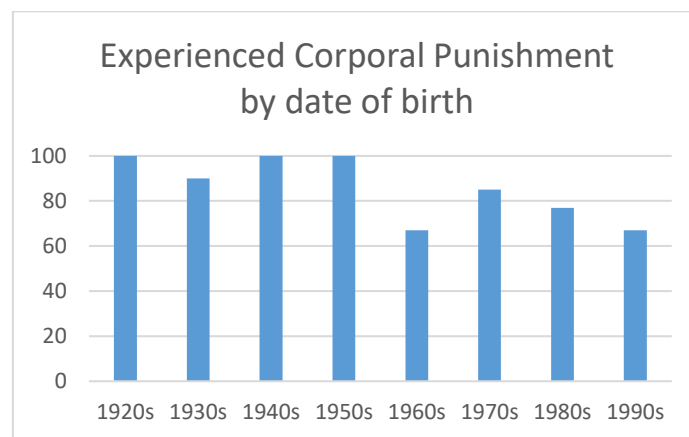


Figure 1.1: Respondents who experienced corporal punishment by birth decade.

One of the key questions put to the observers was centred around their own experience of corporal punishment. They were asked: ‘Have you ever experienced any form of corporal punishment? For example: smacking, caning or slapping.’ Of the 115 who responded, 87% of those who answered the 2014 survey had experienced corporal punishment during their childhood. Only 13% of those who responded had never experienced it. With such a high percentage of experience, a breakdown of the decades in which the observers were born indicates that those who were born after the 1950s were less likely to be corporally punished than those born in the 1920s (Figure 1.1). Of course, this mapping does not claim to be

representative of broader societal change in Britain, but it is helpful to begin to chart the shape of the survey, before exploring why children born after a certain date were less likely to be corporally punished. If we then drill down into the percentage of observers who experienced corporal punishment by gender (Figure 1.2 – below), we can see that girls were as likely to be corporally punished as boys until the 1950s and then more so until the 1980s. As this thesis will later demonstrate, although life history attested to this continued corporality of girlhood throughout the twentieth century, it was widely upheld by those fighting to keep the practice that girls were rarely corporally punished in schools. The 2014 survey, therefore, appears to gel with other life history sources, explored throughout this thesis, which suggest that corporal punishment was still employed between genders in schools and homes throughout society.

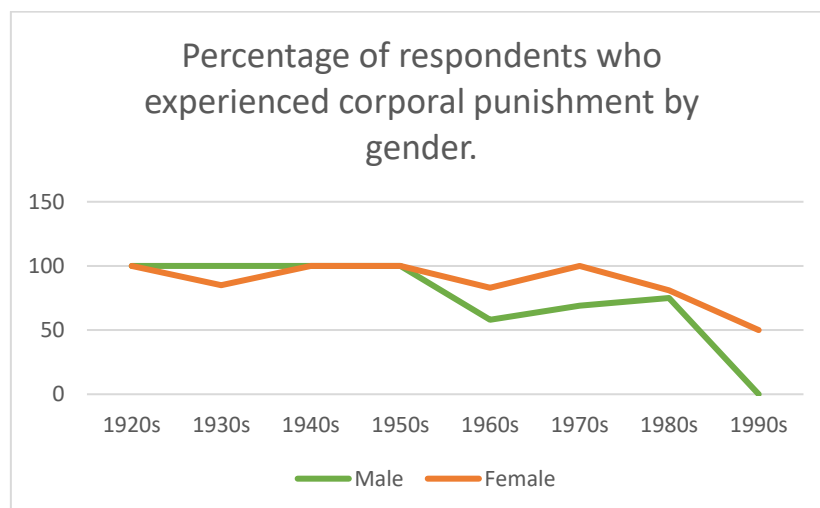


Figure 1.2: Percentage of respondents who experienced corporal punishment by gender.

If we look more broadly at who was doing the punishing, 67% of those who had experienced corporal punishment had been punished by their mothers, 58% by their fathers, 43% by their teachers, and only 5% by other people. If we break this down further into the decades that respondents to the survey were born (Figure 1.3, below), we can see that teachers were consistently present in respondents' answers right until the generation who were born in the 1980s and who were educated throughout the late 80s and 90s, when corporal punishment

had been abolished from state schools. Mothers remained the most likely to have punished respondents except for those born in the 1950s and those after the 1980s. Generally, respondents were only corporally punished in the home by their parents or in school by a teacher. Very few respondents detailed that other people corporally punished them, except for a few examples from those born in the 30s and 40s and later in the 1970s.

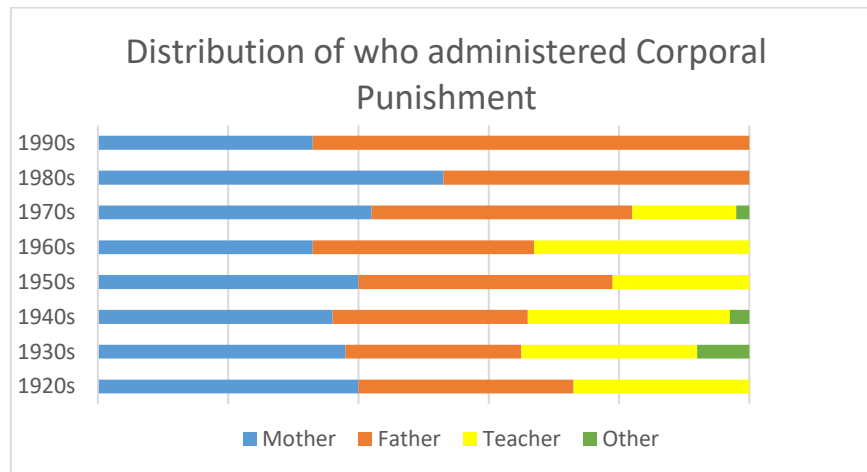


Figure 1.3: Distribution of who respondents received corporal punishment from by decade.

This survey shows us a shift from public & private usage of corporal punishment to a predominantly private use over the twentieth century. A child in the 1920s could be punished at home, in school, by a policeman, by the court, in prison and in a children's institution. By the late 1980s, the only place they could be physically chastised was the private sphere, and the shape of the survey responses would suggest that its suspension in law was an effective one. And yet, as revelations of child abuse continue to emerge into public discourse, it has become apparent that such examples of public punitive punishments continued despite the intervention of the law. These findings point to the limitations of surveying a small, self-selective panel, when other life histories continue to attest to the corporality of public institutions long after 1987. Used collectively, alongside contemporary records however, as the remaining chapters of this thesis will show the limitations of state intervention on the subject of corporal punishment become apparent. Corporal punishment tended to find a way to exist

outside of the parameters of the law when it was not a legal method of discipline. It is perhaps then not surprising that ways could be found in the relative privacy of a classroom to silently and defiantly avoid scrutiny when defying the law by using it after its abolition.

Views on the use of Corporal Punishment

Another section of questions related to the observer's current views on the use of corporal punishment. In total, 52% believed that corporal punishment should be used on children, although 7% of those who agreed with its use intimated only under certain circumstances. 47% of those who responded to the directive believed that it should not be used. Conversely, only 14% of respondents believed that corporal punishment should be used on adults, with 86% believing that it should not. The original Mass-Observation organisation had twice before asked its panel about their feelings about physical punishment, once during the Second World War and again during the early 1950s. I was therefore able to ask the panel of 2014 a near identical set of questions that had been asked of the panel in 1942. As we shall later see, in 1942 the Mass-Observers were almost identically divided, with 52% of respondents being outright in favour of corporal punishment on children, with an additional 17.7% citing limited use under certain circumstances. However, as this chapter and the next will demonstrate, the reasons underpinning people's justifications for corporal punishment had shifted dramatically over the century, and the relationship between experience, precept and practice is just as complex in 2014 as it was in 1942. One point of continuity between the directives is the propensity for observers to see the past and previous childhoods as a place of significantly more cruelty and harm to children. This thesis will question why.

If we break down the responses by gender, we can see that men born after the 1930s were increasingly more likely disapprove of the use of corporal punishment, rising to an even split in respondents who were born in the 1970s (Figure 1.4: below):

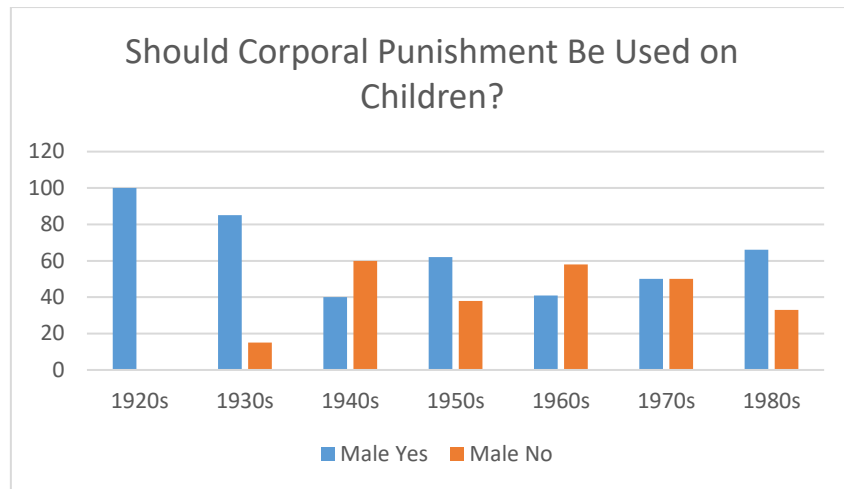


Figure 1.4: Men's responses broken down by decade of birth.

Conversely, when outlining the female respondent's attitudes towards corporal punishment by their dates of birth, we can see that women became more likely to approve of corporal punishment if they were born between the 1920s and the 1950s (Figure 1.5: below). It is more common to find women opposing corporal punishment in the survey if they were born after the 1950s, with an overwhelming majority against its use if they were born after 1980.

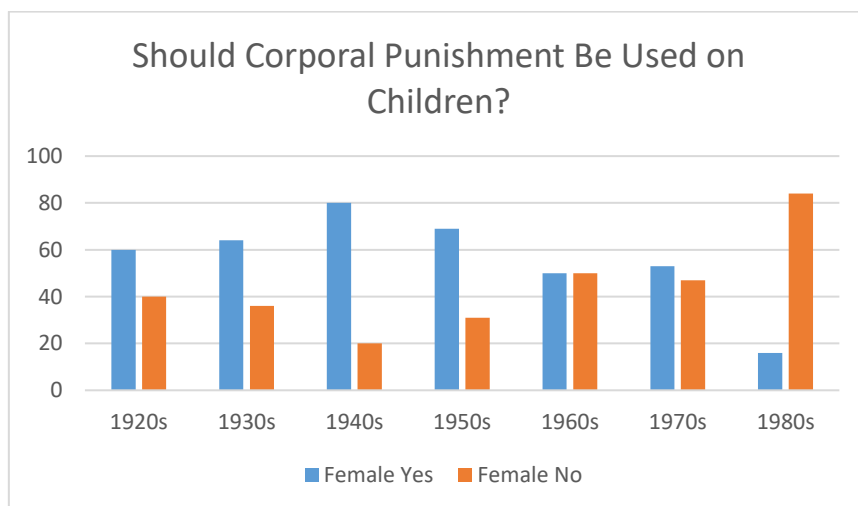


Figure 1.5: Women's responses broken down by decade of birth.

What is most striking is that in almost all circumstances, those who went on to use corporal punishment – even if they regretted and/or desisted – had experienced corporal punishment in the home, and most likely in the classroom too. 48% of the respondents had used

corporal punishment, with 51% with no experience of using corporal punishment. There were exceptions however, where husbands who experienced corporal punishment used it on his children when their mothers had no experience of corporal punishment as a method of discipline.⁸⁸ These exceptions help us to understand how complex the relationship between experience and belief was in the corporal punishment debate. They help us to comprehend that the context in which experiences shape opinions changes over time. They do not neatly coalesce into pre-determined outcomes but evolve from and are calibrated by the context in which they are socially and culturally situated. A good example of how complex the reasons behind these statistics are is the response sent by a sixty-five-year-old divorced female secretary from Cheshire. She details how she was caned, smacked and even shaken by her father and teacher. She was then beaten by her husband in the 1970s when living in Essex:

I suppose he felt it was the only way to knock some sense into me at the time, or punish me because I made him feel in some way inferior. In any case it certainly shouldn't have happened. I don't know how premeditated it was and whether he really thought this was the way he could get me to behave in a way he preferred? Is this corporal punishment? Well it felt like it to me, except there was no warning from him, and no discussion of why he got angry.⁸⁹

Here we can see how the distinction between corporal punishment and domestic violence is inherently blurred; the fault lines between permissive violence toward girls and women and that which exists outside of the law are the same fault lines.

The confessional-like nature that the relationship between MOP and its writers is apparent when the same writer then divulges 'my truly dark secret':

I do think the latter punishments did have an adverse affect on me, although I do have to take full responsibility for my actions. As an infant teacher in Essex in the seventies while in that marriage, and subsequently with my own very young son when we lived in Cheshire in the mid eighties, I did on three occasions that I can recall hit little children: not in a calm, premeditated fashion, but more like a cornered wild animal lashing out for survival. I knew at the time what I had done was terribly wrong and I

⁸⁸ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', A5197.

⁸⁹ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', T1843.

have felt remorse and shame ever since, even terror that if it was known about even (or especially) now, I would be branded dangerous, and/or someone deranged and lose friends because of the sheer evil of it.⁹⁰

We can sense from her rising fear of her treatment of these young children – ‘especially now’ – that the climate towards how children have been treated in the past has shifted since the 1980s. She added that: ‘I believe and hope that, with a different culture around physical abuse, I would now behave differently.’⁹¹ And yet, despite contending that her opinions had ‘changed over my lifetime’, she still believed that corporal punishment for children who do not ‘understand reason’ should be slapped ‘quickly and calmly on the bottom or hand just once, after a warning by a loving and consistent parent.’⁹² As this chapter will further demonstrate, the divide between prescript and proactive in the corporal punishment debate is a complex one, and people do not agree on how or why social change on the subject occurred.

Social Change

When exploring why attitudes toward corporal punishment might have changed, the panel had vastly differing views. And yet, regardless of their approval of that change, there are some enlightening threads that emerge across the responses. Many saw the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s as a driver of attitudinal change towards discipline. Allied to a growing focus on children’s rights, the media’s exposure of child abuse was assumed by a number of respondents to be a determinant of change in the corporal punishment debate. There was, however far less consensus on why this change occurred. For example, a 57-year-old female writer believed that:

physical punishment has become more repugnant than it once was. Probably the main reason for this is the increasing exposure of crimes committed against children. People in general are also more aware of the sexual overtones of flogging and other physical discipline. This greater sexual awareness has a number of important effects. It raises

⁹⁰ M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, T1843.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

the possibility that any incident of corporal punishment may have hidden sexual motives, In the light of this greater understanding, violence, abuse, sex and sexual abuse start to blend together in an very unsavoury way.⁹³

This observer believed that corporal punishment had emerged as part of a broader discussion on safeguarding for children from abuse, which is continuing to emerge. She continues that the:

Sexual abuse of children many years ago has come to light after the Jimmy Savile scandal... How can we teach children not to allow anyone to touch them in an unwanted way, yet at the same time say that it is all right for a parent or teacher to beat them? There is a deep inconsistency here, and I think that people sense this, even if they do not consciously analyse the idea.⁹⁴

The tension here between the safeguarding of children from abuse in private and the infliction of corporal punishment in the public sphere was also noted by a sixty-year-old Civil Servant from Weymouth, who stated that:

I think the revelations about the extent of child abuse from Maria Colwell in the 1970s onwards have focused on how wrong corporal punishment is. The idea that the 'institutions' sanction such behaviour, but such awful events take place in the privacy of the home could not continue.⁹⁵

As we will see later and throughout this thesis, the corporal punishment debate often centralised around the validity of the notion of it being a 'loving' practice because throughout the century it had frequently been upheld as being born from and executed within a form of love. Yet here, the extreme examples of childhood abuse in private homes which permeated through the press from the 1970s onwards played a role in answering the ongoing question as to whether such treatment should be couched as 'loving' or not. Moreover, this observer suggests that this

⁹³ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', A2212.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', M3476.

enlightenment of the extremities of private abuse began to make people question how the maltreatment of children in public institutions related to these private exposures to abuse.

The prominent belief that wider debates around child welfare, including around the sexual abuse of children, played a role in changing attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment is a common trend in the survey. Yet safeguarding concerns could also be seen as a less than welcome intervention by respondents, particularly when constructed as being intrinsically linked to a shift in deference between the generations. For example, an 84-year-old male retired shopkeeper from Sussex believed that: ‘[t]he increase in legislation for child protection and their rights in modern times has gone in concert with the decrease in respect for authority’.⁹⁶ In the MOP responses, this attitude is far more prevalent amongst those who were born before the 1960s. For example, a 92-year-old male retired decorator explained that although corporal punishment had pervaded his childhood and the society he lived in, this structure of discipline had established qualities of behaviour that have since been lost:

It is true that we lacked much in the way of material possessions, even warmth and food at the worst of times, and then always with the threats of physical retribution – but at least do-gooders were unknown and we were left alone to enjoy our childhoods. We grew up as real kids into one of the finest generations this country has produced.⁹⁷

Here, progressive approaches, introduced by ‘do-gooders’, changed the landscape of childhood discipline and are framed as a detrimental force which had taken away a tool which was not only linked to an authentic or ‘real’ childhood, but which underpinned a superior quality of citizenship across society. There is even a sense of patriotism attached to this bygone system; a lamenting of its passing.

If safeguarding children could be viewed as both a progressive and a regressive force within the corporal punishment debate, then there were those who believed that a middle-

⁹⁶ M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, S2083.

⁹⁷ M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, R1418.

ground was more desirable. A sixty-year-old female Civil Servant from Weymouth believed that the:

Public image has changed, the attitude now is much less accepting of any kind of physical restraint. At the same time many people feel that discipline has gone too soft in both schools and in the home. There should be a middle ground but it seems to be almost impossible to achieve.⁹⁸

Few of those who believed that a middle-ground was more desirable than the more polarised positions of absolute abolition or retention, explained how such a compromise could be achieved or could work in practice. A fifty-eight-year-old female retired nurse from Suffolk believed that a more central ground had been reached by the introduction of alternative methods of punishment that were tied to the material shifts in childhood and adolescent leisure activities:

I think the early 70's brought about a change in what was actually useful as a deterrent or punishment to 'bad' behaviour. Loss of pocket money, cancelling a trip to the cinema or football match or what would now be called 'grounding' became the norm.⁹⁹

A forty-three-year-old male warehouse worker from Stoke-On-Trent believed that:

Rather like the death penalty in the fifties and sixties it was an 'ultimate punishment' that existed mostly for its supposed deterrent value, this being largely watered down by the reluctance of those in authority to impose it because they lost confidence in it being either right or effective.¹⁰⁰

As the cultures surrounding childhood were observed to shift in the late twentieth century, alternative methods of punishment could be seen as a more effective compromise between traditional punitive mores and change in those traditions. Moreover, change could also be seen to be emerging as a result of observable inefficiency in achieving specific objectives.

⁹⁸ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', O3436.

⁹⁹ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', M3476.

¹⁰⁰ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', C3167.

People often also tied broader societal change to their own experience of their own opinion changing. For example, a 48-year-old male from Southampton stated that:

My opinions have changed. I grew up in the 1970s when it was acceptable to punish children by smacking, often on the bottom or the legs. In secondary school in the early 1980s it was still meted out as a punishment by means of a slipper, sole or cane. I was aware that although a debate over corporal punishment was active and that opinions and practices were changing. At secondary school in the early 1980s we had a music teacher who seemed to spend most of his lessons deciding who would get the slipper across the bottom, or sometimes the sole of a Doctor Maarten boot... I just got it the once, for whispering. It was humiliating and it stung, and I felt very hard done by as I was one of the well behaved pupils who never got into trouble. I didn't learn anything from it but it happened so we just put up with it and accepted this was the way it was. It would have been very hard to report or speak up, it was the prevailing culture and almost impossible for children to go up against adults in the way that could be done today.¹⁰¹

This observer's mapping of his journey - from acquiescing to a prevailing practice to a place of abolition - is tied to a broader debate about corporal punishment that he states was visible to him as a youth. And yet, he did not feel able to take an active role in that debate. What had helped to form his stance was his, as he felt, unjust and indiscriminate experience of being punished.

Experience of corporal punishment could also be made complex by contemporary events which threatened the return to a more regressive trajectory. For example, a sixty-two-year-old male retired teacher from Malvern stated that although he had once supported the notion that corporal punishment would 'solve many of the problems of the time':

... but as I became an older teen and became a rebel against societies mores with a greater understanding my beliefs developed into more complex ideologies of freedom and acceptable behaviours became greater than society was prepared to accept. I was at this time that I realised that violence of any sort does not solve problems and I have stuck with that belief to this day. I lived in Rhyl at this time and the violence of the mods and rockers towards each other was exciting as an onlooker but also very frightening as it threatened to overspill into the rule of law. There was much talk at the

¹⁰¹ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', D4736.

time from sections of the media that what these youngsters needed was discipline and a good thrashing.¹⁰²

Here we can see a mapping of a wave of fear that accompanied the very public debates around the reintroduction of corporal punishment that crystallised in the wake of the moral panic of the mods and rockers. It speaks to a tension between the past and present; between the severity of practices of the past and their desirability in the present. It suggests a grating resistance flowing against the tide of children's rights which manifested in public, fear inducing tensions between the past and present. Such fear - of returning to a more corporal landscape - is placed as a central factor in shaping his opinion against the use of corporal punishment. It also speaks to the role that emotion played in shaping the corporal punishment debate.

Emotion

Emotion emerged as a visible yet contested component of the corporal punishment debate to varying degrees throughout the twentieth century. As this thesis will demonstrate, emotion could on one hand be cited as a legitimate basis for opinion formation in the debate, just as it could be dismissed as an influence that impeded a rational position on the subject on the other. For the 2014 Mass Observers, emotion was frequently cited to explain and justify the treatment they received, as well as a means to explain why they rejected the practice. As a sixty-year-old female civil servant from Weymouth remarked, the corporal punishment debate was often framed by the notion that physical chastisement was reasonable so long as it grew from and existed within a loving family.¹⁰³ For a ninety-two-year-old male retired decorator, corporal punishment was 'part of everyday life', and it was effective because it existed within a loving home:

¹⁰² M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', H3821.

¹⁰³ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', M3476.

Chastisement in plenty there might have been but at no time throughout our childhoods were we ever made to feel unloved or unwanted.¹⁰⁴

And yet the centrality of love within a more progressive, child-centred approach to discipline could also be cited as the underpinning cause of the declining deference of children towards teachers and parents. For an eighty-four-year-old retired nurse in Nottingham, love underpinned the shift in the corporal punishment debate:

The public image of physical punishment, as I see it, started to appear in the late 1960s when the image young people tried to project, was LOVE. Sadly this went too far in the wrong direction.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, the emotions associated with being corporally punished were often cited as more significant than the physical act itself. For example, a sixty-seven-year-old female from Nottingham recalled that she:

didn't like angering either of my parents, mainly because I loved them both and simply didn't want to upset or disappoint them. I don't know how far the knowledge that I might get a smack if I transgressed also came into this. I can't say that I was physically hurt much by their smacks; it was more the fact of being out of favour that was upsetting.¹⁰⁶

This Mass Observer placed far more emphasis on the emotional dynamic between the fact that they existed in a loving environment with their parents and that their misdemeanour had suspended that important bond than they did on the feelings experienced during the punishment itself. This speaks to the fact that corporal punishment was not only a punishment of the body, but it also was a method of imparting particular feelings upon a child.

¹⁰⁴ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', R1418.

¹⁰⁵ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', M2061.

¹⁰⁶ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', F3409.

Explorations of gender roles and the emotions assigned to them were also explored in people's responses to being corporally punished. A ninety-two-year-old man from Derby recalled that:

Boys didn't cry in those days and you would go back to your desk to blow on your hands and keep quiet in front of your classmates.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, a sixty-two-year-old male from Malvern recounted that:

In the late fifties I was slapped on the hand with a ruler for being out of my desk along with two friends, when the teacher came back into the classroom after being called out. This was a badge of honour for a 10 year old boy something to be proud of. It hurt but I tried not to show it.¹⁰⁸

This deliberate repression of the emotions induced by corporal punishment speaks to cultural and temporal expectations of emotional conduct that existed, and how they were defined differently according to gender relations. This sense of duty in keeping a sense of composure in the face of corporal punishment is more commonplace amongst the responses given by male respondents to the survey, perhaps suggesting that these gender-specific expectations of behaviour were part of broader expectations and conceptions of masculinity during the twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ This stands in stark contrast with the histories that women provided, which suggested that the repression of emotional responses to corporal punishment was not necessarily an expectation of girlhood. For example, a fifty-seven-year-old female writer remembered that she cried openly amongst her female peers after being publicly punished for wiggling a stage curtain during a nativity rehearsal at school:

The teacher was furious. She said, 'How dare you! How dare you try to spoil the performance! You're a very naughty girl, do you understand? You're a very naughty girl, and I'm going to have to punish you!' She then lifted up my angel's robe and smacked me hard at the top of my thigh, with the whole class looking on in

¹⁰⁷ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', R1418.

¹⁰⁸ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', H3821.

¹⁰⁹ For an overview of British masculinity see Francis, M, 'The domestication of the male? Recent research on nineteenth and twentieth century masculinity' in *The Historical Journal*, 45(3), pp.637-652.

bewilderment. I went back to sit with the other girls, and I cried and cried, while they stroked me and tried to comfort me.¹¹⁰

Crying was by no means only mentioned by female respondents to the survey – indeed there are several examples of men recalling that they emoted in this way – but it was deemed to be a more socially acceptable response to physical chastisement amongst the women who submitted answers to the survey than men.

The detailing of emotional responses to corporal punishment was also not limited to the historical event itself but could be emphasised as being part of a continuing emotional response; very much alive in the present. When recalling the emotions that she felt when she was smacked during her school nativity, the fifty-seven-year-old female writer cited above documented that:

Even now the thought of this incident upsets me. I remember it from time to time, and I cry, and I regret that I never thanked the little boy who asked, ‘Are you all right now?’ even though I shall remember his kindness as long as I live. I cried as I wrote about this, even though it happened fifty years ago. As for the effect that this punishment had on me, it certainly did not make me a better person, but possibly it made me more cautious, more timid, and less sure of myself, and I was already extremely timid and reserved.¹¹¹

Here recalling the emotions of the past retains the power to almost relive those emotions; they are evoked from the past into the present in the process of recollecting. Moreover, the author suggests that this experience helped to shape what her emotional makeup is today – a ‘more timid’ and ‘reserved’ character. The feelings of the past are constructed not just as a remnant of an experience, but as a lived component of the present; shaped by the past. A sixty-year-old female civil servant emphasised that her opposition to corporal punishment relates to the feelings she experienced in the past when pretending to smack her doll as a child:

¹¹⁰ M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, A2212.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Funnily enough I do have a very vivid memory of playing with a doll as a small child & pretending the doll had been naughty so I had to smack it. This made me feel totally awful, I was sick with myself & I wished so much that I had never done it.

She added: 'So presumably if I ever had a child then I would've only ever slapped him or her once, if that!'¹¹² Relating past negative emotions and experiences to current opinions did not necessarily coalesce into an abolitionist stance, however. An eighty-four-year-old male from Sussex wrote how:

I was only caned once and that was at a village school in Cumberland when evacuated there during the Second World War. An incident occurred which annoyed the head master and he caned the whole class. As I was not involved in the incident I felt this was very unjust and resented it greatly.¹¹³

Despite his resentment of this experience of 'unjust' mass-punishment, he remained firm in his belief that it was a good release for parents' 'frustration' as well as 'correcting bad behaviour'.¹¹⁴ For others, however, resistance to corporal punishment was underpinned by experiences or observations of unjust or excessive use of it.

Resistance

Although the vast majority of respondents had received corporal punishment, there were examples where resistance to instances of corporal punishment by children and their parents were documented. For example, an eighty-five-year-old female respondent from Sussex recalled that her mother intervened when her brother had been subject to what she deemed an excessive use of the practice in 1935:

he was caned, and my mother, on seeing the red welts across his back at once set off for the school, all guns blazing, to tell the teacher she would not tolerate such treatment...I was shocked by this incident and felt, as my mother said, one should never hit a child.¹¹⁵

¹¹² M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', O3436.

¹¹³ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', S2083.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', K310.

This act of resistance by a parent, and the effect it had on her child, speaks to a thread that this thesis will chart which documents the origins of the abolitionist movement. The thesis will examine the relationship between local sites of resistance, such as that documented above, to broader movements that sought to banish corporal punishment across the century. Throughout the twentieth century, parents intervened when corporal punishment exceeded their expectations, and these interventions were shaped by, and in turn helped to shape the direction of abolition. Resistance grew from experience, to the streets and permeated through institutions into Parliament.

It wasn't just parents who resisted. Respondents noted examples where pupils would pre-score rulers so that they would break and ease the blow.¹¹⁶ Others, such as a forty-seven-year-old male, forged letters withdrawing parental consent, as the corporal punishment debate shifted in the 1980s:

At school I was subject to violent assaults from teachers, under the name of discipline. Fortunately for me, in my first year of secondary school, the law changed, allowing parents to refuse schools the right to use violence against their children. I forged a letter from my parents, and from then was free from assaults from evil teachers with slippers and canes.¹¹⁷

This act of resistance was possible because of the frameworks that had resulted from other sites of resistance. As this thesis will show, by the late 1970s the anti-corporal punishment debate had been elevated to the European Court of Human Rights, where two Scottish mothers took Margaret Thatcher's government to court. Its ruling in favour of the rights of parents to revoke the *in loco parentis* rights of teachers in 1982 enabled the above respondent to forge such a revocation from his school, ending the 'assaults' he had experienced. It was resistance that shaped his ability to evade such punishments four years before the anti-corporal punishment

¹¹⁶ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', H1543.

¹¹⁷ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', E5559.

debate succeeded in defeating Thatcher's government in the Commons in 1986. Behind each shift in institutional practice and each move to legislate to safeguard against child cruelty lay resistance from below. This thesis will explore why.

What also emerges from the survey is that the act of recording experiences can in and of itself be seen as an act of resistance. As we have already seen, respondents have recognised that the exposure of the abuses of childhoods past are a continuing process, with the full extent of public and private abuse still emerging. For example, a forty-nine-year-old female education administrator noted that her:

headmaster at junior school used to use the ruler on children's bottoms he ended up going to prison as it turned out he was a paedophile.¹¹⁸

She also documented some of the crueller practices that other children's parents inflicted upon her friends, such as her friend's dad who: 'used to scald her and her brothers' hands with the teaspoon from a hot cup of tea. He also used to use the belt on the boys.'¹¹⁹ The landscape that she recovers, of often extreme physical punishment, was one that continued into adulthood.

A friend of ours used to lock her child in the coal shed and drag her upstairs by her hair. This was in the 1990s. This was very shocking and I did not intervene and I have forever felt ashamed that I did nothing about it. I do not know what I could have done but I know that if this was a stranger and not a friend I would have informed social services.¹²⁰

It is here, in the context of anonymity, that almost confessional-like revelations from observers can help us better understand how instances of extreme cruelty could be ignored. Had this instance of abuse been conducted on a stranger's child, this respondent believes that she would have most likely reported the abuse. Here, because of the knowledge of, or the perceptions of

¹¹⁸ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', J2891.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

an emotional bond helped to cloak the abuse, and as this thesis will demonstrate, familial ties were an even more complex barrier to children's safety.

Punishment or Abuse?

Another significant barrier to safeguarding children was their ability to understand and communicate when certain behaviours exceeded the boundary between permissible corporal punishment and that which was deemed questionable, excessive or abusive. For example, a forty-seven-year-old male respondent recalled that:

The experience that is most prominent in my memory of being punished by my music teacher for answering his exam questions in a sarcastic manner... The man, my intuition now tells me, was a paedophile. His hands lingering far too long on my bottom while gearing up for the first whack. Violent disciplinarians are usually perverts, another reason to deny them the pleasure of inflicting pain on children. These experiences were in the mid-1980s.¹²¹

Here we can see the process of reanalysing the experiences of corporal punishment as a child in the light of the knowledge and experiences that the observer has since acquired in adulthood. There is a sense here that this experience was marked out in childhood as somehow atypical, with a developing understanding of why this experience was abnormal growing over time. That children were unable to pinpoint exactly why experiences were particularly discomforting in relation to more established forms of punishment speaks to the existence of a grey area, or blindspot, in the corporal punishment and safeguarding debates; a line between permissible punishment and more questionable conduct that children could potentially detect but were perhaps unable to articulate until later in life.

¹²¹ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', E5559.

Another trend that emerges from the survey is the propensity for more extreme forms of corporal punishment to flourish unchallenged in familial settings. For example, an eighty-four-year-old female from Nottingham noted that:

When I was eleven, my mother died, and when I was twelve and a half, my dad married again. Then it was my step mother who handed out the punishment, she had a baby not long after they were married, and made it clear I was not really wanted... I still have a very faint scar on the bridge of my nose, caused by my stepmother hitting me while I was drinking from a Bakelite...beaker, and it broke my nose causing a deep cut on the bridge of my nose. Another occasion she hit me with a toasting fork.¹²²

These experiences were shaped by the prevailing cultures of parenting and discipline, where the use of implements when chastising children was permissible, and as chapter two will explore, more extreme examples of corporal punishment existed without intervention by the state across society in private homes. This was particularly pronounced as wartime shifts in expectations of motherhood were severely challenged by the dislocation of everyday life at the Homefront. Although there were cases where parents or guardians were fined for brutal examples of maltreatment, for the most part excessive corporal punishment and/or child abuse in the home continued, unhampered by the state. These disclosures, then, are a window into the private home where adults turned to domestic metal kitchen implements and Bakelite beakers as their tools of punishment. They also demonstrate how experiences in childhood can shift dramatically in the event of parental loss and in the context of remarriage; from a relatively pain-free childhood to extreme examples of physical harm in the home.

How abuse was defined by the observers varied greatly. Other observers, such as a sixty-two-year-old female from Leeds, were keen to emphasise that there should be no distinction between corporal punishment and abuse:

¹²² M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', M2061.

Abuse is abuse and that's what corporal punishment is by any other name. It intimidates and frightens children and adults and that's what it's there to serve.¹²³

Indeed, the use of 'corporal punishment' throughout the directive questions that I had asked was a point of contention later in her response:

What I'm starting to get a sense of at the moment is my annoyance by the term "corporal punishment". It's as if somehow using that term legitimises/ sanitises physical/emotional abuse. It segregates it in a way from "abuse". As a child at home I experienced physical/emotional abuse. I also witnessed it.¹²⁴

This intervention details a reaction of annoyance to the legitimising and sanitising effect of separating corporal punishment away from a definition of abuse, and experience is used to underpin her rejection of what she believes is an unwarranted segregation and categorisation. Moreover, it intimates that corporal punishment should be recognised as both physical and emotional abuse, designed to 'intimidate and frighten', as well as cause pain to the flesh.

Corporal punishment appears to have been particularly effective method by which to evoke an emotional response in children across the twentieth century, in both the private sanctum of the home and in the public domain of the school. A sixty-year-old female civil servant from Weymouth wrote that:

Every school had a scary teacher, mine was a much feared man who would fling the wooden blackboard duster at anyone misbehaving. He would also smack the back of the children's hands with a ruler if their work was not up to scratch. I do remember hating him & his nasty, violent temper was well known to all the adults and children connected to the school.¹²⁵

Unlike the private home, the public nature of the school meant that there were far more observers to the extremities of teachers' punitive practices. And yet, as this response details,

¹²³ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', F4065.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', O3436.

such a known culture of fear and punishment could exist with full knowledge of parents and other adults connected to that institution. It stands in contrast with the more rebellious narratives conveyed whereby children and parents intervened by refusing to acquiesce to extreme violence.

Experience of corporal punishment had both the potential for the person punished to reject the use of corporal punishment or conversely embrace it into their own parental practices. For example, a forty-nine-year-old female who grew up in London detailed how her complete opposition to corporally punishing children related to both her experience of receiving corporal punishment as a child and her use of it as a parent.

The smacks were on our legs and were quite hard, they used to grab me by the arm and swing round to smack. This was in the 1970s on the outskirts of London.¹²⁶

Being subject to corporal punishment by both parents across her childhood extended to being made to wash her mouth out with soap, an act which she detailed really made her ‘hate’ her parents.¹²⁷ Although her childhood experiences were cited as the transformative factor in her own feelings against corporal punishment, they were further upheld by her experiences as a parent. Keen to stress that she only used it once, that experience further consolidated her resistance to using it again:

I tapped my oldest son once on the hand because I was cross and it was out of proportion and I felt ashamed and apologised and I cried. It was not him it was me being frustrated and cross. This was in the 1990s.¹²⁸

Experience of corporal punishment did not always lead to opposition to it. Indeed, regular and at times extreme experiences of corporal punishment were as likely to result in that child

¹²⁶ M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, J2891.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

adopting a similar approach to punishment that they had experienced as it was to reject that approach. For example, an eighty-four-year-old female observer stated that:

My own mother had a cane hanging on the wall, and she often used it on my elder brother who was always a bit cheeky. But I seemed to have behaved enough just to get a smack on my legs sometimes. My husband's father often stood him or his brothers up on a chair, made them drop their trousers and belted them with his leather belt.... I'm not saying this was a correct thing to do, but it really didn't seem to do us much harm.¹²⁹

She had experienced corporal punishment at school, in the home and often had witnessed extreme examples of severe punishment, such as her brother regularly having TCP applied to bloody cane wounds, which her mother maintained he must have 'deserved'.¹³⁰ These experiences underpinned her support for more corporal punishment in today's society; a return to the continuity that both she and her husband had experienced and upheld in the rearing of their own children. Central to this argument is the notion that although subject to more extreme examples of corporal punishment, they did not feel harmed by it. Experience therefore underpinned both abolitionist and retentionist arguments.

Severe corporal punishment could be seen as belonging to a different era in a definable context where a very different landscape of expectations of childhood existed. For example, a 48-year-old male from Southampton stated that:

It seems we value our children more highly these days, going away from the extreme Victorian value of 'being seen but not heard' and when infant mortality was high. Quite simply we know now there are better ways to treat our young.¹³¹

This mapping of a shift between extreme control and less corporal punishment of children onto their mortality suggests that the expectations of what childhood actually entailed had shifted across time. It posits also that knowledge of the benefits of alternative punishments had shifted

¹²⁹ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment' H260.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', D4736.

across time also. The burgeoning fields of ‘alternative’, non-corporal parenting that spanned the century married practices to expertise. And yet, despite the ever-growing prescription of alternatives to corporal punishment, there are many examples where observers believed that corporal punishment should return to public life. The eighty-five-year-old female respondent from Sussex - whose mother had intervened in her brother’s brutal caning and who had been convinced for much of her life that such punishments were always wrong – had ‘only recently’ changed her mind:

I feel the corporal punishment could possibly bring order to the school rooms. As to adults, I would almost wish that the birch might be brought back for paedophiles, but then again, they might enjoy it! ¹³²

This shift after a lifetime of believing otherwise reminds us that the corporal punishment debate is an elastic and malleable one. Although this observer thinks that the reintroduction of corporal punishment ‘could possibly’ help contemporary classroom discipline, it is significant that, after a considerable period being opposed to it that opinion on the subject could change.

Culture

Another question put to the Mass Observers in the 2014 survey related to corporal punishment in popular culture. Respondents were asked if they could provide ‘examples of representations of corporal punishment in books, film, or television’, giving details of how they made the observer feel.¹³³ One of the most frequently cited examples was Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, and this novel was exclusively cited by female respondents. Men were more likely to cite particularly masculinist representations of corporal punishment, citing Naval films and books with flogging, such as *Hornblower* (1938); Lindsay Anderson’s *If...* (1968) and Roald Dahl’s *Boy* (1984). The instances of corporal punishment in Charles Dickens’ novels were also

¹³² M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, K310.

¹³³ M-O Directive, ‘Corporal Punishment’, Summer 2014 Directive.

cited by both female and male respondents. Overwhelmingly people's responses to cultural representations of corporal punishment were negative ones and they were believed to be primarily reflecting the extreme brutality of the past. For example, a seventy-five-year-old retired teacher from Surrey wrote that:

Images of corporal punishment often occur in films set in earlier times, for instance in films of Dickens' novels or *Jane Eyre*. I do always feel uncomfortable watching these.¹³⁴

Similarly, a seventy-eight-year-old retired secretary stated that:

I am not comfortable with such images and have seen them in art, books and films. One of the earliest films that I recall was "*Jane Eyre*" with a young Elizabeth Taylor who played Jane's friend who died of a fever. All the children were treated unkindly to say the least and I remember thinking how could the school treat children so badly. It probably wasn't unusual at the time that it was written.¹³⁵

There is a sense here that the past is a more corporally punitive place, and the fact that it is commonplace to see depictions of corporal punishment in adaptations of novels from bygone centuries helps to reinforce a sense of difference between the practices of the past and present.

Observers were also keen to emphasise that the depictions of corporal punishment in novels such as *Jane Eyre* were evocative and even transformative in that they stayed with and even affected them. For example, a forty-two-year-old female shop assistant detailed that:

I read *Jane Eyre* when I was around 12 years old and clearly remember the description of one of the girls being stuck with a bundle of sticks on her neck as a punishment for having dirty fingernails. It must've affected me as I can recall it now as if I read it recently.¹³⁶

Very much opposed to the use of corporal punishment, this respondent intimates that the impression made on her by the experience of reading this depiction of that practice had such

¹³⁴ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', H2637.

¹³⁵ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', B1771.

¹³⁶ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', B5178.

clarity almost to suggest that thirty years hadn't passed since she had read it. Similarly, a thirty-two-year-old museum consultant stated that:

the image that came to my head immediately was Jane Eyre standing on her stool when she was sent to the horrible school. I think it's the element of humiliation that makes it stay in my head. I also think of Roald Dahl, I can't remember exactly what happens in his autobiography 'Boy' but I do have quite a vivid feeling of his description of being caned.¹³⁷

Here we can see how central the evocation of feeling is in the process of mapping of how this respondent remembered corporal punishment in culture. Even when the precise details of the narrative of Roald Dahl's caning cannot be recalled, the feeling evoked when engaging with the book is the overriding remnant of her exposure to the text, just as the sensation of humiliation is a prominent residual feeling from her consumption of *Jane Eyre*. Reflecting on this relationship between the feeling evoked from key cultural depictions of corporal punishment and her own feelings on the subject, she adds:

... I think all the incidents that come into my head say something about my attitude to corporal punishment – it's all about bringing someone down a peg or two, teaching them a lesson, making them powerless. I don't think there is any value in it other than revenge (which is a legitimate feeling but not necessarily something that will make you feel better in the long run) or pure sadism and bullying.¹³⁸

The most prominent representations that this respondent recalls evoked a feeling that underpinned and shaped her rejection of the practice. Seeing corporal punishment as either an act of valueless domination and 'revenge' or an act of 'pure sadism and bullying' chimes with some of the central themes of the cultural works she cites. *Jane Eyre* was physically beaten by her cousin and banished to a corporally brutal institution by her aunt in an act of revenge on her part to curb Jane's 'passion'. Institutional humiliation, beatings and neglect were an act of domination, one that Jane rejects. Roald Dahl's *Boy* was a far more masculinist expose of

¹³⁷ Dahl, R, *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, 1st ed. (Puffin, 1986).

¹³⁸ M-O Directive, 'Corporal Punishment', C4131.

institutional sadism, bullying and severe canings which was detailed in the posthumous 2012 edition, 'leave a lasting impression of horror upon me.'¹³⁹

Conclusion

One trend that is important to note within the survey is the propensity for observers to talk far more about the practices of corporal punishment that they experienced than that which they employed. By and large, people could speak at length about the punishments they received in a way that they didn't when addressing the punishments, they witnessed or used. There is also a reluctance or unwillingness to discuss people's partners' or parents' use of corporal punishment on their own children when questioned about their wider experiences of witnessing corporal punishment. A focus so heavily weighted toward experience as a child may well be in part because of the very framework that has built up around safeguarding children in recent times. History is less of a place of safety for those who severely abused children in the past, and the implications of divulging other people's histories and behaviours is different to revealing the behaviours you experienced from individuals who have long since been dead. As this survey suggests, people stayed silent about extreme examples of child abuse because of complex familial and social ties which existed in a much broader culture of silence about the abuses of children. The weight towards experience and not practice may well be indicative of the cracks that have emerged since that culture of silence began to crumble in the late twentieth century, and which continue to emerge in enquiries today.

This survey also demonstrates how central emotion is in the corporal punishment debate, how emotion is asserted as a legitimate basis for opinion formation on the subject, and how experience often underpins that legitimacy. There are clear examples where corporal punishment has been experienced and rejected, and where the emotional distress caused has

¹³⁹ Dahl, R, *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, 4th ed. (Johnathan Cape, 2012), p.187.

encouraged the use of alternative methods of punishment. Yet, these examples are by no means dominant. As this chapter has shown, the fault lines between experience, precept and practice were calibrated by the dominant culture. By and large respondents who experienced corporal punishment in the home and at school went on to use corporal punishment on their own children, and in some instances, other people's children. The fact that corporal punishment on children is seemingly supported by as many people in 2014 as supported its use in 1942 may suggest a continuity in thought and practice. And yet, as observers often intimated, there is a prominent belief that corporal punishment has shifted from an earlier, more brutal time in history, to one where a 'loving smack' is considered appropriate by many today. Deborah Thom has explored the almost cyclical nature of this narrative of appreciating the behaviours of today as being a progressive and diluted extension of the more primitive practices of the past. As this survey suggests, modern adaptations of older cultural constructions of harsh childhood corporal punishment could serve to uphold this sense of dislocation from a more punitive past, even as the history of abuses of children continues, slowly, to come into focus.

A prominent belief amongst respondents was that a change toward the treatment of children had occurred in the post-war period, with many people citing the permissiveness of the 1960s as a significant point of change in how children were treated in society. The survey itself adds weight to the notion that those who were born after the 1960s were less likely to be corporally punished than those born before. And yet, as this thesis will argue, progress towards abolition has not been a continuing, smooth process, but a disjointed and at times regressive trajectory. Change can be seen around the pinpoints of legal challenge and by the reshaping of the laws that shaped children's rights. And yet that framework only existed because of the shifting expectations of childhood safety that was the result of a century of resistance, research, debate and prescription. The corporal punishment debate was shaped by that activism, as was the resulting legislation that emerged begrudgingly across the century. Although this thesis will

recognise the 1960s and 1970s as pivotal periods which shifted the corporal punishment debate, it will argue that the roots of this political and cultural moment lay in the earlier debates of the interwar period which were significantly disrupted by the dislocation of childhood during the Second World War. The corporal punishment debate had reached a significant milestone upon the eve of war, with the abolition of corporal punishment by the law court being recommended; further defining where the lines between public and private corporal punishment should lay. As chapter two will reveal, the advent of war would put a halt to this prescript being implemented, and as it will demonstrate, public corporal punishment would significantly increase as the war fractured expectations of home life and familial structures.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.



Figure 2.1: *Daily Mail*'s 'Can You Spank an Evacuee?' February, 1940.

On 27th February, 1940, the *Daily Mail* asked its readers 'Can You Spank an Evacuee?' Seemingly no-body knew (Figure 2.1). The newspaper reported that councillor, J. A Ritson of Liverpool had been made aware that in:

...some places it was held that corporal punishment by foster-parents would be an assault, but he personally understood that they had the same right of reasonable chastisement as parents.¹⁴⁰

The Director of Education, Mr M. F Watt, replied that there was '... no test case, no code, and no legislation on the point.'¹⁴¹ Steadfastly, the very next day, the *Daily Mail* let the 'war-parents' share their views on the subject: 'They leave corporal punishment to the billeting officers on the rare occasions where it is necessary.'¹⁴² The anonymous reporter had in fact conducted a 'telephone-tour of evacuation centres' and assured that 'in most cases foster-parents have been reluctant to punish difficult children.' Moreover, it was claimed that of the 'hundreds of thousands of children evacuated...only one has had to be spanked'.¹⁴³ Considering the prominence of the article, and the expediency with which the *Daily Mail* assuaged its reader's assumed concern, it may seem strange that the publication didn't address

¹⁴⁰ *Daily Mail*, 27th February 1940, p.7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Daily Mail*, 28th February 1940, p. 3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

this subject again. The *Daily Mail*'s reassurances, however, cloaked the source of Mr. Ritson's point of enquiry: a case forty miles from Liverpool, which had appeared extensively within editorials such as *The Daily Mirror* and *The Manchester Guardian*, two months previously.

On 29th December, 1939, *The Daily Mirror* reported that 'terrible screams' had been heard from a house in Stockport where two young female evacuees were billeted with a man and his young wife. The neighbour who heard the screams stated in court that: '[t]hey were terrible and went on for ten or fifteen minutes.... I heard Mr. Harrison say to the child: "That hurts harder than the strap, doesn't it?"'¹⁴⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* reported that Mr & Mrs Harrison had been charged with 'ill-treating' children and were made to 'pay costs amounting to £2 17s 4d. No fine was imposed.'¹⁴⁵ The children, Rene and Jean, had spoken to a doctor and 'a member of the N.S.P.C.C.' of being 'strapped, beaten on the head with a brush and burnt with a poker'. The newspaper then detailed that the Harrison's plea of 'fair use' of corporal punishment had been rejected upon the physical and witness-based evidence provided in court.¹⁴⁶

Although detailed reporting of the 'ill-treatment' of children more broadly was scarce throughout the print media of the Second World War, recently documented oral histories and biographies of these years commonly contain instances of such treatment within schools, within institutions, and within the private home. These narratives find little anchorage in the public record system: the very nature of the privilege to physically punish children within these institutions nourished the potential for many to exceed the legal limits of these practices with relative privacy. Silence around these practices was far more attainable when it had literally been beaten into a child.

¹⁴⁴ *Daily Mirror*, 29th December 1939, p. 14.

¹⁴⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, 29th December 1939, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The N.S.P.C.C. pointed to continuities with the pre-war period affirming in 1945 in the *Manchester Guardian* that:

Much publicity had been given to certain cases of cruelty to children more recently, but these cases were not unique; there have been parallel cases time and time again over the past 60 years, and this was something the public did not always realise.¹⁴⁷

What had changed was the fact that the newspaper now printed an acknowledgement both of child abuse and of the fact that such abuse was not a new phenomenon. By 1945 the N.S.P.C.C. was actively reporting to the public that they had been blind to the historic and contemporary prevalence of domestic cruelty to children across Britain.

But the speakers at the 1945 annual District Branch of the N.S.P.C.C. at Manchester Town Hall unanimously agreed that those who had ‘ill-treated’ children should not only be whipped, as was permitted by law, but reasoned that:

...if we put offenders in the pillory at the top of the street to have their neighbours know what their faults were I think it might be a considerable help.¹⁴⁸

The suggestion here of a return of more literal public corporal punishment, the pillory – which was formally abolished in 1837, but remained stubbornly active until 1872 – speaks to a trend that is traced throughout this thesis: that the implementation of a more severe form of corporal punishment appears to have been a common reflex when being considered as an appropriate punishment for someone who has imposed pain on another. It also echoes the complex way that several forms of corporal punishment fell from use throughout the century, which almost always was faced by a current of resistance that sought to re-implement the practice. When parliament finally banned court-ordered birching after the war in 1948, heralded as a mark of modernity, in reality it went as stubbornly as the pillory had; remaining in prisons until 1962,

¹⁴⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, 24th February 1945, p.6.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

and most famously in the Isle-of-Man until 1976, and it is not hard to see why. But child cruelty – as evidenced by the N.S.P.C.C.'s candid proclamation in the *Manchester Guardian* - was now more visible in the print media, albeit perhaps in a fleeting sense: there had been a change during the people's war. This chapter will explore how complex that change really was.

For decades, popular culture of wartime childhood featured adventure away from home. Notions of provincial playgrounds - from C. S. Lewis' allegorical *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) and William Golding's dystopian *Lord of the Flies* (1954) to Disney's cosier *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971) - provided audiences with a window away from the realities of the wartime home and into a world of childhood fantasy. The evacuation of children was the vehicle that ties these three famous narratives together, all of which rely upon the premise of unknown journey as a plot device.¹⁴⁹ More recently, however, those asked to conjure an image of wartime childhood, may be influenced by a less romantic idea of that period. *Goodnight Mr Tom* was first published in 1981 and has more recently become a best-selling novel upon wartime childhood, particularly so after its adaptation for television in 1998. Although *Goodnight Mr Tom*'s central narrative addressed the topic of physical abuse, the dangers that the main character, Willie, was subject to were found at home at the hands of his mother. Willie's evacuation, unlike Rene and Jean's who were so brutally beaten and burned in Stockport, had been his salvation.¹⁵⁰

In 1986, Channel 4 released a three-part documentary, *A People's War*, which drew upon Mass-Observation materials and video interviews, to document the social history of the Second World War. It was one of the first documentaries aired in Britain to detail abusive

¹⁴⁹ Welshman, J, *Churchill's Children: The Evacuee Experience in Wartime Britain*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010) p.5; Lewis, C. S, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 1st ed. (Geoffrey Bles, 1950); Golding, W, *Lord of the Flies*, 1st ed. (Farber and Farber, 1954) and *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, (Dir Robert Stevenson, 1971)

¹⁵⁰ Magorian, M, *Goodnight Mister Tom*, 1st ed. (Kestrel Books, 1981) - The central character 'Willie' was re-named William or 'Will' in the 1998 ITV adaptation.

experiences of childhood, which had previously been absent from cultural discourses. Amongst the countless examples of life history which were used to problematize the ‘myth of the Blitz’ during the people’s war, the documentary shed light into the private homes of those who had neglected evacuees.¹⁵¹ Although *The Guardian* praised the *A People’s War* for its attention to the ‘reality’ of women’s wartime lives, dedicating a further feature to the topic in its *Women’s Editor* page, the right-wing tabloids rebuked the ‘rubbishing of a generation’.¹⁵² ‘There WAS a people’s war!’ the *Daily Mail*’s headline cried, ‘Don’t Rubbish Our War!’¹⁵³ Particular annoyance came from former evacuee’s letters, who were not at all happy with how their war had been represented:

...Many wartime evacuees came from perfectly respectable homes, had a decent education and were well-versed in table manners. My brother and I were billeted with a lovely couple who cared for us as they had no children of their own.¹⁵⁴

A People’s War was clearly a particularly potent statement in 1986, despite its narrative being heavily influenced by Angus Calder’s much earlier thesis of 1969. As Mark Connelly’s work demonstrates, in the 1980’s ‘Thatcherism caused much debate in the nature of national identity, a strand of which was the examination of Britain’s wartime role.’¹⁵⁵

Despite not representing ‘everyone’s’ experiences, *A People’s War* (1986) was cited in Ben Wicks’ ground-breaking collection, *No Time To Wave Goodbye* (1988) as being crucial in engendering testimony which spoke to similar experiences of corporal punishment. With interviews arranged by advertisements in newspapers, Wicks received ‘thousands of letters’ from former evacuees whose wartime experiences had not previously been acknowledged or

¹⁵¹ Connelly, M. *We Can Take It: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2004) p.47-48.

¹⁵² *The Guardian*, 5th November 1986, p.10.

¹⁵³ *Daily Mail*, 8th November 1986, p.17.

¹⁵⁴ *Daily Mail*, 17th November 1986, p.28.

¹⁵⁵ Connelly, M. *We Can Take It: Britain and the Memory of the Second World War*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2004) p.47.

heard by this dominant culture.¹⁵⁶ Himself a former evacuee, Wicks states that ‘a whole army of witness have been overlooked’ by ‘historians and popular writers’ who have ‘busied themselves with the exploits of the leaders and heroes of the Second World War.’¹⁵⁷ He drew particular attention to the evacuees who, like he, had ‘left homes of loved ones to find only cruelty and abuse – all ignored then and unknown today.’¹⁵⁸

Foster and Davies research into the long-term psychological effects of the evacuation scheme, conducted in 2000, suggested that the cases of children abused were far greater than had previously been accounted for. Having conducted a preliminary survey of a non-random sample – recruited through the Evacuation Reunion Association newsletter and by word of mouth through participating members of that organisation - Foster and Davies found that far higher numbers had been physically and sexually abused than had been anticipated. 8.2 per cent of members stated that they had been sexually abused when evacuated and 7.1 per cent cited physical abuse.¹⁵⁹ These statistics were gleaned not from the questions that were asked in the survey but were written within a ‘free recollection’ section.

Waugh et al conducted a follow-up survey in 2002, with the same panel, but with the addition of a control survey with people who were not evacuated during their wartime experience. It asked, this time specifically, whether they had experienced any kind of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or any kind of neglect as a child) – before, during and after evacuation. 23 per cent of non-evacuees responded yes to this question – 18 per cent reported physical abuse whilst 14.5 per cent cited physical and emotional abuses. Almost double the

¹⁵⁶ Wicks, B (ed.) *No Time to Wave Goodbye*, 1st ed. (Bloomsbury, 1988) p XIV.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ D. Foster, S. Davies and H. Steele, 'The evacuation of British children during World War II: a preliminary investigation into the long-term psychological effects', *Ageing and Mental Health* 7:5 (2003) p.402.

amount - 47 per cent of evacuees – answered yes: 51.9 per cent cited physical abuse, 43 per cent cited emotional abuse, and 22.9 per cent sexual.¹⁶⁰

The ITV adaptation of *Goodnight Mr Tom* in 1998 contained the potential to revive a long-held notion that evacuation had protected evacuees not only from the dangers of war, but the cruelty of a harsh working-class existence. However, as Gillian Mawson's interviews attest, as the book gained a wider readership in school reading lists, it became more frequently cited by former evacuees who sought to compose their narrative against it.¹⁶¹ As Penny Summerfield states:

Ordinary people who have memories that do not fit publicly available accounts many have difficulty in finding words and concepts with which to compose their memories, whether in anecdotal snapshots or extended narratives.¹⁶²

As such, *Goodnight Mr Tom* provided the right 'words' for those who had experienced abuse during the war, and people could use those words to describe how their own experiences of abuse matched or differed from the fictional account. For many former evacuees, *A People's War*, and the culture it created, provided the narrative within which to situate their own memories, and to end the silence that had so often been beaten into them.

Lena Aktar's *Intangible Casualties* remains the only historical study thus far that situates the corporal punishment experienced by evacuees within the broader context of familial and domestic use of the same practice. Drawing upon the survey material garnered by Geoffrey Gorer via *The People* newspaper in 1951 - where three quarters of responses supported the use of corporal punishment - Aktar suggests a continuity between 'attitudes

¹⁶⁰Waugh, M. J, Robbins, L. Davies, S and Feigenbaum, J. 'The long term impact of war experiences and evacuation on people who were children during World War Two.' in *Ageing and Mental Health* 2007 Mar; 11(2) p.172.

¹⁶¹ Mawson, G. *Guernsey Evacuees: The Forgotten Evacuees of the Second World War*, (The History Press, 2012) p.11.

¹⁶² Summerfield, P. "Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews," in *Cultural and Social History* 1, no. 1 (2004) p.92.

reflected by parents and householders of the 1930s and 40s'.¹⁶³ This chapter will problematize this chronology, and contends that material gathered from Mass-Observation's hitherto unused 1942 directive on this subject reveals far less homogeneity during the war than has thus far been allowed for, with only half of the panel firmly supporting its use, and an additional 17.7 per cent suggesting it should 'sometimes' be used, suggesting a slight increase of at least 5 per cent of those in favour in the later survey of 1951. It suggests that Aktar's reliance upon survey generated during a period defined by 'instability rather than continuity' according to Claire Langhamer and Nick Thomas overlooks the emotional landscape of the war years, in all its seemingly fragmentary (and often contradictory) forms.¹⁶⁴

The complexity of family life during the war, and how this shaped a plurality of attitudes toward corporal punishment lies at the heart of this chapter. It argues that it is only by embracing this complexity that can we recover the social and cultural landscape of wartime childhood. Some historians have made assumptions about private practices on the basis of studies that only focus on public uses of corporal punishment.¹⁶⁵ By focusing on the dialogue between the public and the private, between the shifting forms of discipline found in the wartime home and their relationships to institutional forms of punishment, we destabilise the overarching narrative.

Jacob Middleton has suggested that from the 1940s, the practice of corporal punishment was far less homogenous in British schools than it had previously been. He presents a decline in its use, particularly in light of a consistent period of use in schools from the latter half of the nineteenth century to end of the inter-war period.¹⁶⁶ Deborah Thom proposes that corporal

¹⁶³ Aktar, L, M, 'Intangible Casualties', p.226.

¹⁶⁴ Langhamer, C. "The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour", p.421, and Thomas, N. "Will the Real 1950s Please Stand Up? Views of a Contradictory Decade," in *Cultural and Social History* 5, no. 2 (June 2008): 227–35.

¹⁶⁵ Middleton, J, 'The Experience of Corporal Punishment in Schools, 1890–1940', pp. 273–274.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

punishment using instruments such as canes and rulers was effectively condemned ‘as far as childcare professionals and most educators who elaborated theoretical justifications for their practices were concerned’ by the end of the war, but contends that it was ‘...not discredited in the homes of Britain nor in many schools.’¹⁶⁷ This chapter will demonstrate how the war fundamentally challenged the boundaries between the public and private uses of corporal punishment in Britain. Mass-Observation’s survey of 1942 suggests that the rapid increase in court-ordered corporal punishment of children hardened public attitudes toward such practices. Although ‘the birch’ had almost been banned by law in 1939, *The Criminal Justice Bill* of that year had been one of the ‘...first legislative casualties of the war.’¹⁶⁸ A demonstrable decline in court-ordered corporal punishment was reversed dramatically during the people’s war. This increased public use of corporal punishment existed alongside nuanced definitions of, and increased concern toward, juvenile delinquency. As court-ordered birching of children increased, and children’s schooling became increasingly fragmented, criticisms arouse that challenged the shifting shape of the family unit.

Prescribing recommended practices to mothers became increasingly problematic, as the recommendations often assumed the presence of a familial structure that no longer (or had never) existed. Women’s increased labour, state-funded childcare, men’s conscription, disrupted educational patterns and evacuation meant that the inter-war notions of childhood were dramatically re-constructed in often contradictory terms. Childhood co-existed as both a private and public responsibility and negotiating between these spheres required a greater elasticity between definitions of the ‘emotional’ and the ‘rational’. Love was a particularly prominent and contested emotion of wartime motherhood, and this was none more so when it came to provide ‘reasons’ for and against punishing children. This complexity existed

¹⁶⁷ Thom, D. “Beating Children is Wrong”, p. 268.

¹⁶⁸ *The Hansard Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (Spring 1940). Editorial, p. 225.

alongside increasingly academic ‘reasons’ that suggested mothers were to blame for rising juvenile crime. Many people’s inability to dichotomise between ‘reason’ and ‘emotion’ in relation to corporal punishment during the war was problematized by the often-contradictory ways in which emotions relating to childhood were both employed and prescribed by the government, as well as theorised by a rising tide of psychological discourses of childhood. As birching figures soared, so too did its critics, but the criticisms against its public use often strengthened the reason(s) for its continued use in private.

The Militarisation of Discipline in Schools

The suggestion that corporal punishment in schools declined during the Second World War by relying on official records (that is to say punishment books) is a deeply problematic owing to the limits of the source base.¹⁶⁹ This is particularly so when this source is privileged above the life histories which so often contradict them. Corporal punishment could be administered ‘off record’, and outside the rituals of the cane or taws. The short sharp crack of the ruler on children’s hands administered throughout lessons often existed to a degree that would have been impractical to document. Cuffs around the ears, books to the head or the propulsion of chalk or chalk board erasers were the more private, and undocumented privilege of those who taught behind closed doors. These methods and experiences were ritualistic in themselves, and although we could view them as private because of those closed doors, they were - for children – particularly public forms of admonishment, distributed in front of the class. Mary, evacuated from Newcastle, remembered that:

If you could read, as I could, you was to sit at the back of the class. Times tables had to be recited every day, first thing. Miss Gunner would whack those in the front row over their heads if they faltered. I felt sorry for one red-haired boy – he got more whacks than anyone.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Middleton, J, ‘The Experience of Corporal Punishment in Schools, 1890–1940,’ pp. 273–274.

¹⁷⁰ Mary in Goodman, S, *Children of War: The Second World War through the Eyes of a Generation*, 1st ed., (John Murray, 2005) p.232.

This complicated divide between the public and private nature of corporal punishment within schools was significantly challenged by the increased militarisation of the school environment, which hardened across the war. What the punishment books from this time do often demonstrate, importantly, is the fragmentary nature of schooling during the war.

As Audrey Alcock has demonstrated, the punishment book at East Leake Junior School, where the school population increased 35% with the addition of evacuees from Sheffield, shows that three new evacuees were punished regularly, one being caned eight times in the first year of the school.¹⁷¹ The closure of schools in cities was an official tactic to encourage families to evacuate their children. The majority, however, did not. The introduction of half-time schooling in more rural areas, where evacuees and school children were both schooled for half the day, meant that schooling was significantly different in shape and consistency for many children. The complexity of this fragmented period of schooling is worryingly absent from recent studies of corporal punishment, particularly as it is so evident in official records. Moreover, the new rituals that wartime brought to the classroom, all of which sought control within this increasingly fragmentary environment, retained the potential to both pacify children by fear, and to encourage their rebellions against it.



Figure 2.2: Imperial War Museum: ‘Gas-mask practice’ life drawing, 1940.

¹⁷¹ Elock, A, *Government Evacuation Schemes and their effect on School Children in Sheffield during the Second World War*, Phd Thesis, (University of Sheffield, 1999), p.186.

Alongside the sound of the air-raid siren, which so regularly disrupted schooling during the war, were the militaristic rituals that can be found documented in life histories of this period. Some children spent prolonged periods of time being educated in air-raid shelters, whilst others without such a shelter simply hid under their desks, and sang to block out the sounds of bombardment and anti-aircraft gun-fire.¹⁷² Although Mass-Observation's surveys of public gas-mask carrying demonstrate so vividly that adults were reluctant at best to comply with government appeals, with definable periods of greater adherence during historically specific periods of time, gas masks were compulsory at school (Figure 2.2).¹⁷³ Some histories show that children were marched in their gas-masks to army vans, contained inside the vans with their teacher with the closed doors, and were then exposed to tear gas, often causing significant distress to those involved.¹⁷⁴

Fire evacuation drills became a regular feature of school life in response to the likelihood of incendiary devices being dropped. Children were ritualistically introduced to such weaponries from the sky: being encouraged to skip around disarmed 'butterfly' and incendiary bombs to ensure they knew of the dangers. These rituals became a common feature of children's experiences of school life.¹⁷⁵ For most children at school, marching became part of the routine form of discipline. When sent away from their homes with their school, they were often publicly marched to train and bus stations. But the routines that textured the everyday life of school children created an expectation of discipline in children that could not possibly be maintained owing to the closure of many schools, and the decreased hours of attendance that

¹⁷² Present Author, Interview with Gladys Edwards, Unpublished (2014).

¹⁷³ Moshenska, G, 'Government gas vans and school gas chambers: preparedness and paranoia in Britain, 1936–194' in *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 26:3, p.232.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ See Welshman, J, *Churchill's Children*, chapter 5 'Victims or Vandals?' pp.176-197 & Goodman, S, *Children of War: The Second World War through the Eyes of a Generation*, 1st ed., (John Murray, 2005) p.119.

became a reality for many children across Britain. As Gabriel Moshenska argues, these new rituals:

...can be seen as the imposition of quasi-military discipline on a now potentially anarchic element of the population... not to educate or warn British children about dangers... but to impose and reinforce discipline.¹⁷⁶

As Humphries discovered, during the inter-war period pupils regularly thwarted the rituals of the schoolroom, primarily through truancy, but also by rebelling against corporal punishment.¹⁷⁷ The quasi-millenarianism of the wartime school greatly increased such rebellious behaviour. Testimonies suggest that resistance was often demonstrated by children whipping their hands away at the very last second before a caning to the hand, compelling the teacher to crack the cane or tawse across their own knee, causing themselves considerable discomfort.¹⁷⁸ When a bomb hit Bob Gibb's school in Middlefield, his first impulse was to:

...gather up straps. Straps? They're known in other parts of Scotland as the tawse — vicious, thonged leather belts used for corporal punishment. We found dozens of 'em. We buried 'em. Secret No. 5. But when we eventually got back to Middlefield, we found that all the teachers had been issued with new, and even more vicious, straps.¹⁷⁹

The closure and disruptions of school life created a 'perceived disciplinary vacuum': enhancing existing concerns about juvenile delinquency, which soared across the war.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Moshenska, G, 'Government gas vans and school gas chambers: preparedness and paranoia in Britain, 1936–1941', p.232.

¹⁷⁷ See Humphries, S, *Hooligans or Rebels?* pp.62-90.

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/50/a2022850.shtml> [Date last accessed: 1/4/14].

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/83/a2034983.shtml> [Date last accessed: 11/6/15].

¹⁸⁰ Moshenska, G, 'Government gas vans and school gas chambers: preparedness and paranoia in Britain, 1936–1941', p.232.

Juvenile Delinquency and the Birch

Year	Assizes & Quarter Sessions	Magistrates Courts (including Juvenile Courts) – under 16	Total
1938	17	48	65
1939	11	58	69
1940	17	302	319
1941	36	531	567
1942	42	314	356
1943	31	165	196
1944	31	37	68
1945	14	25	39
1946	35	13	48

Table 2.1: Figures of birching in England and Wales. (Cmnd. 1213, 1960)

Although interwar patterns of a decline in the use of corporal punishment informed the ill-fated move to abolish it upon the eve of war, the birching of young offenders soared during the conflict. As Table 2.1 demonstrates, although only 65 and 69 people were birched in England and Wales in 1938 and 1939 respectively, 1940 saw numbers rise to 319, climaxing at 567 during 1941. A discernible reduction is then evident from 1943, tailing off to lower levels in the early post-war than had been experienced during the latter part of inter-war Britain.

¹⁸¹ Looking beyond these striking statistics, we can uncover the complex texture of public attitudes towards this increase, apparent in contemporary print-media, within current psychological discourses, and within the legal system. One such example vividly illustrates these complex and interrelated discourses. In January 1940, the *Daily Mail* reported that

¹⁸¹ Home Office, *Report of the Advisory Council on the Treatment of Offenders – Corporal Punishment* (Cmnd. 1213, 1960), Appendix B, p. 31.

Alderman Braybrooks of Bedfordshire Juvenile Court believed that people had become ‘sloppy’ with regards to the birching of children:

I hope you don’t think we’re cruel here. Recently we have had an epidemic of juvenile crime. We give six strokes.... But my eldest daughter who teaches psychology said I was wrong to have ordered a birching. What did she expect me to do? Tickle them under the chin and kiss them, I suppose. It’s only another form of caning. You and I have had that. I think we are too sloppy these days.¹⁸²

Not only had Braybrooks ordered the birching of two boys, but he had instructed their fathers to similarly take the ‘belt’ to their children.¹⁸³ He ‘reasoned’ that his actions were similar and familiar punishment to that performed in schools, and that psychologically formed arguments were founded upon ‘sloppy’ emotions. For him, there could be no ‘cruelty’ in birching children, whose crimes were increasingly being described as ‘epidemic’.

In 1943, when birching figures had significantly dropped from earlier wartime peaks, a birching case arose in Hereford that fundamentally challenged the system of court-ordered birching, and foregrounded parental rights within the process. The case became so big that it featured in New York’s *Life* magazine in December 1943. This *cause celebre* rested upon the ‘emotional’ petition by one of the parents of the two children who had been birched. A third, aged 10, had been dismissed due to his age, whilst his accomplices, aged 11 and 13, were immediately birched after sentencing. Their crime was relatively serious: the theft of £200 worth of goods from various provincial properties. Two of the boys were sentenced to the care of the Local Education Authority and;

to be privately whipped as soon as possible after the court with four strokes of a birch rod by a constable in the presence of an inspector of police and in the presence of the parents if you desire it.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸²*Daily Mail*, 11th January 1940, p.7.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Life*, 6th December 1943, p.11.

The fact that the parents of those birched had not been present, and that the immediacy of the execution of the punishment prevented reasonable time to appeal against the sentence, lay at the heart of the parental appeal against it. The system, the parents argued, prevented punishment with sufficient 'reason' in its form. That the presiding magistrate, Mrs Bentley-Taylor, resigned her seat on the Juvenile Court panel, and that debates in the Commons and 18-page white papers were written to rebut this contradiction speaks volumes of the contested ways in which the birch was being publicly critiqued.^{185 186}

This 'epidemic' of juvenile crime has been the focus of many contemporary discourses and is well known in the historiography. As Angus Calder noted in his study of *The Peoples War* of 1969:

In the cities, over a million children were left to run wild. Children turned to hooliganism – so often were public air raid shelters wrecked by children that the authorities were compelled to keep them locked.¹⁸⁷

But, as the Hereford birching case shows, these childhood behaviours could also be found within more provincial communities, where 'running wild' was actively encouraged as part of the ideological promise of provincial safety. If truancy in inter-war Britain had been a consistent thorn in the side of compulsory education, the disruption of school structures during the war inevitably gave some children more free time, and the increased rigidity of discipline through militaristic rituals provided ample reason for some to forgo attending school altogether. But, as Humphries' study of inter-war working-class family life revealed, the family life of a child could have as much impact upon these levels of truancy than a child's own decision to 'escape' or 'rebel' against attending school.¹⁸⁸ This was even more so the case during the war

¹⁸⁵ *Daily Mail*, 9th December 1943, p.3.

¹⁸⁶ *The Times*, 23rd November 1943, p.9.

¹⁸⁷ Calder A. *The People's War: Britain 1939–1945*. 1st ed. (Johnathan Cape, 1969), p.49.

¹⁸⁸ See Humphries, S, *Hooligans or Rebels?* pp.62-90.

than before, with the frequent dislocation of ‘normal’ childhood familial structures, and an increase in child labour. To understand why domesticity and motherhood, not schooling, was primarily cited as the ‘problem’ within the wartime ‘problem child’, an understanding of the contradictory expectations of the ‘war parents’ is necessary.

Childhood and the Family at War

In March 1944, twenty-three-year-old Beryl Hobson’s letter, ‘From a Wartime Mother’, was published in *Picture Post* magazine. She believed herself to be ‘one of the most discussed and misunderstood of people at the moment, very insignificant, and very important; in fact, a wartime mother.’¹⁸⁹ Beryl’s letter claimed that ‘other people’s opinions’ upon the realities of her life as a mother, which were shaped by ‘financial, political and moral’ factors were making her an ‘anxious woman’. Combined with the potential loss of her absent husband, ‘the root of the whole problem’ was how to teach children ‘morals’ in the face of the cruelty of total war. Before the war she had believed that corporal punishment was ‘justifiable in order to teach the meaning of pain’, despite believing that it was ‘best to reason with the offender.’ The war had made her see that ‘courage and cruelty walk side by side’ and that her ‘sense of values’ had been so destroyed that she no longer felt competent to teach anyone anything:

How can I answer my children’s questions and teach them not to hate and not to be cruel? Few children accept facts without evidence. My generation grew up bitter and disillusioned by the aftermath of the last war. How can we teach the coming generation a better sense of values that will not be destroyed by the passing of time? ¹⁹⁰

Beryl’s dilemma, surrounding the appropriate way to teach children morals in the climate of a visibly cruel war, was compounded by the fact that her husband was not at home, and that the responsibility was now hers alone. But family was an increasingly complex institution during wartime Britain. As Claire Langhamer has demonstrated in her study of love, the war

¹⁸⁹ *Picture Post*, 11th March 1944, p.26.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

fundamentally re-shaped family lives, with newlywed mothers often remaining in their parents' home during the conflict.¹⁹¹ Beryl, at twenty-three, was part of a very small minority of newlyweds who lived in a family home outside of familial influence. This inter-generational cohabitation only increased as the blitzes across Britain destroyed increasing numbers of family homes. Children were, therefore, more frequently exposed to inter-generational disciplines, and to witness inter-generational conflict upon the subject.



Figure 2.3 (left): 'Mothers let them go' poster, MoH, 1939, LCC/EO/WAR/5/20

Figure 2.4 (right): WVS recruitment poster, MoH, 1939, LMA/EO/WAR/5/20

The war in its totality encouraged an expectation of family life, or more accurately, of motherhood, that was inherently political, often contradictory, and often resulted in huge dissatisfaction of the distance between the promise and the reality of the domestic ideal. Children were both a public and private concern depending on where that child lived, and the financial resources of its parent(s)/guardian. The government's increasing emphasis on a

¹⁹¹ Langhamer, C, *The English in Love: The Intimate Story of an Emotional Revolution*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), p.181.

maternal duty of care to children was underpinned by a continued public concern around birth-rates; notions of maternalism were fostered by encouraging existing mothers to extend their motherly care to evacuees. ‘Love’, women were told, was something that ‘all women’ had for children.¹⁹² Having an evacuee was ‘National Service’; rewarded with money for the additional labours of motherhood, as is evident in the Ministry of Health (hereafter MoH) Women’s Voluntary Service (hereafter WVS) poster from 1939, (Figure 2.4).¹⁹³ But the emotion of ‘love’ that encouraged many women to labour over more children was also employed to encourage women, particularly in cities, to part with their children: simultaneously others women were encouraged to override their assumed emotion of love for the child, and to send them away from their care, to a promised safety (Figure 2.3).¹⁹⁴

Mass-Observation had been largely critical of the MoH’s attempts to emotionally mobilise civilians via these methods, particularly in the case of the ‘Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness. Your Endurance will bring us Victory’ MoH poster. But as Jennifer Purcell’s research demonstrates, Mass-Observation’s panel exhibits the complex relationship between subjective understandings of such posters and women’s ability to volunteer.¹⁹⁵ Whilst Mass-Observation’s now famous diarist Nella Last was able to draw strength from this public message, joining the WVS, other women resisted or were forced to resist such participation.¹⁹⁶

Corporal punishment of children between these public and private boundaries became increasingly contested as the fundamental contradictions of motherhood became apparent throughout the war. As the family home was dramatically redefined as a defensive space of labour, the conscription of men had the potential to shift the parental responsibility of the

¹⁹² LCC/EO/WAR/5/20.

¹⁹³ LCC/EO/WAR/5/20.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Purcell, J, *Beyond Home: Housewives and the Nation, Public and Private Identities, 1939-1949*, PhD Thesis (University of Sussex, 2008) p. 186.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

punishment of children from fathers to mothers. Subsequently the conscription of women into wartime labour demanded a provision of childcare, outside of the home and family, which facilitated their labour.¹⁹⁷ Denise Riley's research demonstrates how women fought for this provision, and how these institutions maintained their own forms of discipline, often physical.¹⁹⁸ Outside of the home, children's schooling in often numerous institutions created further friction between public and private boundaries, as divergent practices of corporal punishment were experienced. This often created friction with mothers who were disciplining their children according to their own beliefs in their newly formed position as a war parent. But the disruption or frictions of school life were not the contemporary focus of blame for those addressing youth crime, rather motherhood was.

Beryl's 'suffocation' in her role is perhaps more understandable when it is evident that both the left and right-wing media supported the idea that delinquency grew from bad motherhood, and often contradictory psychological discourses were employed to affirm these criticisms. *The Manchester Guardian* wrote in December 1943 that the problem of child delinquency bred from an age-old problem, witnessed in the last war, and repeated in the current conflict: war marriages:

...mean broken homes, unwanted and neglected children, and mothers with no interest in their children, and consequently children altogether out of control.¹⁹⁹

The *Daily Mail*, however, had turned to psychology to affirm that delinquency grew from an intelligently inferior class of mother, whose children of similarly low intelligence were being inadequately supervised, and had turned to crime.²⁰⁰ Although this psychological theory, reasoned by Miss I Dunsdon of Bristol City, rejected the public admonishment of youth

¹⁹⁷ D. Riley, *War in the Nursery*, (Virago, 1984). p.189.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 6th December 1943, p.6.

²⁰⁰ *Daily Mail*, 14th August 1941, p.3.

offenders by the court, it upheld the cane in schools and it actively encouraged the private use of corporal punishment by mothers:

The quick, spontaneous slap by a parent or the injured party is a thing the child can understand. But the formal birching ordered by the court, frequently weeks after the offence has been committed, is a proven failure.²⁰¹

Returning to Mary from Newcastle, whose memories of ‘off-record’ punishments in the classroom were earlier explored, we can texture this academically reasoned attack on motherhood by understanding how its logic could appeal to existing trends in practices of corporal punishment. The front row seats in Mary’s classroom were for those who could not read or recite their times tables, and the teacher would ‘whack those in the front row over their heads if they faltered.’²⁰² She had felt sorry for an ‘ungainly ginger-haired’ boy who ‘got it the most.’ Clearly, many of the children beaten in schools were those who were unable to learn by the pedagogical methods employed by them. Their names dominate punishment books throughout the twentieth century, and in wartime Britain the right-wing media was supported by academia in prescribing this practice. Working-class mothers apparently created ‘dead-end kids.’²⁰³ Of course, as is characteristic of this period, other psychologists fundamentally disagreed. Particularly those whose arguments grew from research on evacuation.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Mary in Goodman, S, *Children of War: The Second World War through the Eyes of a Generation*, 1st ed., (John Murray, 2005) p.232.

²⁰³ *Daily Mail*, 14th August 1941, p.3.

The Sounds and Silences of Evacuation



Figure 2.5: ‘Vacuation’ card game, (1940) V&A

When we look at contemporary culture, which directly links the evacuation of children during the war with corporal punishment – seen in the ‘happy families’ style game ‘Vacuation’ (Figure 2.5) - it is hard not to see the humour that is embedded within such cultures. Stern teachers, such as ‘Mr Tanner’ with his crooked brow and cane, and evacuee ‘Hilda Howler’, with her forlorn gas mask case and tears, are two of many characters around whom humour in relation to punishment is found.²⁰⁴ ‘Vacuation’ was a pack of laughs that spoke directly to and from existing cultures that found punishment inherently funny. Examples of this ‘dark’ humour can be found throughout wartime childhood literature and imagery, and, in varying degrees, throughout the twentieth century. Enid Blyton’s wartime books were, for example, overflowing with lashings of corporal punishment. This emotion, of humour, is almost entirely absent from life histories which speak of the experience of being beaten during evacuation. As one former evacuee put it:

Every time I heard Vera Lynn softly singing ‘Goodnight Children Everywhere’, my lip would tremble and the tears would well up and I had to leave the room and rush up to

²⁰⁴ VA B257.

the bedroom. My small frame often shook as I broke down in floods of uncontrollable tears, and I felt so terribly lonely, unloved and homesick.²⁰⁵

Perhaps no other song has been more frequently cited by evacuees during oral interviews and in life histories than Vera Lynn's iconic rendition of *Goodnight Children Everywhere* (1939); targeted specifically at those who had partaken in the evacuation process, it was inscribed, 'with a tender thought to all evacuated children.'²⁰⁶ Sound played an important, and hitherto unaccounted for, part in state manipulation of emotions, both before, during, and in the aftermath of children leaving. Silence, however, was perhaps the most commonly experienced aspect of many children's war. *Goodnight Children Everywhere* seems to contain the potential to awaken many different emotions from such silences, many attached to memories that interviewees had rarely (and in most cases, never before) spoken about.

The ability to actually hear what 'evacuation' day - 1st September, 1939 - sounded like is not available to historians researching it. Many films of that day do exist, but only in the edited and overdubbed form in which they were shown to contemporary cinema-goers via newsreels. We only see the smiling, happy children of that day, which in many cases are brief reactions caught within the novel context of being filmed. The total absence of sound masks an equally commonly cited emotion from that day - audible no doubt in the background of these shots: crying. Even those who were, as James Roffey remembered, 'wildly excited... couldn't work out why the girls and women were crying.'²⁰⁷ Women and men who attempted to attend their children's needs on the platform were forcibly removed by the police.²⁰⁸ Photographs were taken of the parents straining behind locked gates. These pictures were not

²⁰⁵Wright, J. T. *An Evacuee's Story: A North Yorkshire Family in Wartime*, 1st ed. (John Thomas Wright, 2007) pp.254-255.

²⁰⁶Cited in Baada, C. *Victory Through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music during World War II*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013) p.45.

²⁰⁷Roffey, J. *A Schoolboy's War in Sussex*, 1st ed. (The History Press, 2010) p.65.

²⁰⁸Gardiner, J. *The Children's War: The Second World War through the eyes of the children of Britain*, 1st ed. (Portrait, 2005) p.18.

contemporaneously published. One such photograph, Figure 2.6, below, contains a pencilled inscription by the unnamed council photographer:

The pathetic scene at Waterloo Station this morning (1st September 1939) showing mothers shouting goodbye to their kiddies from behind the gates of the platform. No mothers were allowed on the platform as the kiddies embarked on the trains.²⁰⁹



Figure 2.6: Waterloo Station (1939) EO/WAR/1/7

These photographs, taken at a time of such anxiety, sadness and fear, inevitably seem to convey the emotions which we, as historians, cannot access through sound. We recognise the fixed, encouraging smiles, and that glint in the eyes of some of the women in the picture, because the majority of us have, or feel that we have, at some point, felt the warmth and pain that such a look brings. Many would also feel that they know well the pain it would take to maintain such a smile between the iron railings. It is a moment of emotional communication, between the emotions that are being conveyed within the historical moment, and the feelings that historians receive from it. Of course, this sense of communication that we, as historians, rely upon when looking at such documentation is necessarily one-sided. As Roper notes:

²⁰⁹ LMA EO/WAR/1/7.

...the desires, frustrations and pleasures of historical actors may communicate themselves to us, and we may have certain emotional experiences, but...the relationship is neither face to face not reciprocal.²¹⁰

Life history, however, and in particular oral history, allows the author to convey their emotions of their present, which are shaped by the emotions of that past. There is an enhanced sense of emotional communication within such narratives because sound very often reinforces our interpretation of feeling. And yet emotional communication with historical actors in the present are far from unproblematic, and the historian must tread with caution when equating present feeling with emotion in the past. This is even more so the case when an individual is talking, often for the first time, about memories which haunt their present memory of childhood.²¹¹

It is particularly difficult to access historical actor's emotions from letters and other communications from children at this time because such communications were actively controlled, supervised or suppressed. The headmistress of a London school evacuated to Wales felt 'very strongly' that children:

...should be free to write to their mother whatever was in their hearts. To put down in black and white what they really felt when they were overwhelmed by a patch of homesickness and misery. One custom that has wrecked a number of billets is the practice of reading letters...and marking their replies.²¹²

Not everyone agreed. Ruby Thomas recalled that other teachers facilitated the writing of letters, and their censorship, by 'chalking letters for [children] to copy.'²¹³ Carlton Jackson's research has revealed that parents had anticipated such manipulation, and had pre-arranged codes which would signal unhappiness.²¹⁴ We do not have letters home which contain details of physical

²¹⁰ Roper, M, 'The Unconscious Work of History' in *Cultural and Social History*, (2014) Volume 11, Issue 2, p.172.

²¹¹ Summerfield, P. "Culture and Composure".

²¹² Quoted in Gardiner, J: *The Children's War: The Second World War through the eyes of the children of Britain*, 1st ed. (Portrait, 2005) p.49.

²¹³ IWM Catalogue, No. 13662 13:43.

²¹⁴ Jackson, C, *Who Will Take Our Children?: The British Evacuation Programme of World War II*, 1st ed. (McFarland and Co, 1985), p.79.

abuses for a number of possible reasons. We must consider the child's ability to communicate such incidents, and especially their understanding of what had happened to them and why. Many former evacuees who have disclosed abuse state that they were told what to write in letters home, with instruction and supervision of letter writing given by both schools and billet-owners. Others simply would not have been able to afford to communicate in such a way. Archived and biographical materials, though extremely limited in both number and scope, can provide a window into the broader silences during evacuation that surrounded physical and sexual abuses during the war.

Most cases of abuse and assault that have been recorded via oral history methods are untraceable within local authority or government records. Out of the hundreds of boxes documenting the London County Council's (hereafter LCC) evacuation programme and experience, only one contains a reference to such a case. Three of the council's 'action' lists survive, which were a bureaucratic attempt to document the whereabouts of the evacuees through requests to move children from billets. Either such records were not kept after 1943, or such documentation was deemed pointless after this date, for as Carlton Jackson points out, by 1945, over 19,000 children were unaccounted for in official records.²¹⁵ Although brief, these records provide documentation of a case of abuse, within government records, which has hitherto been absent from histories.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.159.

Name	Billet	Date of Notification	Comments	Action
<div></div> F. W. <div></div> H. F. <div></div> R. H. —	Deanshanger	20/11/41	Ill treatment, lack of food given, assaults, DO	None
<div></div> S	Bilsworth	20/11/41	Billet-owners want to go out in Evenings	Master in charge found billet 10/1/42

Table 2.2: ‘Action List’, (1939-1942) EO/WAR/1/137 LCC (Names redacted)

As Table 2.2 demonstrates, three children (siblings) were reported on 20th November 1941 to have been subject to ‘ill treatment’, with lack of food and reports of ‘assaults’ at their billet in Deanshanger. These details were reported to the council by a member of the WVS, who also reported on that day that another billet-owner in Bilsworth had requested to have their evacuee re-billeted owing to the fact that they ‘wanted to go out in [the] evenings.’²¹⁶ Whilst we can see that the ‘master in charge’ found another billet for the unwanted evacuee in Bilsworth in January 1942, the three siblings who had been subject to ‘ill treatment’ and ‘assaults’ were marked with the word ‘none’ in their ‘action’ taken column. The same names are reported at the same address seven months later, in June 1942, and again in January 1943.²¹⁷ We have no knowledge of who was assaulting these children, or when such abuses stopped, for as with so many cases, their names simply do not appear within archival records again. It is when faced with such limited access to records of such cases, mainly cited within oral interviews, that the reasons for such silences must be interrogated.

Many oral interviews contain ambiguities surrounding the levels of awareness that wider authorities had of their abuse. For example, one former evacuee, Mary Phillips, stated that:

²¹⁶ LMA EO/WAR/1/137.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

I still cannot understand why no one checked to see if we were all right. But then, perhaps they did, while we were at school. Or maybe I was too shy to speak if they spoke to me. I certainly cannot recall seeing anyone, even when I had to move from the happy home to the hurtful one.²¹⁸

Mary's memories – of the abuses she experienced being unnoticed by the authorities who were moving her from a 'happy home' to a 'hurtful one' - are complicated by her continued disbelief that so little attention was afforded to her welfare. This uncertainty seems to make her question the reliability of her memories, of whether she really had been disregarded or 'missed out' by those in authority – 'perhaps they did' - as well as inducing her to further qualify that her own 'shyness' in speaking up about her experiences may have contributed to this silence. This is a common feature of such interviews and can provide a considerable point of emotional unease for interviewees in the present. The inability to document with certainty the names, dates and details of the events which have, for many, remained traumatic, is an understandably complex emotional experience. This was particularly the case when former evacuees such as Vera Bullman, located the emotion of fear within their silence:

I had a mishap with a soldier and I was terrified. I didn't know about the facts of life, I was only twelve. I just thought he was filthy. I remember I punched him and he hit me again, I was terribly worried. I didn't tell anybody. He was someone who came to the house and came into my bedroom. I was packing up something and he got me on the bed. I was so terrified and I remember calling him 'a filthy dirty terrible man'. Not that I knew what was going to happen. He actually raped me, but because I was shy I didn't tell anybody. I was very worried and it took a lot of courage to talk to boys after that. I think children are funny, they keep to themselves. He went away, I don't know where.²¹⁹

Here, Vera reasons that her inability to tell anyone about being raped can be located within children's 'funny' or peculiar trait of 'keep[ing] to themselves', which was strengthened by the 'worry', 'fear' and confusion that she experienced during the event.

²¹⁸ Schweitzer, P (ed.) *Goodnight Children Everywhere: Voices of Evacuees*, (Age Exchange, 1990), p. 14.

²¹⁹ Smith, L. *Young Voices: British Children Remember the Second World War*, 1st ed. (Viking, 2007), p.199.

Although many former evacuees were unable or unwilling to name those who abused them others, such as Amba Dalton, were keen to emphasise that they were fully aware of who had abused them. Unlike Mary Phillips, Amba knew for certain that the ‘authorities’ knew of her abuse, as her Billeting Officer – in charge of her welfare, and, as the *Daily Mail* prescribed, her discipline - regularly raped and beat both her and her sister in his car:

I can remember exactly what he looked like after all this time and I know his name. This is not because we grew to like him but because he sexually abused me and my sister each time he took us anywhere. I wonder how many ex-evacuees remember him for the same reason.²²⁰

For Amba Dalton and in so many former evacuee’s life histories, silences were enforced by the fact that the person beating and or raping them was also their primary carer during their time away from home. And as Amba goes on to explain, she was not allowed to ‘write her feelings in letters’.²²¹

Life histories of those exposed to corporal punishment during their evacuation are often drawn from vivid, painful memories. Dislocation from children’s familial experiences often meant exposure to divergent methods of physical and emotional discipline. Although the law fined some whose actions toward evacuees went beyond the accepted legal definition of corporal punishment, such as was the case with Rene and Jean who opened this chapter, they remained few, and were not widely publicised in the press. Whilst there are examples where family members removed their children from such practices, many parents were simply unable to communicate freely enough with their children to gain knowledge of practices that they may fundamentally have objected to. But these silences also evaded the archive, perhaps purposefully so. If documentation of such abuses were to be expected, we would perhaps immediately think of the large psychological and psychoanalytical experimentation that we

²²⁰ Wicks, B (ed.) *No Time To Wave Goodbye*, pp. 85-6.

²²¹ *Ibid*, p.86.

know was contemporarily practiced across the war on evacuees, and yet it is largely conspicuous by its absence.

Psychologies of the War Child

If the emotions of maternal love were constructed and upheld, often in contradictory terms, by the government, and if mother's responses to such ideologies were so diverse, then perhaps it is only to be expected that psychology remained divided about the role of discipline and the emotions relating to it. Emotions, and increasingly definitions of love, were central to many psychologies of motherhood and childhood, increasingly in the theories conceived by psychoanalysts John Bowlby and Susan Isaacs. Bowlby's use of evacuation during the war was, as Ben Mayhew argues:

...underpinned by a belief that social responsibility was an evolved psychological potentiality that could be actualized in the mother-child bonding processes.²²²

Bowlby's politics often lay at the heart of his employment of emotional theories, particularly so with conceptions of love between a child and its mother. The 'neurosis' displayed by evacuees grew from the child's detachment from its mother, a symptom, then, of emotional deprivation. Bowlby's conviction that democratic socialism could be nurtured by the love found through a 'mother-child bonding process' was strengthened by the evidence gleaned from surveying evacuees.²²³ Susan Isaacs's survey of the *Cambridge Evacuees* (1941) was fundamental in this thinking. The sheer number of cases of 'unhappiness' that Isaacs presents in her publication is quite staggering, and it is clear that the motive for her to complete such a

²²² Mayhew, B, 'Between Love and Aggression: The politics of John Bowlby' in *History of Human Sciences*, Vol. 19 No. 4, p.19.

²²³ *Ibid*, pp.19-35.

survey was the government's refusal to consider her psychoanalytically reasoned arguments of mother-child attachment within the planning of evacuation.²²⁴

Our study of the families of children who went home emphasised still more deeply the crucial importance of family ties and the feelings of parents and children towards and about each other. It was far from easy to discern and disentangle the many and complex motives which led parents to take their children home again. Many different reasons were discovered. But the dominant motives seemed to fall into three groups: (a) Those relating to family feeling, anxiety and loneliness of the parents, the homesickness or worry of the children, (b) complaints about the foster-homes or foster-parents...(c) the financial burden of keeping part of the family away from home.²²⁵

These three areas, documenting people's motives for not complying with the government's scheme, were at the heart of the arguments that psychoanalytic thought had brought to the committee that planned it. Of the many other European evacuations that occurred during the war, Britain's scheme remained oddly defiant in insisting upon separating older working-class children from their mothers. In almost all other comparable evacuations, mothers accompanied their children. But as I have demonstrated, public criticisms of working-class motherhood, which ran throughout the inter-war period, increased during the war. Psychology was utilised in these discourses, and they upheld the assumptions that detachment from parents was demonstrably beneficial, contrary to Bowlby and Isaacs assertions.

John Anderson, who chaired the committee for evacuation, fundamentally rejected the emotionally bound reason of psychological thought presented to the committee in 1938. His 'reason' was enacted chiefly on the basis that he and all other committee members had been schooled away from the emotions of home, as was customary of the majority of the then ruling elite. Discipline was routine, physical and often severe in such institutions, and comparable forms of corporal punishment were demonstrably found in the public discourses pertaining to

²²⁴ Isaacs, S, *The Cambridge Evacuation Survey: A Wartime Study of Social Welfare and Education*, 1st ed. (Methune & Co. Ltd, 1941) pp.12-13.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

punishments in all schools and in all ‘classes’ of homes. Susan Isaacs’ advice to mothers throughout the interwar period, via the undeniably middle-class magazine *Nursery World*, centred around the notion of child individuality and its emotions.²²⁶ Isaacs’ advice throughout the war continued to encourage mothers to view their child as autonomous beings, with an ‘emotional landscape’ of their own; one that differed considerably from a mothers own emotional needs.²²⁷ She had so often admonished parents for their continued – and as she argued, ineffective – uses of corporal punishment, and their number were so overwhelming that she stopped answering questions upon the subject in the 1930s.²²⁸

D.W. Winnicott’s broadcasting helps us to uncover how childhood emotions were to be understood as inherently maternal. Although he warned against the detachment of children after evacuation, and in particular the need for increased communication between families, Winnicott was often far more vocal about what he termed ‘the deprived mother’.²²⁹ As Lisa Farley has thoughtfully argued, Winnicott cited a complex psychological experience of working-class mothers affected by the public evacuation scheme:

[Winnicott] debunked the anti-feminist “opinion” which claimed that women, in their new childless roles, were now simply “free to flirt, to get up late, go to the cinema, or to go to work and earn good money.”²³⁰

Winnicott was not so much interested in engaging with what he described as a familiar and ‘paranoid debate’ as interested in what was ‘true in a deeper sense’.²³¹ Winnicott did not discuss corporal punishment on the wireless until 1957. When he did, he summed up his reasons for not doing so before thus:

²²⁶ Thom, D. “Beating Children is Wrong”, p. 268.

²²⁷ Aktar, L, M, ‘Intangible Casualties’, p.242.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Horne, A (ed.) *Winnicott's Children: Independent Psychoanalytic Approaches With Children and Adolescents*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2012, p.164.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ Quoted in Horne, A (ed.) *Winnicott's Children*, p.164.

Generally, when dealing with more controversial issues such as discipline, I phrased my ideals very carefully. This was to avoid alienating the substantial number of listeners who will think that a 'loving smack' is a helpful boundary for their child. But at the same time, I feel I have to now express my views, for example about the effect of corporal punishment on children.²³²

He acknowledged the complexities of contemporary criticisms, but although he stated publicly that corporal punishment had an 'effect' on children's emotions, he maintained that it would be improper to start such a conversation on the wireless, stating that:

This is one of the difficulties of starting the one-way conversation of a radio broadcast with the risk of evoking strong responses which cannot be dealt with immediately.²³³

Although psychoanalytic and psychological theories were available in the print-media, in magazines, and across the wireless, we know they were inconsistent and often silent on the subject of emotional harm via physical punishment. Moreover, behaviourism was equally as present in this discourse as attachment.²³⁴ To try to map the influence of these contradictory theories onto 'public' opinion about corporal punishment, and to think more broadly about how they relate to people's subjective opinions on the subject, I will now explore how Mass-Observation's survey of the subject of physical punishment in 1942 was shaped by, and gives testimony to, a complex and increasingly contested debate around childhood and emotion.

Mass-Observing Wartime Punishment

Mass-Observation's 1942 directive (open ended questionnaire) on physical punishment - a total of 209 discursive responses on people's 'beliefs' and 'feelings' - has thus far been unaccounted for in histories of corporal punishment. As Dorothy Sheridan reminds us, the relationship between Mass-Observation and its writers (often spanning several years) 'facilitated a degree of frankness which would be difficult to find in any other kind of

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Thom, D. "Beating Children is Wrong", p.269.

survey.²³⁵ Feelings, as Claire Langhamer argues, were believed by Mass-Observation to be key in unlocking subjective understandings, and the ‘relational nature’ of Mass-Observation; engendered a frankness which ‘facilitated the narration of such private worlds and intimate thoughts.’²³⁶ As such the responses to this directive provides a rich source of ‘feelings’ relating to punishment, peoples definitions of abuse, and their place within the increasingly elastic public and private boundaries of discipline.

I will outline quantitative trends before discussing the problems they raise in relation to qualitative evidence. The scope of such a plurality of feelings toward this subject create a ‘messiness’ that necessitates such a mixed method analysis.²³⁷ Annebella Pollen has drawn close attention to the pitfalls of simply ‘mining’ a directive survey for quantitative data, stating that such an approach views Mass-Observation material:

...as an unproblematic generator of facts to be mined for ‘evidence’ and statistical frequencies, rather than as complex, variable, subjective material solicited so as to access experience, opinion and feeling.²³⁸

I will use statistical frequencies alongside a qualitative approach to better understand the scope of the complex, subjective material, and to highlight contested boundaries and variations in experience and feelings. In highlighting statistically, the breadth of thought and feeling contained within the directive as a whole, we can better account for those who had mixed feelings, or who simply refused to dichotomise between ‘reason’ and ‘feeling’. Although, as I will later discuss, the directive is not unproblematic in representing ‘public opinion’, Mass-Observation’s wartime survey offers a glimpse into a small kaleidoscopic window of the private

²³⁵Sheridan, D. ‘Using the mass-observation archive as a source for women's studies’, in *Women's History Review*, (2006), p.109.

²³⁶ Langhamer, C “The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour”, p. 424.

²³⁷*Ibid*, p. 418.

²³⁸Pollen, A. ‘Research Methodology in Mass Observation Past and Present’, p.224.

sphere of the home, which often included complex, and at times hostile, views toward the more institutional elements of physical punishment.

Why Mass-Observation chose to consult its directive panel upon the subject of physical punishment in December 1942 is sadly not documented within the extensive archive, but 1941 saw a significant rise in court-ordered birching of both adults and children, and 1942 had been only slightly less flagellant. As with many of Mass-Observation's open-ended questions, many correspondents revealed far more than simply stating if they agreed or disagreed with the subject. Rather, they elaborated the emotions and feelings which comprised and underpinned their opinion. The question on physical punishment was not the highest priority of the December 1942 directive. Typically, three or four questions were asked of the panel on a monthly basis, with priority given to the first question, 'A'. Physical punishment was a priority 'B' question and, as was typical in these wartime directives, gleaned fewer responses than those composed for priority A, which focused upon people's hopes and expectations for 1943. Although there were 315 responses to the main topic, only 209 returned their thoughts upon physical punishment. This lack of attention to the subject could, of course stem from a lack of interest and engagement with the topic, particularly when we consider that 22 of those who did not respond to priority 'B', did respond to the priority 'C' question upon medicines. What is more important to consider, however, is that for many Mass-Observers, the omission of the priority 'B' question was a reflection of their increased involvement within the war effort. 1942 saw modifications to the compulsory conscription of both women and men. Unmarried women, who were not legally responsible for a child under 14, were conscripted into national service, and the age range in which men could be conscripted rose to 51, the upper limit having been set at 41 in 1939.²³⁹ Many of those who chose not to respond to the question

²³⁹ Smith, H, *Britain in the Second World War: A Social History*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 1996) p.63.

of physical punishment did not continue to write to Mass-Observation after December 1942, whereas many other Mass-Observers' contributions noticeably declined during this period of increased conscription. Many previously diligent observers took advantage of Mass-Observation's recognition of the dramatic shift in spare time that many people now had: 'for anyone who can possibly spare the time' (Figure 2.7).

PRIORITY B (for everyone who can possibly spare the time).
 4. What are your own beliefs about physical punishment?
 a) for children?
 b) for adults?
 On what occasions, if any, do you think it should be used?

Figure 2.7: Mass-Observation's 'Physical Punishment' directive, December 1942

The complexity of people's attitudes to disciplining children; the layers of factors with which people's subjective understandings of this subject were conveyed, are far more accessible through this methodology owing to the question's construction, for as Claire Langhamer demonstrates, for Mass-Observation 'the qualitative and the quantitative were necessarily reconcilable approaches'.²⁴⁰ Unlike the contemporary debates in the media regarding the abolition of capital punishment, which were measured via opinion polls in newspapers, the question of public opinion on corporal punishment was not measured in the same fashion, although the debates surrounding the topic featured heavily within such publications. This qualitative and quantitative approach cannot, therefore, be measured against any other contemporary surveys, but can help us to establish just how complex people's subjective understandings were with regard to corporal punishment, and the emotions that were layered within them. Finally, it is significant that in 1942 Mass-Observation chose not to address 'corporal' but rather 'physical' punishment. When the Cadogan Committee had published its

²⁴⁰Langhamer, C "The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour", p. 418.

findings, it did so under the more traditional title of corporal punishment. Mass-Observation regularly chose to use particular words, in this case ‘physical’, over more official terms, such as ‘corporal’. This carefully chosen distinction often caused responses in which people felt the need to make clear the language with which they understood such punishment, often being vastly removed from its official term. It also encouraged people to talk about that which was defined outside of boundaries of ‘reasonable’ punishment.

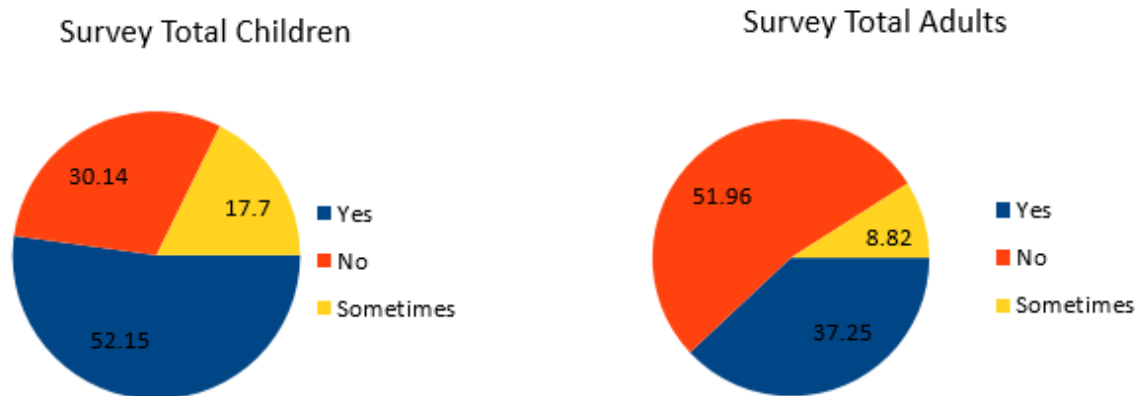


Figure 2.8 (Left): Total survey attitudes to the physical punishment of children
Figure 2.9 (Right): Total survey attitudes to the physical punishment of adults

The panel’s beliefs about physical punishment were defined broadly between three categories – those who believed it should be used, ‘yes’, those who did not, ‘no’, and those who believed it should only be used ‘sometimes.’ It is striking that without exception each respondent provided a reply that can be categorised within these three answers. This was true for both the question on children and on adults, but as I will later discuss, the subjectivities which shaped these more definitive categories are far more complex than this level of quantification can possibly demonstrate. In viewing the responses within these three broad categories, just over half of the panel believed that physical punishment should be used for children (52.2 per cent), 30.1 per cent believed it should not, and 17.7 per cent cited specific occasions and persons in which it should ‘sometimes’ be used (Figure 2.8). It is important to

note here that had this analysis been presented as a contemporaneous newspaper opinion poll, the ‘sometimes’ category would have likely been included in the ‘should’ results. Therefore, 69.85 per cent of observers would have been recognised as supporting the corporal punishment of children, and 30.15 per cent against. This stands in stark contrast to their beliefs for the use of corporal punishment on adults: 37.2 per cent believed that physical punishment should be used for adults, 53.9 per cent believed that it should not, and a only 8.9 per cent believed that it should be used sometimes (Figure 2.9). Again, had the less nuanced approach of a contemporaneous ‘yes/ no’ opinion poll been applied to these statistics, 46.1 per cent would be seen in favour of corporally punishing adults, with 53.9 per cent against. The discord between beliefs toward the punishment of adults and children is of particular resonance, as it demonstrates that those who believed that physical punishment was an appropriate form did not necessarily believe it a befitting penalty for both adults and children. What this approach cannot demonstrate, and where the clarity of these boundaries loses their definition, is the far more elaborate and complex layers of subjective understanding that underpinned the feelings behind these broader boundaries of enquiry.

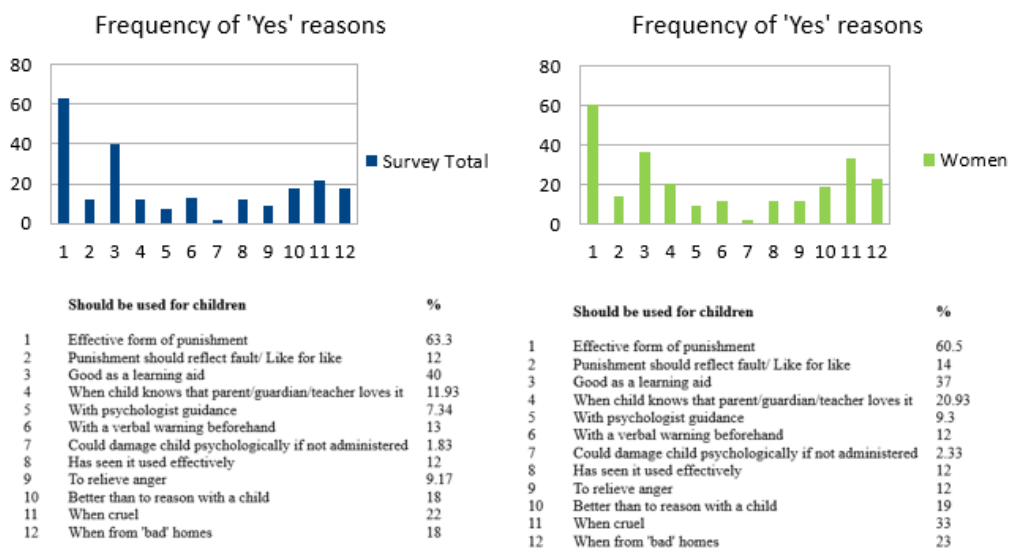


Figure 2.10 (Left): Reasons cited by those who answered ‘yes’ to punishing children
Figure 2.11 (Right): Reasons cited by women who answered ‘yes’ to punishing children

Referring to Figure 2.10, we can see the frequency with which people cited similar reasoning which underpinned their beliefs on this subject. For those 109 respondents who believed that physical punishment should be used, the belief that it was an effective form of punishment was cited by 63 per cent, with 40 per cent of them stating that physical punishment was good as a learning aid. 22 per cent believed that physical punishment was a better approach with children than attempting to reason with them, and 18 per cent thought that it should be used when the child had been wilfully cruel. If the gender of the responses is broken down, we can see that a similar percentage of women and men believed that physical punishment was appropriate: 54.4 per cent of all women compared to 58.4 per cent of men (Figure 2.11, above and Figure 2.12, below).



Figure 2.12: Reasons cited by men who answered 'yes' to punishing children

Their subjective reasoning was, however, at times vastly different. A greater percentage of women than men (33 per cent and 15 per cent respectively) believed that physical punishment was a necessary punishment for children from 'bad' homes. Irene Naylor, a forty-four-year-old female social worker from London believed that 'children from very rough homes may be best punished in this way'²⁴¹ Joan Dubber, a fifty-five-year-old female nurse companion from Gloucestershire stated:

²⁴¹MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 1563.

Until recently, I thought it a bad thing, but of late children, especially those evacuated from bad homes, have become so uncontrollable that they need a sharp reminder of wrong and right.²⁴²

Here we can see examples of how the categorisation of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ homes from which children derived provided the basis on which adults would prescribe physical punishment. This is a particularly salient trend of reasoning in light of the experiences of the evacuees who were physically punished by billet owners, and who had reasoned that their experience had been made worse by social and cultural differences between child and guardian.

Further difference between men’s and women’s reasoning can be found within the concept of bodily chastisement being drawn from love: 20.9 per cent of women stated that physical punishment could be defined as an act of love, or that children’s understanding of their parents love for them made such punishments more effective. This is compared to only 6 per cent of men who cited love as a factor. The texture of the discursive material makes this heterogeneity more visible than these statistics allow. For example, drawing upon historical familial events Edna Hodgeson, a sixty-six-year-old housewife from Kent, explained that the love nestled within physical punishment, that she had observed in her family’s practices, was a fundamental means to establishing control, to maintaining authority, and in doing so, to ease the discomfort of the child’s subordination:

Personally I believe that a slipper held by the heel to spank a young child 4-8 is a very good thing. I have seen children ruined by unwise reasoning with them and letting them have their lead before they are capable of reason and self control. It does no favours. As a sister of mine once said to her naughty child, ‘come to mother, let her love you and let her whip you, you’d feel so much better.’²⁴³

Observing her sister’s use of physical punishment, with love being employed to rationalise the physical action, was fundamental in shaping Edna’s own subjective understanding of the

²⁴²MO Directive, ‘Physical Punishment’, 1942, DR 2466.

²⁴³MO Directive, ‘Physical Punishment’, 1942, DR 1015.

importance of 'spanking' children. She cites '4-8' as the period in which children attained an age of 'reason', and thence, 'control', and beating children in the meantime was essential to their development. A twenty-nine-year-old female teacher from Argyllshire also cited love within this context, writing that:

A good sharp hurt, quickly over, is a good thing for a tiresome child, especially when administered by parents or guardians whom the child knows fundamentally loves it.²⁴⁴

We can see a cohesion between these complex definitions of love espoused by this particular grouping of women and those afforded within the Cadogan Report which had been published in 1938; the primacy given to the concept of a child knowing and, crucially, being emotively attached to the person punishing it. In some instances, it is clear that people having read the committee's findings or the discussions around them, were in agreement with their conclusions. For example, a thirty-three-year-old woman in Warwickshire stated that 'I know experts have studied this and am prepared to stand by their judgement.'²⁴⁵ Yet more commonplace were examples, such as those disclosed by Edna Hodgeson, of this particular concept of love being inherited from, and found within pre-Codagan familial practice. Men, however, were far more likely to draw upon definitions of an element of justice within physical punishment, which fed into a similar concern relating to reasoning with children. Clive Searle, a thirty-six-year-old married man from Brighton, believed that corporal punishment:

...should be used on children if their wrongdoing is deliberate. My experience of boys is that they prefer a caning to endless "lines" - &, I think it is better for them. I also think it is better to spank a small child (under 7) than to argue with them. Children have a great sense of justice, and do not resent punishment which they feel is deserved. I would always make it clear, before inflicting corporal punishment "if you do such and such this will follow." It is far better than nagging.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2486.

²⁴⁵ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 1362.

²⁴⁶ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2463.

The emphases placed by the author give us an indication of his strength of feeling toward this debate, and perhaps a sense of annoyance at contemporary discourses which suggested that children did resent being physically punished. Although he agreed that ‘nagging’ and ‘arguing’ with a child did far more harm than physical punishment, it was not love that underpinned his reasoning, but a ‘sense of justice’, which he believed that children naturally understood through punishment. ‘Nagging’ is quite a distinction from ‘unwise reasoning’, as Edna Hodgson chose to describe methods that discursively explained wrongdoings to children, rather than physically punishing them. To nag implies the repetitive harassment over a particular subject, and to ‘argue’ suggests a level of comprehension on the part of the child. As Clive Searle made clear, the subject – ‘justice’ – was understood by children under seven as they ‘have a great sense’ of it and ‘feel’ it is deserved. Whereas Edna saw children attaining reason, and therefore necessarily absent of it to begin with, Clive saw the need to tame and shape the reason which children naturally had a ‘sense’ of. As this messiness between these complex understandings of reason and feeling demonstrates, although the majority of the panel agreed with physical punishment, their individual responses often varied considerably as to why this was so.

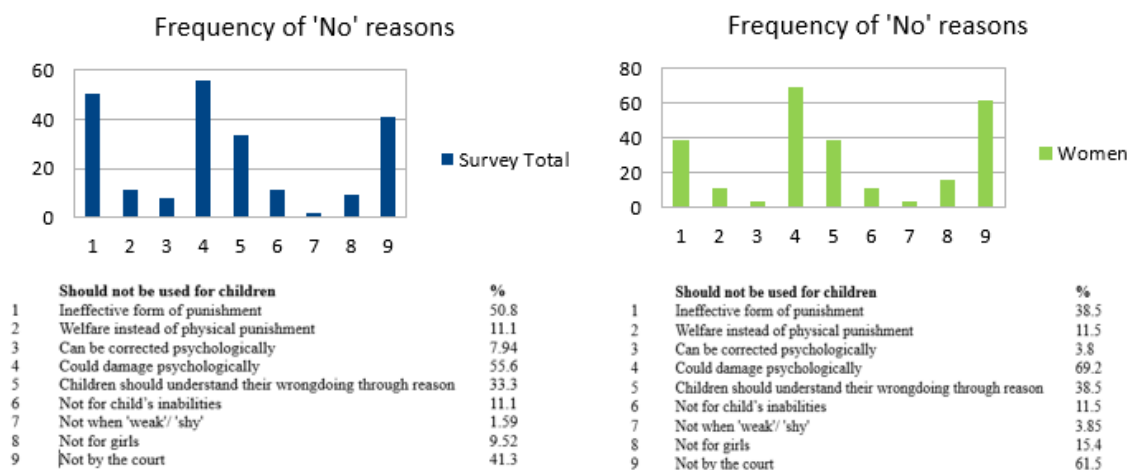


Figure 2.13 (Left): Reasons cited by those who answered ‘no’ to punishing children
Figure 2.14 (Right): Reasons cited by women who answered ‘no’ to punishing children

In considering those writing to Mass-Observation who were against the use of physical punishment, (Figure 2.13), emotional damage is cited as the chief reason, with over half of the total panel (55.5 percent) expressing concern about the mental effect of the physical action. Half again, (50.7 percent) believed that physical punishment was simply an ineffective form of disciplining children, whereas 41.2 per cent further qualified that they believed that the courts should not be able to order the physical punishment of children. A further 33 per cent of these no responses cited that it was better to reason with a child than to physically punish it. Whilst the same percentage of women and men were against physical punishment (32.9 per cent and 33.6 per cent respectively), again, their reasons for this position were at times conflicting (Figure 2.14, above and Figure 2.15, below).

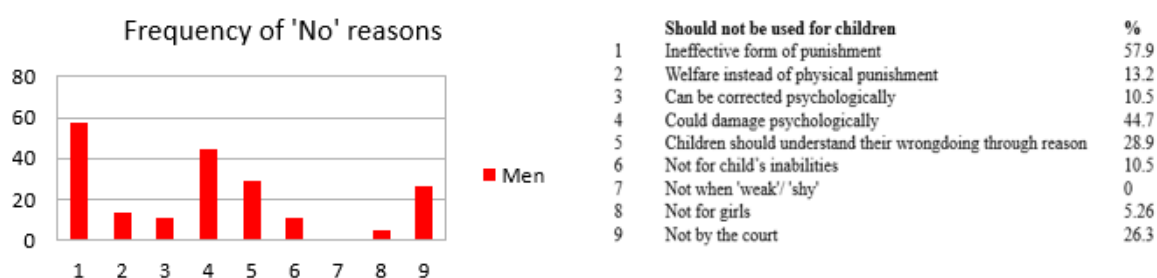


Figure 2.15: Reasons cited by men who answered 'no' to punishing children

Far more women, 61.5 per cent, stated that they were particularly opposed to court-ordered physical punishment than men, 26.3 percent. 69.2 per cent of women who were opposed to physical punishment were concerned about the psychological effect that it could have on children, compared to 44.7 per cent of men. However, men were twice as likely to cite the need for psychological treatment as women, who were more likely to see psychological damage caused by physical punishment, rather than necessarily adopting a psychological approach to their own pedagogical methodologies. A twenty-year-old male surveyor's apprentice from Wiltshire stated simply that:

Physical punishment of children should be completely abolished and psychological treatment initiated.²⁴⁷

Whereas Enid Fletcher, a twenty-year old female teacher from Northamptonshire, displays pride in her ability to recognise, and crucially rectify, what she saw as an archaic and institutionalised contradiction:

In the case of children the psychological harm done by smacking etc. is far greater than any good affected in the child's behaviour. This is shown from the moan of mothers at guidance clinics: "I keep on smacking him, but it doesn't do any good!" and yet they keep on! I keep good discipline but do not use the cane. There is something degrading about the caning at public schools, but then their schooling is still in the middle ages. The idea that caning in schools will cure naughtiness in children has been proven quite wrong. This is easily checked up by looking at the Punishment Books in elementary schools. I looked up my predecessors Punishment Book. The same name was entered again and again until the child left the school.²⁴⁸

Rather than understanding that psychological treatment could take the place of physical punishment, Enid saw evidence of psychological 'harm' as a result of the practice of physical punishment. This she reasoned by measuring both her subjective understandings of everyday observation, and the patterns she saw in records documented by the institutions in which physical punishment was experienced: the school and in the home.

For Alice Bridges, the feelings and emotions that she felt and associated with the experience of physically punishing her daughter underpinned her reason for being against its practice:

I can honestly say I don't believe in physical punishment. I have never made a habit of smacking my child & the only time I did and spoke loudly it pained us both so. She still remembers it and the other day she informed me that that voice was even now travelling through the atmosphere and would go on forever. Her teacher had given her a lesson on it. I somewhat surprised her when I said you remember one incident in your life, what of all the mothers who are always shouting and who so rarely are kind, what of their

²⁴⁷ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2090.

²⁴⁸ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2043.

voices in the ether. For parents who are strong minded and just, there is no need for physical punishment they can control their children without it.²⁴⁹

Although Alice and Enid shared the same overarching view, that physical punishment was damaging and unnecessary, Alice Bridges' conclusions, as a mother, were firmly entrenched in the pain of experience. This included both the emotions experienced when inflicting such punishment and her observations of its effectiveness, measured in her daughter's emotive response. She uses her daughter's analogy between sound and emotion – the concept that the emotions embedded within her mother's chastisement were forever to be experienced because of the infinite nature of sound in the atmosphere – to try to instil a sense of perspective of her relative restraint in physically punishing her daughter compared to its prevalence within their community. Without further details of how Alice Bridge's daughter's analogy was understood, for example if her teacher had drawn such a comparison themselves, we cannot measure with any certainty if psychology had been an influence here. However, Alice Bridges demonstrated that her own experience, and her emotional responses to it, had been the reason for rejecting physical punishment from her pedagogical practice.

Others, such as this twenty-five-year-old female respondent, whilst in agreement with psychological theory, believed that the practice was unlikely to be applicable because the 'science' was

...neither sufficiently developed, nor sufficiently widely understood to solve many problems at present. I very much hope to see its effects in the future.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2254.

²⁵⁰ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2745.

Here we can see further complexities in how people's subjective reason was shaped by both emotion and familial practice, and how beliefs about how psychological insights, whilst appreciated, were not necessarily integrated into people's own view.

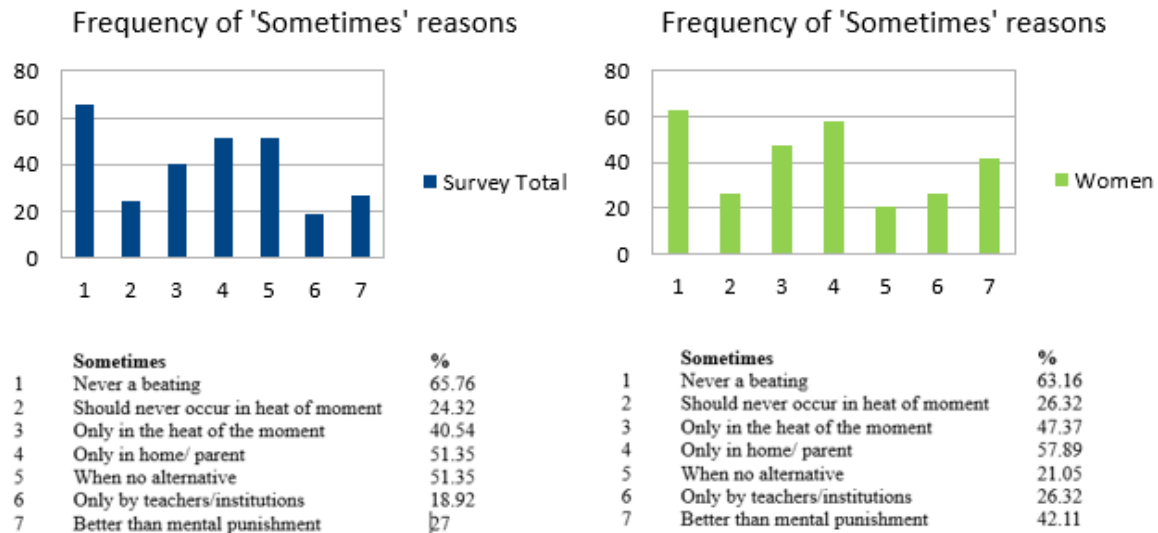


Figure 2.16 (Left): Survey total – reasons from those who answered 'sometimes' to punishing children

Figure 2.17 (Right): Reasons cited by women who answered 'sometimes' to punishing children

Finally, when we compare these feelings to those who believed that physical punishment should only sometimes be applied, we can see that both the belief that parents should solely be responsible for physical punishment, and that such actions should only be used when there was no other 'reasonable alternative', was mentioned by 51.3 per cent of the panel and 50.3 per cent respectively (Figure 2.16 & Figure 2.17 above, & Figure 2.18 below)

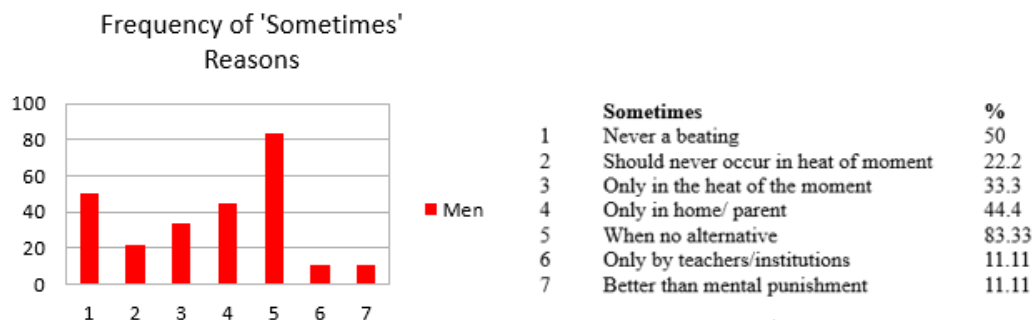


Figure 2.18: Reasons cited by men who answered 'sometimes' to punishing children.

For many, the method and severity of punishments was a deciding factor, with over half, 56.7 per cent, responding with the belief that children should never be ‘beaten’ or receive a ‘beating’, and that such practices should desist. One such response came from Fred Smith, a forty-nine-year-old miner from Yorkshire:

It’s all very well having pre-conceived ideas about this, but I’m afraid they all vanish if one say finds the kiddies using your best hat for a football. I do know individuals who under all circumstances refrain from inflicting physical punishment, but they are few. I do not agree with beating children, but at the same time I have on more than one occasion administered a flick, but I have never knocked them on the head. It has helped to give a slap across the legs. My children (2) were as mischievous as any other, but I have always tried to play the game with them, never promising any present; when I eventually gave it (at least I think so) I have never had any trouble with them. No deceit, lying or stealing and as far as I know they were never cheeky or rude to others. These I believe are a reflection of home life, and to punish a child for what they have been reared in is abominable. The children I know who were evacuated here and who have been beaten about are no better for it.²⁵¹

Fred’s example of giving a ‘flick’ when a child has caused annoyance, or a ‘slap across the legs’ rather than ‘knock on the head’ gives a very definite boundary as to what kind of punishment was acceptable in his household. He did not bargain with his children but rewarded their good behaviour without ‘promise’. Whilst those categorised as answering ‘sometimes’ naturally practised physical punishment of a specific kind, those counted within this category defined ‘beating’ as an act other to their own, such as those inflicted upon evacuees within Fred’s community. His feelings are in opposition to those demonstrated by Irene Naylor and Joan Dubber, who, as discussed earlier, saw a greater need to beat those from ‘bad’ homes. Fred believed that such distinctions were ‘abominable’, and his feelings are particularly salient when viewed against those of Percy Stace, a forty-year old Nurseryman from East Sussex, who stated that he was ‘very much against’ physical punishment:

²⁵¹ MO Directive, ‘Physical Punishment’, 1942, DR 1266.

As far as I can remember my own children have never received physical punishment, only a flick. It is an insult to the child that we grown-ups should take advantage of our superior force and strength, and it seems to me to be an admission of not being able to deal in any other way with a difficulty. Our little evacuee was very much frightened of hitting or rather being hit. He has been with us for more than two years, and is a very difficult child, but we never felt that physical punishment would do any good.²⁵²

For those who cited ‘sometimes’ within their beliefs on physical punishment, the domestic sphere was seen largely as the only appropriate place in which limited means of physical punishment should take place. Parents could define a ‘flick’ as other to a ‘beating’, and evacuees who had been subject to such beating were ‘no better for it.’

Mass-Observation’s directive also asked people to provide details of their feelings toward the physical punishment of adults, and the circumstances in which it should be used on them. Although over half of the panel had stated that they approved of using physical punishment on children, 51 per cent were against using it on adults. Only 37 per cent of those who responded believed that the law should permit physical punishment, with 8 per cent believing that it should only be used for certain cases. Whereas people provided lengthy and complex details about their beliefs about physical punishment for children, people were brief and clear about their beliefs for adults. Indeed, the only topic that features with any particular detail within people’s responses, particularly women’s, is that of physical and sexual abuse. Irene Naylor, working for the LCC within social work and heavily involved with the evacuation scheme, believed that physical punishment should be used ‘...in the cases of men against very young girls or children.’²⁵³ A sixty-six -year-old retired housewife and mother from Orpington in Kent stated that:

I should chastise all men who assaulted children and young girls. No-one would risk being lashed twice.²⁵⁴

²⁵² MO Directive, ‘Physical Punishment’, 1942, DR 2801.

²⁵³ MO Directive, ‘Physical Punishment’, 1942, DR 1563.

²⁵⁴ MO Directive, ‘Physical Punishment’, 1942, DR 1015.

Nella Last, housewife, mother and WVS worker, was far more explicit (and surprisingly detailed) in how she would deal with men who were involved with such crimes:

I cannot say much about adult “thrashings” from a personal basis – but one type of criminal I’d whip – no on second thoughts I’d have beaten nearly immobile by a really good prize fighter, really hurt – battered I mean – the brutes who attacks children or “beats up” defenceless women.²⁵⁵

Over three quarters of those who cited sexual or physical crimes against children within their reasoning either had or worked with children. The vast majority of those who detailed the topic of evacuation within their diaries also responded with a similar response to the one cited above against those who abused children. Although more women than men responded in this way, those men who did cite child-abuse within their responses were far more likely to need to provide justification for the physical punishment of adults. For example, a fifty-two-year-old Scout Master and member of the Home-Guard from Newick in East Sussex, whose diaries regularly detailed his involvement in entertaining the evacuees resident in his village, justified the flogging of child-abusers through the ‘greater brutality of war’:

When we come to crimes of violence, rape of young girls etc., drastic remedies are necessary. Although flogging is not desirable in a ‘civilised’ community and yet we are civilized when we permit the far greater brutality of war. Brutes are cowards and cowards fear physical pain.²⁵⁶

What is striking is that on one hand we can see people responding to concepts of creating sexual perversion within the physical act itself, and on the other prescribing physical punishment for those who are identified as practising such perversions. 69.2 per cent of those who believed adults should be punished were embroiled in these complex and contradictory viewpoints. It

²⁵⁵ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 1016.

²⁵⁶ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 2720.

was also recognised as contradictory by members of the panel, such as a thirty-two-year-old cookery demonstrator from Kent, who saw the predicament thusly:

Those who support it will rarely admit that it gives sexual excitement when both given and received, but this is the chief reason why it shows such strong feelings when discussed. Those who advocate its retention in cases of sexual violence are stirring the very feelings (usually if not always pathological) which they are presumably attempting to eradicate.²⁵⁷

Here we can see a level of engagement with psychological discourses which questioned the innate nature of sexuality, but this particular definition of reason was not evident more substantially – across the panel – who adapted psychological understandings to critique the practice of the state, others in their communities, but crucially not themselves.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the complexities of these changing social relations in relation to corporal punishment. Claire Langhamer has recently stated that the Second World War was:

...an emotional watershed; that is, a period of rapid discontinuity out of which emerged a subtly different set of intimate relations embedded in, and expressive of, changed gender social relations.²⁵⁸

As we will see in chapter three, the death of the birch after the war, as had been recommended in 1938, occurred at a time of increased private uses of corporal punishment during the post-war. A further survey of Mass-Observers in post-war Britain, and Geoffrey Gorer's *Exploring English Character* suggest that opinions toward, and practices of private corporal punishment grew across the post-war. Regardless of people's 'hopes' and 'feelings' for peace-time, which as we will see were naturally plural and often contradictory, the family and motherhood would

²⁵⁷ MO Directive, 'Physical Punishment', 1942, DR 1018.

²⁵⁸ Langhamer, C, *The English in Love*, p.8.

become the idealised price of peace. The complex notions of wartime motherhood would be more uniformly elevated in peacetime, creating an expectation of both motherhood and childhood that became increasingly unattainable. If Bowlby-ism was somewhat undetectable in the broader wartime opinions of appropriate pedagogical practices in 1942, it was more frequently prescribed under Labour from 1945, and the promise of psychology in post-war politics will be interrogated. But the private abuses of corporal punishment remained largely absent from public discourse. Silence upon this subject continued throughout the early years of peace, and the effects of such abuses across the war had a profound consequence on interpretations of the ‘problem child’ throughout post-war Britain.

Fundamentally, this chapter has shown how the war divided public and private lines in profoundly contradictory terms. The planning of evacuation during inter-war peace time allowed the government to construct a scheme which it thought and argued was ‘reasonable’, without the context of the complications that war would bring. These complications often upheld the public assumptions they had fundamentally ignored. For many people throughout Britain during the people’s war, ‘reason’ and ‘emotion’ were simply not dichotomised when presenting arguments for and against punishing children. The personal was political for many, and emotions shaped many reasons. Family became a defensive space, and yet people’s varied circumstances dictated how such families were both experienced and negotiated.

If the wartime reality of family was increasingly a more intergenerationally co-habited one than that in inter-war Britain had been, then it is easy to see the lure of the well-known promise of the peacetime ideal, which became conceptualised as autonomy from such familial complexities: the private home. The private home, however, if realised, provided unprecedented space for the silences of corporal punishment to flourish. As sexual gratification became central to ideals of love, marriage became the only permissible space in which sexual gratification should be gleaned. As heteronormative sex became more culturally prominent, so

too did its more problematic flagellant friend. But such luxuries were increasingly defined as heterosexual: those identified outside of the permissive realm of heteronormative behaviour were increasingly re-defined as dangerous to childhood. But the dangers of childhood and womanhood remained largely unvoiced in the private, heteronormative homes of Britain.

CHAPTER THREE

‘THE PLEASURES OF SEVERITY’: EXPLORING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
ENGLISH CHARACTER IN EARLY POST-WAR BRITAIN – 1945 - 1959

‘It would be highly improper for children who are going to school the next day to sit and watch a film about masters who are frankly sadists.’

In December 1954, the British Board of Film Censors rejected an application for the general release of the film entitled *Spare the Rod*. The rejection was founded upon the concern made clear by the board that children should ‘not be witnessing the questioning of authority between pupils and teachers.’²⁵⁹ The rejected film script had been adapted from the novel, *Spare the Rod*, which had been released earlier that year to great acclaim. Authored by Michael Croft, who had taught in three secondary modern schools following his discharge from the RAF, *Spare the Rod* was a semi-autobiographical exposé of the oft brutal corporal punishment that existed within post-war state schools in Britain.²⁶⁰ When choosing his favoured *Desert Island Discs* in September 1977, Croft was candid about his motives for writing the book:

It really was meant as an attack on those secondary modern schools. I was very sure that the book should expose the very great brutality in schools, which to my great surprise still very much went on. The amount of corporal punishment that went on in schools, despite that fact that people said that it was in decline and wasn’t used. These conditions were really such a surprise to me that I really felt I had to write about them.²⁶¹

The screenplay’s rejection created a cause célèbre within the popular press. The furore deepened when the London County Council appealed to the censorship board, stating that if the screenplay were eventually to be approved, it would refuse to allow any London secondary modern schools to be used for its filming location.²⁶² Other public appeals against the books elevation to the screen come from Teachers’ Unions, who were largely in favour of retaining

²⁵⁹ O’Hoggins, P, *Censorship in Britain*, 1st ed. (Nelson, 1972), p.84.

²⁶⁰ Croft, M. *Spare The Rod*, 1st ed, (Longmans, March 1954).

²⁶¹ Croft, M. *Desert Island Discs*, Saturday 17th September 1977.

²⁶² O’Hoggins, P, *Censorship in Britain*, p.84.

the cane, and who rejected the brutal and damning depiction of corporal punishment within its pages.²⁶³ Croft had clearly hit a nerve that touched beyond the remit of art and culture and into the very fabric of public punitive mores.

Corporal punishment had been frequently shown on the silver screen in mid-century Britain. ‘U’ certificates had been applied by the committee to *Goodbye, Mr Chips* (1939); *Jane Eyre* (1944); and *Tom Brown’s School Days* (1951); all of which contained scenes where audiences were called upon to take pity on the children who were subject to corporal punishment. Yet the idea that children would be influenced differently by a film depicting modernity than a literary work set in history speaks to growing concerns about how popular culture influenced notions of childhood and their relation to juvenile delinquency. *Spare the Rod* was marketed as the ‘English equivalent of America’s *The Blackboard Jungle*’. Released in the same year by the American author Evan Hunter, and with parallel themes questioning pupil/ teacher authority, violence and race in the American public-school system, the film version of *The Blackboard Jungle* (1955) had similarly given an X rating by BBFC²⁶⁴, with five minutes of violence cut out from the film.²⁶⁵

Michael Croft’s response to the furore, published in *The Spectator* in 1955, speaks to numerous areas of focus that will be explored within this chapter.²⁶⁶ His concern surrounding the BBFC’s rejection of the film script relates to the growing resistance and hostility to the debate that shifted across the early post-war period. With the passing of the 1948 Children Act, the idea that young people in breach of the law should be ‘protected and reclaimed as “good citizens”’ became a dominant message.²⁶⁷ Yet rising concern about how to best police juvenile

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Golbu, ‘A Transnational Tale of Teenage Terror: The Blackboard Jungle in Global Perspective’ in *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, (6,1, 2015) p.3.

²⁶⁵ *New York Times*, September 18, 1955, p.69.

²⁶⁶ Croft, M, Letter to *The Spectator*, 5th January 1955, p.28.

²⁶⁷ Bradley, K, ‘Juvenile Delinquency, the Juvenile Courts and the Settlement Movement 1908–1950’ in, *Twentieth Century British History* Vol. 19 (2008), pp. 133–155.

delinquency, and its assumed link to ‘Teddy Boy’ culture, was heightened by the Labour government’s decision to ban the birch in 1948.²⁶⁸ When birching was finally abolished, both abolitionist and retentionist debates employed denunciations of emotionalism to invalidate their opponent’s claims. And yet emotion was continually asserted by ordinary people as a legitimate basis for opinion formation upon the subject, even as debates increasingly demanded a dislocation of feeling from reason. Moreover, the birch’s abolition had wider ramifications than had been anticipated, with broader questions arising that challenged the public use of corporal punishment that existed in schools.

The post-war tripartite schooling system continued to employ corporal punishment across its newly founded, and increasingly criticised boundaries. Over-populated classrooms within the lower tier of the system, and an inherited culture of strict punitive educational mores across these educational boundaries ensured that corporal punishment continued to be meted out throughout the early-post war period. Yet, as this chapter will demonstrate, the appropriate place for discipline within the classroom became a hotly contested subject, with fervent campaigns both for and against the cane. Whilst school surveys suggested that parents were happy for teachers to act in *loco parentis* - extending the discipline of the home into the hands of educational figures - pupils were demonstrably more fervent in their attempts to define the boundaries between the public and private nature of corporal punishment in their schools.

Croft criticised the propensity for post-war films to show ‘domestic conflict and the breaking up of family life.’²⁶⁹ This trend co-existed with increased concern surrounding the fabric of British family life, and the appropriate methods that should be employed to maintaining a fit, healthy and harmonious family existence that would fulfil the economic and social demands of post-war reconstruction. Whilst motherhood had been blamed for the

²⁶⁸ Osgerby, B. *Youth Media*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2004) p.57.

²⁶⁹ Croft, M, Letter to *The Spectator*, 5th January 1955, p.28.

delinquency of wartime Britain, fatherhood became seen as central to the ‘cure’ of the rising post-war concern towards youth crime, and a shared duty of care between father and mother in regards to the nurturing of a child’s moral well-being became increasingly prescribed. Whilst Bowlbyism, and child-centred welfare became central to post-war moral and emotional reconstruction, this chapter will question how readily psychiatric approaches to childcare were understood by ordinary people, and the extent to which psychiatry impinged on punitive mores.²⁷⁰

Finally, it is significant that the censorship board evoked ‘sadism’ within their rebuttal of *Spare the Rod* at the same time that Croft detailed in his letter to *The Spectator* that a producer was willing to transform the novel against corporal punishment into an ‘X rated’ ‘quickie’ with a ‘good sex angle’.²⁷¹ Concern toward the sexual nature of children, and the ‘perversions’ associated with flagellation conflicted across the post war. Whilst science defined the boundaries of childhood and adulthood in increasingly disparate and contradictory terms, and further redefined appropriate childrearing practices, culture sought both to challenge the use of corporal punishment, as seen in *Spare the Rod*, and to uphold and revel in the sexual capacity that the subject still openly held, seen in ‘Carry-on’-style films such as the 1959 Warner-Pathé film *Bottoms Up!* An examination of Geoffrey Gorer’s 1950 social survey *Exploring English Character*, will show how sex related to corporal punishment in the post-war period, and how Gorer came to define Britain as revelling in the ‘pleasures of severity’.

Banning the Birch

The Labour landslide of 1945, with its radical proposals to form a welfare state, reinvigorated the abolition debates that had been curtailed by the onset of war. *The Criminal*

²⁷⁰ See chapter three of Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement*, (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.81-97.

²⁷¹ Croft, M, Letter to *The Spectator*, 5th January 1955, p.28.

Justice Bill of 1948 was a synthesis of that previously created by the former Conservative government in 1938, with additional changes that arose from the instability that war had created. As Rose comments, such changes were precipitated because ‘the experience of war and post-war years sharpened the feeling that punitive measures were needed’.²⁷² The rise in public concern about juvenile delinquency in the early years of the war, and the ensuing rise in court-ordered birching of offending youths brought a complexity to the debate that necessitated such alterations. Nine years had elapsed since the abandoned *Criminal Justice Act* of 1938, and the war had bought an increased concern regarding juvenile delinquency. As Raymond Guard states, ‘... a punitive alternative had to be offered’ as the birch fell from the magistrates’ books.²⁷³ One such alternative was the Detention Centre Order, which was intended to provide a ‘short, sharp, shock’ in custody for youths under twenty-one.²⁷⁴ However, as the Bill passed through parliament, Attendance Centre Orders were also hastily added to the statute books: two alternatives to corporal punishment were therefore required to fill the gap the birch had left.²⁷⁵

The appropriate place of punishment within the post-war settlement was a highly emotive subject. Moreover, the place of such emotions within policy decision making was an increasingly divisive question. Although abolishing corporal punishment in accordance with Cadogan’s recommendations was a priority for the Labour government, it somewhat faltered over the increasingly divisive subject of abolishing capital punishment. Although Labour had spearheaded numerous campaigns to modify and suspend capital punishment in the inter-war, it became increasingly divided on the subject during the debates that ensued in 1947.²⁷⁶ Although cabinet meetings suggested that the time was not opportune to implement a ban or

²⁷² Rose, G, *The Struggle for Penal Reform*, 1st ed. (Stevens and Sons Ltd., 1961), p.232.

²⁷³ Guard, R, *The End of the Rod: A History of the Abolition of Corporal Punishment in the Courts of England and Wales*, 1st ed. (Brown Walker Press, 2009) pp.119-120.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.117.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.118.

²⁷⁶ Langhamer, C “The Live Dynamic Whole of Feeling and Behaviour”, pp.422-423.

suspension of the death penalty, it remained resolute that the birch should go.²⁷⁷ Although the government were keen to disentangle the abolition of capital and corporal punishment during their reforms to the criminal justice system, Sydney Silverman's clause for a suspension of the death penalty brought the comparison to the fore. When the bill was debated in the Commons, claims that emotion was clouding reasonable judgement were brandished by both sides. When the Conservative Member of Parliament for Chertsey claimed that the government were being led by emotions that resulted in the 'very word of punishment upsetting them',²⁷⁸ the Labour member for Leyton, Mr Sorensen, replied:

I suppose that the hon. and gallant Member for Chertsey like the hon. and gallant Member for Ayr Burghs, assumes that those of us who have supported this Bill have done so for emotional reasons. In fact the hon. and gallant Gentleman rather suggested that the applause which registered the majority decision a few days ago arose purely out of an emotional impulse. Might I suggest to him and others like him that, in fact, the emotion is not all on one side? Those who give way to the perfectly natural instinct of simple revenge are really just as much emotionalists.²⁷⁹

The debate had centred so acutely upon the place of emotions within the reform of the criminal justice system that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Home Office, Mr Kenneth Younger, reiterated within his commendation of the bill to the house that the rational, not the emotional, lay at the heart of the policy:

The last 100 years of our history in this matter have been largely a history of the growing ascendancy of the rational over the emotional approach to the treatment of offenders. I believe that it is the rational approach which dominates in the Bill and for that reason, among others, I commend it to the house.²⁸⁰

Although the majority of those who had railed against abolition had been on the right of the house, the consensus that the birch had to go had emerged from both sides of the

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ HC debates, 16th April 1948, Vol. 449, Col. 1345.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Col. 1347.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Col. 1370.

chamber. The depth of this accord can be gleaned from Conservative Party publications from this period. Their *Youth Astray* publication of 1946, which reported on the treatment of youth offenders, noted that:

[T]he primary aim of modern penal treatment is to strengthen his moral fibre that he will not merely refrain from repeating the particular offence, but become a future law-abiding citizen.²⁸¹

Moreover, in relation specifically to corporal punishment, the party now believed that ‘this form of treatment has almost wholly been abandoned by the more experienced courts in recent years.’²⁸² The tone of the report is surprisingly supportive of the legislation about to be enacted by the Labour government, with its focus on probation rather than physical retribution. Indeed, the National Association of Probation Officers were themselves cautious of the Conservative volte-face in their rather indignant review of their report:

One may doubt the desirability of bringing this subject into the field of political publicity – and one’s doubt is not removed by the fact that there is much in this report which one can whole-heartedly agree.²⁸³

The passing of the Criminal Justice Bill of 1948 may have bought an end to the birch, but in reality, its departure from the statute books was as jarring as the abolition of the pillory had been. The consensus upon which birching had been banned was heralded as a mark of modernity, and yet the lash was teasingly present in the minds of those who were opposed to its departure; remaining in use in prisons until 1962, and - most publicly - in the three British Crown dependencies.²⁸⁴ No sooner had the ink dried than the backlash against abolition took hold in public discourse.

²⁸¹ Conservative Party, *Youth Astray – A Report on the Treatment of Young Offenders*, (Conservative Party, 1946) p.6.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ NAPO, *Probation*, Vol.5, No.6, p.71.

²⁸⁴ Although the last use of corporal punishment in prisons was in 1962, it was not repealed until 1967 under Harold Wilson’s Labour government. See chapter four.

The Backlash and the ‘cosh’ boys

If there could rightly be called a consensus to abolish flogging by the courts within the House of Commons, this was not so within the courts or in the media. No sooner than the birch had been removed from the statute books were calls for its reintroduction being made. For some, like Miss J.V. Reynolds of Palatine Road, Manchester, the end of the birch was a mark of modernity: a rejection of out-dated modes of thought that was upheld by modern scientific thought and which defined itself against the practices of the nations with which Britain had fought:

CRUELTY – Those who advocate flogging for cruelty to children and for robbery with violence show that they have the tendency towards cruelty themselves. Those who have been found guilty of cruelty should have a course of treatment from a psychiatrist. Men and women are not frightened out of their cruel tendencies by having pain inflicted on them. All the countries noted for cruelty – the Germans under Hitler, for instance, and the Japs – have been countries where flogging was practised.²⁸⁵

Miss Reynold’s letter, published in *The Daily Mirror* upon the eve of abolition, speaks to the growing tension between the need for retribution and discipline and the appropriate method and form it should take in the light of the visible cruelties enacted during the conflict. In the immediate post-war, few were in doubt that those who had demonstrably enacted the atrocities carried out by the Nazi regime should be punished within the full remit of the law. And yet people were keen to make a clear distinction between the death penalties meted out at the Nuremburg trials and those for which the hanging sentences had been endowed. Unlike newsreels of the First World War, cinema-goers had been confronted with the harrowing imagery of death and suffering which existed within the labour and death camps at the end of the Second conflict. They had also been educated as to the particularly public nature in which execution and punishment had been wielded by the Nazi regime. When surveyed by *Pathé*

²⁸⁵ *The Daily Mirror*, 12th February 1948, p.2.

News as to whether the executions of war criminals should be broadcast to the nation, out of the 980 letters received, 950 stated that they should not.²⁸⁶ The chief argument against doing so was the need for distinction between the practices of a 'barbaric' nation and those of their own.²⁸⁷ Miss Reynold's letter similarly believed that the integrity of modern British punitive values should be defined against the practices carried out by the 'Germans under Hitler...and the Japs' where 'flogging was practised.'²⁸⁸

Others, however, were lamenting the abolition of the birch. In reply to Miss Reynolds, Mrs N.G De-Vere of Southgate Street, Leicester, lambasted the call for greater psychological application in youth crime, and upheld the notion that a 'like for like' retributive course of action was a more appropriate method:

CRUELTY - PSYCHIATRY is over-rated. The cure for cruelty is flogging. A brute will never alter until he has felt the pain he has inflicted on others.²⁸⁹

Mrs De-Vere was not alone in her belief that the rehabilitative quality inherent within a more psychological approach to retribution created an illogical imbalance within punitive recourse. Emotion, and accusations of emotionalism, often lay at the heart of such arguments, such as those made by Conservative MP Lieutenant Colonel Sir. T. Moore in the House of Commons, only weeks after abolition:

They support it for no apparent reason except that their sensitive feelings are aggrieved or even outraged at the thought of suffering. But oddly enough, this sensitivity is retained only for the criminal... There emerged too something out of this war and that was the psychiatrist. Now we have got to the stage that the psychiatrist, in regard to crime, has really more power than the judge.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ *British Pathé*, 'The End of the Nazis', 17th October, 1946 <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/16th-october-1946-the-end-of-the-nazis/query/Hanging> [Date last accessed: 08/01/16].

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *The Daily Mirror*, 12th February 1948, p.2.

²⁸⁹ *The Daily Mirror*, 17th February 1948, p.2.

²⁹⁰ *Hansard Commons*, 1947-48, Vol. 453, Col. 1549-1551.

Moore's statement to the house spoke to a growing backlash against the progressive move to abolish birching throughout mid-century Britain. Feelings and emotion lay at the heart of such arguments, particularly as they argued that the legislation favoured the feelings of those in society who were 'sensitive' to suffering above those who were not. It argued that sentimentality was reserved not for the victim but for the perpetrators of crime, and that this imbalance had been a result of the emergence of a psychological turn that had materialised in the aftermath of the war.

Magistrates were as outspoken as politicians on the subject of abolition. When Judge G.B McClure sentenced a 'young man' with nine previous convictions to 'eight years' penal servitude' for robbing, with violence, two elderly spinsters, he made bemoaned the absence of the birch in his closing statement to the court:

If ever there were a case for corporal punishment this is that case. But it is now quite clear that it would not now be lawful to impose that punishment as part of the sentence. Anyone who listened to the evidence might well wonder why corporal punishment for this type of offence is about to be abolished. In a fairly long experience I have never heard a more brutal case.²⁹¹

The *London Evening News* concurred, stating that corporal punishment raised 'the strongest feelings of objection to the illogical school of progressives: the sentimental school.'²⁹² Such objections were underpinned by an ever-growing fear of juvenile delinquency which permeated post-war Britain. In the absence of the court's ability to administer corporal punishment, Magistrates and Judges were more likely to impress the necessity for parental physical chastisement in its place. Similarly, they were more likely to impose lighter sentences when it had been made clear that corporal punishment had already been administered for the crime under parental authority. Fathers frequently gave witness to such punishments to the court, as was the case in in 1953 when a father in Dundee was keen to emphasise that his son had 'got a

²⁹¹ *Daily Mail*, Saturday 24th July 1948, p.3.

²⁹² *London Evening News*, 27th July 1948, p.8.

bit big for his breeches in the last three weeks' and that he had already been 'leathered' for it.²⁹³ Unlike wartime 'delinquents' or 'maladjusted' children, the post-war 'cosh boy' (later Teddy Boy) became the identifiably criminal core that were believed to have flourished within the space created by the 'sentimental school' of thought who abolished the birch.²⁹⁴

When Winston Churchill returned to Downing Street in 1951, the vexed question of re-introducing corporal punishment was ever present in public discourse. A number of highly publicised cases of 'coshings' were linked to youth and juvenile delinquency throughout the post-war period. Environmental and spatial factors contributed to the panic surrounding the 'cosh boys' when a series of violent attacks coincided with a succession of severe bouts of smog in London, the most notable being the 'Great Smog' of 1952. The thick veil of fear that accompanied the reports of violence amidst the 'pea-soupers' was exasperated by the fact that attention was frequently drawn to the fact that assailants were not believed to be getting their 'just deserts' in the wake of abolition. Gladys Langford wrote in her diary on 27th October 1952 that newspapers were 'full of accounts of further 'coshings' and letters to the press advocating the return of flogging as punishment for crimes of violence'²⁹⁵ The same month Lord Chief Justice, Rayner Goddard made a 'powerful plea' for the restoration of corporal punishment at the Lord Mayor's annual banquet.²⁹⁶ *Picture Post*'s feature on 'Fear in the Suburbs' suggested that emotionalism lay at the heart of the resurgence of a flogging mentality:

Acacia Avenue's respectability is being ravaged by thuggery and coshery... a state of nerves certainly exists. I talked to men and women of all classes and callings, and in almost every one the attitude was emotional rather than rational. A revival of flogging was in loud demand.²⁹⁷

²⁹³ *Dundee Courier*, 19th December 1953, p.4.

²⁹⁴ For a discussion on the wider 'Teddy Boy' culture, see Jackson, L. A. & Bartie, A, *Policing Youth: Britain 1945 – 70*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 2014); Jackson, L. A, 'The Coffee Club Menace: Policing Youth, Leisure and Sexuality in Postwar Manchester' in *Cultural and Social History* 5, No. 3 (2008): pp.289 – 308, and Osgerby, B, *Youth Media*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2004), pp. 57-59.

²⁹⁵ *Diary of Gladys Langford*, 27th October 1952, Manuscript in Islington Local History Centre, Finsbury Library.

²⁹⁶ Bresler, F. *Lord Goddard*, 1st ed. (Harrap, 1977) pp.225-6.

²⁹⁷ *Picture Post*, 6th December 1952, p.11.

The suggestion that a growing consensus toward the re-introduction of flogging was ‘emotional rather than rational’ induced an ‘unprecedented’ surge of letters from readers who were often keen to emphasise how emotional experience had formed their own particular rationale for being for or against the birch. Miss A. Royce of Salford wrote that ‘[a]fter a personal experience I hold the view that flogging is the one thing to give thugs’:

I was walking home with my mother – she was 79 years old. We were followed by two youths who jumped on us. I had to try and hold up my mother, fight off the two youths, and keep hold of my handbag. Of course, I had to release the bag, which contained valuables and my door-key with name and address attached. My loss, apart from the shock, cost me quite a good sum. My mother eventually got over the fright. It happened some time ago, but I still blaze when I think of it. If one or two of the womenfolk belonging to the ‘anti-flog’ group had a similar experience, maybe they’d change their minds.²⁹⁸

Here experience is freely expressed at the very heart of Miss Royce’s justification for returning to the birch, and the assumed lack of experience of the ‘anti-flog’ womenfolk is cited to explain their position. For two schoolboys writing to the publication, the fact that they were subject to corporal punishment within their educational institution made the absence of such punishments in law all the more illogical: ‘We see no reason why, if school boys are caned, cosh bandits should not be birched as punishment for their offences.’²⁹⁹ However, those who had, in the past, been the recipient of the now-banished birch were also keen to express their experiences in relation to their feelings. An anonymous man argued that although he had received four floggings by order of the court, they were ‘soon forgotten’ and had been no deterrent in keeping him out of prison:

I’ve been in prison thirteen times in all. Each time I came out harder than when I went in. I’ve had four floggings. It was bad enough when it lasted; but when I got out I soon forgot about it.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ *Picture Post*, 13th December 1952, p.8.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Whereas Mr. F.C. Langston of London, an ‘ex-convict’ stated that:

I could have taken the flogger’s life at the time. I felt such revenge. Flogging always gave me that feeling. I’ve heard others who have been flogged say the same. In all I’ve had 875 lashes at different times. I used to boast about it at last.³⁰¹

The inclusion of letters from those who had been repeatedly, and therefore one might conclude ineffectively, been the recipient of the birch was condemned by members of parliament, who suggested that it had been a ‘deliberate circulation stunt, exploiting issues of this kind for circulation purposes.’³⁰² And yet their inclusion spoke to the burgeoning public discussion that sat between feeling, experience and consequence. Increasingly, experience was being sought to understand the consequences of feelings in relation to corporal punishment.

The question of re-introducing the birch was also fuelled by the fact that, although it had been abolished on mainland Britain, the isles of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man had retained the autonomy to birch offenders at the discretion of the police court magistrate. In November 1952, an influx of sentencing from Jersey, including twelve strokes of the birch for John Carrel (19) for slashing seven cinema seats with a knife, appeared to ridicule the inconsistencies of the law as it stood: that youths could be punished by parents, teachers and indeed when in prison, but that punishment could not be ordered by all British magistrates.³⁰³ This discrepancy was felt keenly by the Magistrates’ Association, who, in the same month balloted its members upon the question of re-introducing the birch. The response in February of 1953 had produced a majority of more than two to one in favour of restoring corporal punishment to the courts.³⁰⁴ And yet the Conservative Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, reiterated that there had been a reduction of crimes where corporal punishment had

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Hansard Commons*, 13th February 1953, Vol. 551, C 773.

³⁰³ *Daily Mail*, 11th November 1952, p. 3.

³⁰⁴ *Daily Mail*, 14th January 1953, p. 5.

historically been administered, and that police officials had shown a ‘reluctance to carry out’ the punishment.³⁰⁵ The question of who was most suitable to administer public corporal punishment had, of course, been a central tenant within Cadogan’s recommendations to abolish the practice, believing that the punisher may well be detrimentally affected as well as the punished.³⁰⁶ As to the vexed question of who should, then, appropriately administer corporal punishment should it be re-introduced, Mrs. Dorothy Woodland of Sutton Coldfield’s branch of the W.I. provided the Home Secretary with a solution:

One of the reasons why corporal punishment is not brought back seems to be that the warders do not like flogging prisoners. So we have suggested that a machine could be devised to do the job, perhaps by electricity or clockwork. I am not mechanically minded but surely scientists can devise something? If they can invent an electric chair, I am sure they could invent an electric flogger.³⁰⁷

It appears that the electric flogger was not an option that the Home Secretary took. Although the suggestion spoke to the growth of scientific application to the everyday materiality of ‘modernity Britain’, the electric flogger could not appease the ever-present concern that flogging brutalised and made vengeful its victims. When a private members bill was introduced into the Commons in 1952, its sole aim was to re-introduce the birch. The Criminal Justice Amendment Bill proposed the reintroduction of the birch for any offender convicted of an offence of felony with violence. Had the amendment passed, flogging would have been more readily applicable than in pre-1948 terms, and yet the debate in the Commons demonstrates how resistant both parties had become on the subject of re-introducing public corporal punishment. Although the Bill had been introduced by a number of Tory backbenchers, who were loud in their approval of corporal punishment, the Conservative government remained resolute that the bill should not pass. The Home Secretary opposed the bill, stating that

³⁰⁵ Duxbury, N, *Lord Kilmuir*, (Hart Publishing, 2015) p.28.

³⁰⁶ Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment*, (HMSO, 1938) p.78.

³⁰⁷ *Daily Mail*, Monday, November 17, 1952, pg. 5.

Had I been flogged, far from reforming me at that age, I should not have been satisfied until I had flogged those who had flogged me.³⁰⁸

Just as the two men who had written to *Picture Post* amplifying their acrimony toward the system that had corporally disciplined them, the belief that the birch induced only reprisal not repentance had firmly taken hold. The bill was defeated by 159-63.³⁰⁹ *The Times* stated that the ‘debate...drew freely on emotion and many well-worn arguments.’³¹⁰

The birch continued to be a divisive subject throughout post-war Britain and remained an active and contentious subject within public discourse. As chapter five will later demonstrate, the tendency for governments to revert back to Cadogan’s report of 1938 when the subject inevitably arose became itself a point of contention. When claims were made that the report was outdated, and the government’s continued referral to it was outmoded, the government relented and commissioned a secondary report on corporal punishment in 1960. Three key concerns emerged that warranted such a secondary opinion: firstly, the apparent rise in youth crime; secondly the lack of psychiatric consensus on the subject; and thirdly address the growing concerns toward crimes of a sexual nature.³¹¹ A particularly contentious element within the continued debate remained the legitimacy of the continued – and as I will argue the extensive - use of corporal punishment that existed in schools throughout the post-war period. The fact that corporal punishment continued to be exercised in public institutions such as schools, reformatory institutions and indeed in prisons continued to fuel the desire to regain the birching of offenders by the courts. And yet the abolition of court-ordered birching also questioned the legitimacy of its use in these public spaces. Focusing on the post-war expansion

³⁰⁸ *Hansard Commons*, 1953, Vol. 551, Col. 772.

³⁰⁹ *The Times*, 14th February 1953, p.11.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ Guard, R, *The End of the Rod*, p.126.

of education, I will now explore the impact of the abolition debate upon the growing educational institutions and ask why the cane remained when the birch fell.

Discipline and the Tripartite Schooling System

The post-war educational system was largely inherited from the wartime coalition government's parliamentary act of 1944, which had been piloted through parliament by R.A. Butler. It replaced the existing organisational structure of elementary schools and higher education with a tripartite system, which consisted of 'primary', 'secondary' and 'further' education.³¹² Tripartism would be realised in a 'progressive' separation of secondary level education, consisting of the introduction of free grammar schools, technical schools and secondary modern schools. The new Ministry of Education replaced The Board of Education as the governing body, with a Minister of Education at its head - the first being Labour's Ellen Wilkinson. Introduced in 1948, Wilkinson's post-war educational system made secondary education both free and compulsory to all children aged between eleven and fifteen: a provision that raised the school leaving age by a year and made a clear distinction between primary and secondary educational provision. At its heart, the post-war educational expansion sought to provide an equality of opportunity that had been so glaringly absent from previous educational structures: merit, not wealth would determine a child's educational provision. In practice, policy created a decidedly discriminatory system that, as Selina Todd argues, 'reserved the best places for a few.'³¹³

Reconstruction lay at the heart of the tripartite system; building a workforce that could support peacetime labour. As Ellen Wilkinson stated in 1946 to those within her party conference who favoured a comprehensive system, 'not everyone wants an academic

³¹² *Education Act 1944*, 7 & 8 Geo. Ch. 31, Part 2, Section 7, p. 227.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/7-8/31/contents/enacted> [Date last accessed: 01/12/16]

³¹³ Todd, S, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class- 1910-2010*, (John Murray, 2014) p.185.

education. After all, coal has to be mined and fields ploughed'.³¹⁴ And yet, Moss' governmental survey of 1945 demonstrated that people were keen for children of all backgrounds to have an equal chance of educational success.³¹⁵ This was particularly the case from those who had themselves only attained elementary education.³¹⁶ By 1959, the Crowther Report was clear that in secondary modern schools – the most common destination for those who had failed to pass the 11-plus to gain entry to grammar education – 'the children of non-manual workers are much under-represented, and the children of semi-skilled workers over-represented'.³¹⁷ The 1944 Education Act made no specific mention of class sizes, but regulations in 1945 and 1951 required only a reduction from fifty to forty pupils per class in primary schools.³¹⁸ Government promises to reduce class sizes remained unfulfilled, however, despite an active campaign to recruit more teachers. By 1955 class sizes in many secondary modern schools had increased rather than decreased. Maintaining discipline in classrooms that were increasing, rather than decreasing, often meant the maintenance of an age-old practice of corporal punishment to maintain the longstanding problem of overpopulated classrooms.

The question of the abolition of flogging also brought to the fore the broader question of corporal punishment in schools. The Committee Against Corporal Punishment in Schools (A.C.P.) had been instituted in the wake of the Labour landslide of 1945, and its members boasted over fifty Labour members during its most active years of campaigning in the years leading up to the abolition of the birch. A.C.P. argued that 'no deterioration of discipline was visible in schools where corporal punishment was not used.' Many members of the A.C.P. were dissatisfied with the implementation of 1944 Education Act, preferring the idea of a

³¹⁴ Labour Party, *Annual Conference Report*, (Labour Party, 1946), p.22.

³¹⁵ Moss, L, *Education and the People: A Study of Public Attitudes Toward Education and the Education Act*, (Government Social Survey, 1945), p.2.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ Crowther Report, *15 to 18: A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education*, (Her Majesties Stationary Office, 1959) p.74.

³¹⁸ ED 190/12 'Primary and Secondary Schools (Grant Conditions) Regulations, 1945', and ED 190/12 'Schools Grant Regulations 1951'.

comprehensive educational system, calling tripartism ‘elitist’. Although her Parliamentary Secretary was an active member of the A.C.P, Labour’s Minister of Education, Ellen Wilkinson was, like Attlee, strongly in favour of the tripartite schooling system. Her response to the A.C.P. was that ‘...there was insufficient evidence to justify any general conclusion’ upon the subject of punishing schoolchildren.³¹⁹ Believing that the major reconstruction required to incorporate such radical socialist principles into the schooling system, the tripartite system was seen by many of Attlee’s government to be allowing access to all to grammar schools - irrespective of class – via a IQ test; the eleven plus. Although the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen, which saw four hundred thousand more children in school attendance, and the provision of free school milk and orange juice were welcomed as progressive, modern achievements, tripartism remained to be judged as a deeply divisive and hierarchical schooling system.³²⁰

The formation of the A.C.P committee had largely been due to the fact that no attempts to introduce further controls of corporal punishment had been made during the wartime-coalition Education Act of 1944, when R.A. Butler – after whom the act was more popularly named – had responded to the question of its omission by stating that ‘the practice in schools is dying out. It is better to let the matter take its natural course.’³²¹ As Newall argues, Butler had based his statement on a survey of a selected number of punishment book records from local educational authorities, which as I have demonstrated, were rarely a reliable source for measuring the prevalence of unofficial and so unrecorded punishments, such as a ruler, slipper or with the bare hand.³²² The secretary of A.C.P spoke to the *Daily Mirror* in August 1947, believing that:

The country does not want its children caned for things so natural to childhood as talking, laughing, inattention and unpunctuality. Some offences, such as bullying and cruelty, are so serious that they must be met by methods less crude than that of corporal

³¹⁹ Newell, P, *A Last Resort? Corporal Punishment in Schools*, 1st ed. (Penguin, 1972), p, 24.

³²⁰ Steedman, C, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, 5th ed. (Virago, 1996), p.122.

³²¹ Newell, P, *A Last Resort?* p, 23.

³²² *Ibid.*

punishment, which, in the base of bullying, actually creates the bully. No one who has our knowledge of the results of corporal punishment – gathered from long, personal experiences in schools – can doubt that, whether carried out by cane or birch, it is always harmful.³²³

During the debates to ban the birch, the question of banning the cane became ever-more present in parliamentary debates owing to the substantial Labour members of A.C.P in situ. In 1947, Peter Freeman, Labour parliamentary member for Newport, raised the question of the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools stating that the ‘system turned out little Hitlers.’³²⁴ David Hardman, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Education, announced:

My own view and that of the Minister (Mr. Tomlinson) is that the time has now come for an expert inquiry into this vexed problem of corporal punishment. The Foundation of Educational Research are being asked if they will undertake an inquiry into the effect on children of various forms of punishment and reward. The Foundation will be asked to advise the Minister on the most suitable form of punishment and reward.³²⁵

The Foundation of Educational Research took five years to publish *A Survey of Rewards and Punishments in Schools* in 1952. The report found only thirteen schools in Britain which had voluntarily chosen to abandon the practice of corporal punishment. It found that the absence of corporal punishment was largely due to four main factors; a staff of ‘above average ability’, ‘enlightened teaching methods’ and curriculum, the maintenance of close contact with parents or those at home with the children, and a ‘gradual evolution from rigid and repressive to more democratic’ discipline.³²⁶ Despite these findings, the report did not recommend the abolition of corporal punishment in schools because it felt it would ‘heighten teacher anxiety.’³²⁷ The report detailed that of the teachers that it surveyed, 89.2 per cent agreed that ‘corporal punishment should be retained as a measure of last resort’; 77.8 per cent were

³²³ *Daily Mirror*, 29th August 1947, p.2.

³²⁴ *Daily Mail*, 25th April 1947, p.1.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ Birch, L.B, ‘Critical Notices’, In *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, (1952) 22: pp.210–213.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

‘strongly in favour of its discretionary use’; and only 5.6 per cent thought that it should be ‘abandoned.’³²⁸ It conceded that although increasing numbers of psychological reports were recognising acute problems with the corporal punishment of children within schools, ‘social and school conditions’ necessitated that, in the interest ‘of the majority of children, the right of the teacher to decide on the use of corporal punishment ought to be retained.’³²⁹ By the time of its publication, A.C.P had disbanded, and the more progressive Labour Minister of Education, Tomlinson, had been replaced by Florence Horsbrugh when the Conservative government regained power in 1951. Horsbrugh, who had voted against the abolition of the birch, and who would vote unsuccessfully for its re-introduction in 1953, did not entertain the notion of further probing the question of corporal punishment in schools, particularly as the Labour-initiated *Survey of Rewards and Punishments in Schools* had recommended its retention.

A.C.P was not, however, a lone voice within the abolition debate. Its fiercest opponent came in the form of the National Society for the Retention of Corporal Punishment in Schools, which advertised its formation in a personal column of *The Times* on 4th July 1947.³³⁰ Speaking to the *Daily Mirror* during the Commons deliberations on the fate of the birch, Mr. Eric Wildman – the society chair – stated that:

We want to see the cane, instead of the birch, used in the police court. The birch tends to make a hero of the boy receiving it. Punishment with a cane – with the boy over the knee – would not make him anything like a hero.³³¹

Mr Wildman had more than a vested interest in replacing the birch with the cane, and for retaining the latter in schools. The twenty-six-year-old campaigner was also the chairman of

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Daily Mirror*, 29th August 1947, p.2.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

the ‘Corpun Educational Supply Company’, which had over ten thousand schools on its books of supplies. His catalogue and clientele included:

Canes, punishment straps, wooden spanking paddles and birch rods to boarding schools, council schools, religious schools, Army educational establishments, training ships, governesses and individual parents all over Britain.³³²

Claiming to the *Mirror* that he made ‘no profit out of Corpun’, he stated that, as a tutor:

I depreciate the use of the cane on anyone’s hand. It is caning bone, and does more harm than good. The bottom, however, was made for whipping. It is not a dangerous practice, and a caning does a girl as much good as it does a boy.³³³

Wildman regularly paced the pavements outside parliament in his cap and gown, carrying an assortment of canes, with a banner reading ‘Abolish the Birch and Crime Increases’, distributing leaflets to interested passers-by. He also gave regular public lectures on the benefits of corporal punishment and the arguments against its abolition. One such lecture would result in more than Wildman had bargained for.

On 24th November 1948, Wildman gave a public lecture at Horsely school near Eccleshall in Staffordshire. Before the lecture, he met with members of the local press, to whom he distributed his campaign leaflets and displayed his canes and straps. Wildman was seemingly unaware that his lecture that evening was to be given within an institution that fundamentally deplored corporal punishment. The headmaster, Mr Robert Copping, believed in ‘self-expression’, and, unlike the majority of contemporary educational institutions, had banned all physical chastisement. Wildman’s lecture began by demonstrating his extensive collection of disciplinary implements to the audience, including the pupils. His lecture was reported in the *Evening Sentinel*:

Some of you may regard me as an ogre of whom children are scared. But corporal punishment is a common-sense doctrine, and is one of the best means of correcting

³³² *Daily Mirror*, 29th August 1947, p.2.

³³³ *Ibid.*

children that we have discovered at the present time. Most boys and girls will admit that they are far from angelic at times and that they have to be brought to heel in some form or another. I maintain that corporal punishment is a lesser evil than other forms of punishment applied in some schools.³³⁴

Wildman then demonstrated his ‘favourite’ cane, the ‘Dragon-smoking Malacca’, which – with the aid of smoke blown through it from his pipe – was shown by Wildman to be demonstrably ‘porous and, therefore, less likely to cause bruising.’ Replying to a question as to what he considered to be the maximum punishment to give a child, Mr. Wildman said that the age and the physique of the child had to be considered, but, generally speaking, the most usual punishment for a reasonably serious offence was ‘six of the best on the buttocks.’ With that statement, Wildman was ambushed by the pupils of Horsley School, held to the ground, and with the Dragon-smoking Malacca whipped from his hand, was promptly beaten on his buttocks by the enraged schoolchildren.



Figure 3.1: Wildman’s attack as featured in *Time* Magazine, 6th December 1948, p.11.

Although Wildman complained to the local constabulary that ‘I’ve nine visible weals on my buttocks... I’ve never suffered such indignity in all my life’, the police refused to press

³³⁴ *Evening Sentinel*, 25th November 1948, p.7.

charges against the students. The very public spectacle of a pro-corporal punishment tutor receiving ‘six of the best’ by enraged pupils caused a very public, indeed international sensation. Featuring as highly as *Time* magazine (Figure 3.1), Wildman’s public humiliation spoke to the very public nature of conversation that was taking place about who the most appropriate person was to administer corporal punishment, and where such punishments should take place.

Although Corporal punishment remained open as a valid means of classroom control throughout mid-century schooling, with its legitimacy and form granted at the discretion of the LEA’s that governed any given number of schools within its jurisdiction, it continued to be questioned throughout the post-war. As we have already seen within this chapter, the *Survey of Rewards and Punishments in Schools* of 1952 could find only thirteen schools in Britain which had voluntarily chosen to abandon the practice of corporal punishment, but this did not mean that the subject of corporal punishment as a pedagogical and punitive practice was not contested within mid-century discourse. The disjointed nature of allowing LEA’s to dictate punitive measures across the country necessarily meant that the form and regularity of physical punishment varied considerably according to location. For example, in 1950 a ten-point punishment code was introduced to the Middlesex County’s education committee, dictating how, where and when a child should be punished within its jurisdiction. The code banned the ‘boxing of ears, head-cuffing and knuckle-rapping’ – the hitherto more private privileges that had existed outside of the more rigid codes laid out in the punishment book guidelines. Further rules dictated that caning should always be done in private, marking a significant shift from the public spectacle of corporal punishment that had long existed in schools, and that were to continue under many other LEAs. Punishments were also now to be differentiated by gender: boys were to be caned on the hands or buttocks, whereas girls were to be given corporal

punishment only in ‘exceptional circumstances’ and must ‘only be struck on the hands.’ Mr. T.B. Wheeler, the county’s Chief Education Officer, told the *Daily Mirror* that:

Similar regulations had been long enforced in many schools. Now they will be extended to all schools under the authority as a measure of uniformity.³³⁵

The regulations also dictated that the headmaster, headmistress or ‘authorised teachers’ were to be solely responsible for administering punishments, with full details of the punisher and the actions they had taken were to be logged in the school’s punishment book. These bureaucratic measures had in fact long been required of LEAs, and yet the need to reiterate them to institutions throughout mid-century Britain suggests that adherence to them during the mid-century remained a point of concern.

The question of who should administer corporal punishment within schools remained open to criticism owing to the lack of uniformity between LEAs. Children themselves were often openly critical about the absence of consistency of punitive regulations, particularly with regards to which authority should be in charge of administering punishments in schools, and whether or not the school was adhering to the LEA’s own regulations on the matter. In 1956, children of Bushey Manor secondary modern school in Hertfordshire organised a meeting outside of school to gather signatures for a petition to the headmaster. Their slogan read ‘Only the Head should punish!’ The petition read:

Bearing in mind the recommendation of the Herts Education Officer that corporal punishment be administered by the headmaster, we petition you to request that class masters observe this recommendation unless acting officially as your deputy.³³⁶

When the *Daily Mirror* interviewed the fourteen-year old organiser, he told the newspaper that:

³³⁵ *Daily Mirror*, 10th July 1950, p.3.

³³⁶ *Daily Mirror*, 16th February 1956, p.8.

My mother helped me with the grammar of the petition. We're really fed up with being slapped in class. If we're bad, we should be punished, but only by the head.³³⁷

The headmaster refused to comment on the matter to the press, and the Education Officer stated that 'the headmaster has the right to delegate powers of giving punishment as he thinks fit. We are taking no action.'³³⁸ As Stephen Humphries' research demonstrated, classroom protests against corporal punishment were nothing new in the post-war – with many examples found in inter-war British schoolrooms - and the continued inclusion of parental assistance in the matter may also seem like a continuation of such narratives.³³⁹ And yet these students were not suggesting, as their historical counterparts had, that corporal punishment itself should be banned, but rather than the public nature of contemporary practice should be curbed, within the privacy of the headmaster's office.

The question of who should punish children, and the most appropriate place to do so was also frequently discussed within the popular press. In 1955, the parents of 350 girls and boys were asked what they thought of corporal punishment in their school in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. Out of 200 replies, only 18 were against the use of physical punishment on their children. Parents were asked to qualify in which instances they thought corporal punishment was an appropriate form of correction; 138 replied wilful damage; 136 stealing; 132 dishonesties; 123 bullying; 108 disobediences and 106 replied that cheek should validate the use of the headmaster's cane.³⁴⁰ All but two of the parents who responded stated that they used physical punishment in the home. Although the headmaster had instigated the survey to validate the use of corporal punishment within his institution, he believed that the latter

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ See Humphries, *S. Hooligans or Rebels?* pp.62-90.

³⁴⁰ *Daily Mail*, 20th May 1955, p.7.

revelation of overwhelming domestic use of corporal punishment suggested that parents were out of touch with punitive mores:

I think the survey shows that parents are rather behind the times. I do not disagree with the cane altogether – I was caned myself as a schoolboy. But I find no necessity to use it more than half a dozen times a term, chiefly for bullying or rank disobedience. For other things there are usually better ways of dealing with children.³⁴¹

As Laura Tisdall's research attests, school log books from this period continued to demonstrate an increase in parental dissatisfaction with the ways and means by which corporal punishment continued to be meted out in the school room.³⁴² And yet, as the above survey from 1955 suggests, often large percentages of parents approved of the punishment of children within the educational environment. Was this particular cohort of parents 'rather behind the times', as the headmaster suggested? Tisdall suggests that the rise of child-centred parenting increased the notion that only parents should punish their children.³⁴³ To explore this theory further, I will now explore the growth of post-war 'Bowlbyism', and ask how a child-centred approach to child care affected parental approaches toward corporal punishment.

Bowlbyism and the Post-war Settlement

The question of emotion, and in particular of love, lay at the heart of psychological debates around motherhood and childhood. As chapter two revealed, attachment as a theory had developed largely from the surveying of evacuees, whose 'neuroses' were believed to be a symptom of detachment from their mothers. As Rose argues, after the Second World War, John Bowlby emerged as part of a group of prominent social psychiatrists concerned with 'adjusting the bonds of love'; thinking about the emotion of love between a mother and child in terms of a means-ends rationality.³⁴⁴ A new approach to child rearing was soon evident in the

³⁴¹ *Daily Mail*, 20th May 1955, p.7.

³⁴² Tisdall, L. "Inside the 'blackboard jungle'," in *Cultural and Social History*, 12:4, (2015), p.493.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁴ Rose, N. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. 1st ed. (Routledge, 1990) p. 151.

prescriptive literature of post-war Britain, not least in the work of Benjamin Spock's best-selling *Common Sense Book of Baby and Childcare* (1946). Spock told mothers to 'enjoy your baby', to 'have fun' and to respond to babies in an 'instructive, natural way'.³⁴⁵ The Second World War had brought new psychological thought in direct conflict with the influence of behaviourism, which had been a present, yet contested influence of thought throughout the inter-war period. Aggression was a particularly salient issue for the new psychologies of post-war Britain, and behaviourism, with its propensity to recommend punishments over rewards, was argued to be an outdated mode of familial discipline.³⁴⁶

John Bowlby's influential text *Personal Aggressiveness and War* had been co-authored with the political philosopher Evan Durbin, who had been Clement Attlee's personal assistant during the wartime coalition, and who assumed the role of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Works after the 1945 Labour landslide victory.³⁴⁷ Here the seeds of emotional development to sustain a post-war democracy were sewn. Citing the works of Susan Isaacs, whom as chapter three demonstrated surveyed the emotional landscape of evacuees during the war, and the works of zoologist S Zuckerman, Bowlby and Durbin promoted the idea that there was an innate psychological potential for love in human beings. None more so than between the love developed between a child and mother during its infancy. They promoted the idea that a state-led programme for the emotional education of children was a prerequisite to the formation of a prosperous and – crucially – a harmonious society. They argued that society would naturally incline into a violent, uncontrollable and disparate culture, incapable of the organised division of labour needed for the wealth creation of a post-war consensus.³⁴⁸ The use of psychology for creating a harmonious society was central to both Bowlby's theory of

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Thom, D. "Beating Children is Wrong", p.269.

³⁴⁷ Brooke, S. 'Problems of "Socialist Planning": Evan Durbin and the Labour Government of 1945', in *The Historical Journal* Vol. 34 (1991) pp. 687–702.

³⁴⁸ Mayhew, B, 'Between Love and Aggression', p.21.

attachment and to Durbin's economics, and as Ben Mayhew argues, Durbin '...worked hard to get the subject on the government agenda.'³⁴⁹ In 1945, Durbin organised a conference, 'Psychological and Sociological Problems of Modern Socialism', and Bowlby contributed his paper 'Psychology and Democracy', arguing that the new Labour government had to manage 'emotional development' to 'sustain democracy'.³⁵⁰

As Denise Riley's influential work on work and childcare attests, although Bowlby's theories of attachment had a profound and lasting effect on approaches to post-war child rearing, 'Bowlby's work cannot, in itself, be held fully accountable for the phenomenon of "Bowlbyism"'.³⁵¹ If psychoanalytic approaches to childcare were to be accessed during this period, it was far more likely to be accessed through the works of Benjamin Spock or Donald Winnicott. As chapter two revealed, Winnicott's wartime broadcasts had provided easily understood psychoanalytic advice for the 'deprived mother' during a period of sustained conscription and evacuation. The post-war era saw an expansion of his reach, taking advantage of an expanding B.B.C. programming, affordable paperback books and magazine and newspaper print media to reach a broader audience, popularising the idea that maternal deprivation resulted in psychological damage.³⁵² Hannah Gavron's posthumously published *The Captive Wife* provides us with significant indication of the bearing that this mother-child attachment programme had on women's lives. Using unstructured interviews on working-class and middle-class women, Gavron stated that:

The ideology of the modern family demands high standards of care, living and involvement which inevitably restrict the freedom that the 'new women; has been encourage to expect from her childhood and education.'³⁵³

³⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.18.

³⁵⁰ Mayhew, B, 'Between Love and Aggression: The Politics of John Bowlby' in *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol.19, No.4, p.21.

³⁵¹ Riley, D, *War in the Nursery*, (Virago, 1984). p.109.

³⁵² Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.88.

³⁵³ Gavron, H, *The Captive Wife: Conflicts of Housebound Mothers*, (Routledge, 1966), pp.145-146.

This distance between expectation and experience was perhaps most keenly felt by her interviewees with regards to standards of childcare during the post-war period. Forty-eight per cent of those she surveyed believed that even the smallest period of separation from their child was potentially ‘damaging’ to their mental well-being. As Gavron summarised:

Certainly the general impression gained from interviews was that despite the presence or absence of help with children most mothers felt psychologically tied to their young children, and felt themselves compelled to stay at home whatever their own personal desires.³⁵⁴

One of Gavron’s interviews highlights acutely this sense of psychological attachment and elucidates from where it had developed:

I think, now I have a child it’s very wrong for me to leave him. I used to think I’d go on working, but then I read articles and books about leaving little children and, well, I decided I would not.³⁵⁵

If attachment was seeping into the public consciousness, with profound consequences to the personal needs of the post-war mother, then what effect was this child-centred approach having on the methods of discipline within the home? Particularly as those espousing the need for a child-centred approach were more than reluctant to give advice on the subject.

Contrary to common belief, Spock’s influential 1946 *Common Sense Book of Baby and Childcare* made no mention of physically punishing children.³⁵⁶ This misconception may have arisen from the substantial re-prints of his book, as his revised edition in 1968 did mention the subject somewhat ambivalently:

I’m not particularly advocating spanking, but I think it is less poisonous than lengthy disapproval, because it clears the air, for parents and child.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.78.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.72.

³⁵⁶ See Newell, P, *A Last Resort*, p.74.

³⁵⁷ Spock, B, *Baby and Childcare*, 3rd ed. (Bodley Head, 1968), p.172.

Although both Winnicott and Bowlby were firmly against the use of corporal punishment – Bowlby stated in 1955 that he had not used the practice on his own children – Winnicott was reluctant to give advice for or against the subject during his broadcasts, or in his expanding presence within the print media.³⁵⁸ Indeed, despite having been on air since before the war, and as discussed in chapter two, Winnicott did not discuss the practice until 1957. In a similar vein to Susan Isaacs' exclusion of the question of corporal punishment in her inter-war articles for *Nursery World*, despite their own beliefs that it was an ineffective and harmful practice, advice on the subject seems to have been avoided at the risk of 'alienating' a supposed 'substantial number of listeners' that gave a 'loving smack' who could otherwise benefit from his advice on the importance of attachment, nurture and child-centred approaches to motherhood. Whilst the 'experts' themselves were reluctant to advise parents on different approaches to discipline, popular advice magazines were often vague as to why other modes than smacking were preferable. When a *Listener* article observed that it was 'now normal that naughty children were not simply "spanked"', but that 'reasons for their naughtiness should be explored', the magazine indicated to its readers that psychological modes of understanding were an alternative to the physical action, but crucially it failed to explain to its readers why this they should do so.³⁵⁹

An inspection of the surveys completed by Elizabeth and John Newson reveal that in punitive terms, mothers were freely exercising the disciplinary mores that they themselves had experienced growing up. In their influential survey of Nottinghamshire working-class women, they asked an open-ended question, 'How do you punish him when he's been naughty?' – their reason for leaving the question open was so as to 'allow for the other forms of punitive behaviour – deprivation of sweets, warnings that "Mummy won't love you any more" and so

³⁵⁸ Horne, A (ed.) *Winnicott's Children: Independent Psychoanalytic Approaches with Children and Adolescents*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2012), p.164.

³⁵⁹ *The Listener*, LV:1421, 21 June 1956, pp. 850–1.

on.’³⁶⁰ They found that sixty-two per cent of the mothers that they surveyed regularly practiced corporal punishment on their children. For many women, they explained their use of corporal punishment as a means to stopping their child harming themselves, such as a Salesman’s wife who stated that:

Oh, I sometimes smack his hand if he’s too bad, not hard, just enough to make him realize he shouldn’t do things, you know... if he pulls the tablecloth off, or something like that. And sometimes if he gets mad he’ll bang his head and smack himself, and I’ve smacked him for that as well. I’m frightened of him doing any harm to himself.³⁶¹

Similarly, a Butcher’s wife stated that:

If he’s, say, touching the fireguard, I’ll smack his hand; banging the table, I’ll smack him; trying to do something – you know – trying to be destructive; and I think if I’m a bit off myself, you know, and he’s crying all the while, I do tend to give him a little smack then, I think everybody does though.³⁶²

Here we can see a clear indication of how environmental factors within the home shaped the punitive actions that mothers took in disciplining their children. Just as Mass-Observation found in its wartime survey, the fear that a child may harm itself remained a key reason for exercising corporal punishment in the post-war household. However, the butcher’s wife’s qualification that similar discipline was imposed when her child was ‘crying all the while’ whilst she was ‘a bit off myself’ further suggests that emotive factors other than fear, such as frustration, remained a feature within decisions to punish children.

Although the Newsons found that increased economic well-being, more leisure time, modified working hours and improved living conditions had contributed to a ‘warmer’ family existence, corporal punishment remained a valid and oft practiced means of control within the post-war home. Other examples, particularly notable within the middle-class cohort that the

³⁶⁰ Newson, E & J, *Infant Care and Motherhood in an Urban Community*, (Allen & Unwin, 1963) p.104.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.106.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

Newsons' surveyed, demonstrated that corporal punishment was also accompanied by a prolonged period of emotional absence from the child as a secondary form of punishment. As a 'petrol manager's wife, who stated that:

If she's woken up; or if she's getting teased by all these kiddies; that starts her off. Easily every day she has them. I slap her hand and put her in the pram and let her have it out.³⁶³

Similarly, a salesman's wife stated that 'she holds her breath with it. I just say "you naughty girl", and I smack her legs and I leave her.'³⁶⁴ Whilst shunning a child with emotional absence was certainly not a new disciplinary technique, as evidenced in Mass-Observation's wartime survey, its continued use within the post-war home suggests that messages about mother-child attachment in psychological thought were not necessarily an active or desired component within child-rearing practices. What is striking from the Newsons' survey is that, whether for or opposed to corporal punishment, there is no mention of mothers having formed their opinion in concurrence with any contemporary child-rearing advice that they have received. Rather, they defined their method against their own experiences of corporal punishment as children. This seems to chime with a British Institute of Public Opinion poll conducted in March of 1949 that demonstrated that those who were themselves slapped as children were more likely to approve of such punishment than those who were not.³⁶⁵ However, where extreme cases of physical punishment were experienced, there is evidence to suggest that people defined their disciplining methods against their own experience. A railwayman's wife summed up her opposition to practicing corporal punishment in this line thusly:

I never punish mine at all, duck; a strict word is as good as any smack of any description. I had a lot myself when I was young; I know what the belt is, I know what the stick is, I know any instrument you could name; and I swore I'd never touch me kids.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.104.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ Quoted in Newell, P, *A Last Resort?* p.74.

³⁶⁶ Newson, E & J, *Infant Care and Motherhood in an Urban Community*, p.107.

Experience, and not advice, is overwhelmingly evident within the Newsons' survey of corporal punishment throughout the post-war period. Whether it was inherited from, or defined against historical and experiential familial practice, disciplining methods in the early-post-war seem to bear little relation to the dominant child-centred, nurturing ethos of psychological thought. When emotional deprivation as well as physical punishments were optioned, they actively went against the grain.

Whilst the Newsons' survey clearly demonstrates that mothers were largely in favour of physically disciplining their children, and did so, and Gavron's work demonstrates more broadly the extent to which mothers were receiving and adapting to the psychological advice that was ever-circulating in the post-war popular media, their focus on motherhood – the key recipient of such discourses - and not fatherhood could somewhat skew the extent to which corporal punishment was dispersed within the post-war family. John Barron Mays, in his survey of juvenile delinquency in Liverpool in the 1950s believed that in the majority of working-class families the men were the 'ultimate source of authority and disciplinarian', with women also acting independently with regards to punishing their children.³⁶⁷ Similarly, John Mogey's survey of working-class, inner-city estates in the 1950s, found that women wanted and expected their husbands to share in the disciplining of their children.³⁶⁸ As Bill Osgerby summarises:

Within both popular and academic enquiries there arose the widely held belief that the destruction of the war, the absence of father and the long working hours of mother had all contributed to a break-down in the process of socialization, 'war babies' growing up to be post-war delinquents.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Mays, J B, *Growing Up in the City: A Study of Juvenile Delinquency in an Urban Neighbourhood*, 1st ed. (Liverpool University Press, 1954) p. 86.

³⁶⁸ Mogey, J.M., *Family and Neighbourhood: Two Studies in Oxford* (Oxford, 1956), p. 62.

³⁶⁹ Osgerby, W, *Youth in Britain Since 1945*, 1st ed. (Blackwell, 1997) p.117.

Ever with its finger on the pulse of present anxiety, Mass-Observation surveyed its panel in 1950 to enquire into the punitive practices of its respondents once more. I will now explore the limited results of this second Mass-Observation survey that asked, ‘Was Dad Wrong?’.

‘Was Dad Wrong?’: Mass-Observing Post-war Punishment

As we have already seen, the question of physical punishment and discipline operated in two interrelated ways in post-war Britain: what the most effective nature of punishment was, and crucially who the most appropriate person was to dispense it. As chapter two demonstrated, these questions had arisen largely due to the absence of fathers during the Second World War and attendant criticisms of mothers. As Sally Sokoloff suggests, women’s assumed inability to maintain discipline hardened attitudes against matriarchal dominance within the domestic sphere. Moreover, she suggests that the idea that a family could function without men ‘offended the patriarchal construct of the family.’³⁷⁰ If a more nurturing ideal of fatherhood became central to the ‘cure’ of the rising post-war concern towards juvenile delinquency, and a shared duty of care between father and mother in regards to the nurturing of a child’s moral well-being became prescribed, then what impact did this more egalitarian approach to parenting have on the parental dynamic of punishment? As Laura King’s research has asserted, the end of the war bought fathers’ disciplinary roles back into focus:

Discourses surrounding the war arguably had to assert the importance of men to family life, to reinforce the reasons for them fighting, for their families, and to help ensure their easy return to civilian life.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ Sokoloff, S, “‘How Are They at Home?’ Community, State, and Servicemen’s Wives in England, 1939–45’, in *Women’s History Review* 8:1 (1999), p. 28.

³⁷¹ King, L. *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2015) p. 69.

King suggests that the sharing of parental responsibility was an increasingly apparent remedy within prescriptive literature throughout the post-war.³⁷² And yet this desired re-distribution of familial responsibility raised questions that asked if the previous generation of father had ‘got it wrong’. In 1950, Mass-Observation dedicated a whole bulletin to the topic asking that very question: ‘Was Dad Wrong?’. In its second survey of corporal punishment, Mass-Observation asked its panel of observers what they thought of the principle ‘Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child.’³⁷³ Unfortunately, the original directive responses to this directive have not survived into the Mass-Observation archive: when the organisation was re-imagined as a commercial market-research company during the late 1950s, a proportion of its social research material was either lost, destroyed or damaged in poor storage facilities. Yet the surviving bulletin, that was sent both to a paying public and to the observers themselves, provides a fruitful exploration of the divisive topic of corporal punishment in post-war Britain. It suggested that there had been a significant shift from historic to modern practices of corporal punishment: a shift that was not universally approved of:

In middle-class households, methods of bringing up children seem to have changed considerably in recent years. The Victorian ‘heavy’ father is now a shadowy replica of his former robust self, the quiet biddable child almost a historical survival. This, at least, is the position as it appears to many members of Mass-Observation’s National Panel. They are less unanimous about whether such changes have been for the better.³⁷⁴

Mass-Observation’s summary suggests that rather than attributing the apparent lack of discipline of children to ‘bad’ motherhood, as had so frequently been the case during the war, the panel were now concerned that a generational shift in fatherly discipline was to blame for the lack of ‘quiet biddable’ children of the past. Mass-Observation identified ‘bewilderment’ at the suggestions of ‘emotional and mental’ harm attributed to corporal punishment:

The methods and objects of punishment in the wider sense is something which public and specialist opinion is apt to divide, and replies, especially of those who approve

³⁷² King, L. *Family Men*, p.72.

³⁷³ *Was Dad Wrong?* Mass Observation Bulletin, New Series, No. 36, July/ August 1950, p.1.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

corporal punishment, reflect this divergence. They suggest, also, bewilderment. The child may be harmed mentally or emotionally as well as physically by corporal punishment – but what is to be done with apparently case-hardened sinners?³⁷⁵

And yet, despite the belief that practice had changed, the survey found that two out of three respondents were in favour of corporal punishment – roughly the same amount who had agreed with the use of corporal punishment in the 1942 Mass-Observation survey (69.8 per cent when adding the 17.7 per cent respondents who qualified ‘sometimes’ to the 52.15 per cent who outright agreed). What had changed significantly, however, was a growing and considered psychological reasoning within the responses, which could be used both to question the severity of physical punishment, but also to uphold it. For example, a twenty-six-year old female research worker argued that:

All forms of corporal punishment are expressions of the latent sadism to be found in everyone’s personality. I am opposed to the striking of children in any way, partly because of the devastating effects on the child’s mind, and partly because sadism tends to feeds on itself.³⁷⁶

Although we can see here an increased attention to the psychological effects of corporal punishment on a child’s mind, sadism speaks more to an earlier Freudian school of thought than to the contemporary psychologies of Bowlby and Winnicott. Freud’s *A Child is Being Beaten* had been re-published in 1949, and it is possible (although not acknowledged) that earlier discourses pertaining to his fascination with sadism stirred in infancy are being drawn upon here. Moreover, a forty-three-year-old housewife believed corporal punishment was a legitimate and safe method of discipline, so long as a loving relationship between parent and child existed. This she remembered from a ‘book on psychology’:

I remember reading in a book on psychology that where there is real love it does not matter what you do, and I think this is true.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3.

Love continued to feature as a legitimate reason for physically disciplining children in this sense, particularly as it was understood to be central to the mother-child bonding process. Whilst this housewife understood love in this context from a book on psychology, others, such as this thirty-five-year-old female student upheld that although psychological theories were logical in their approaches to child-rearing, they were not always definitive in practice:

If there was ever a question where theory was modified by practice, this is it. We are a couple of amateur psychologists in our way.... Of course *we* knew how to handle children... physically chastising the child is a confession of failure; one needs to understand the cause of trouble, and then, Hey Presto! the trouble will disappear. Now we have two children of our own. We still have the books of course, but they do not help us very much. If you gave the child a beating every Saturday morning to show who is to be obeyed, then, of course, I am opposed to it. But if its opposite means that under no circumstances do you chastise a child then it is equally wrong. If they insist on doing the forbidden thing, then you have no recourse but to make it clear without words.³⁷⁸

This respondent demonstrates how her, and her partner's parenting roles were shaped by internal familial dynamics as much as broader cultural ideals. Demonstrating acutely how psychological theories on child rearing could mutually be understood by both parents before entering into parenthood, but then somewhat modified by the experience of actually raising children, Mass-Observation noted that many of its panel 'found some knowledge of psychology useful, but still a little bewildering in the face of the child itself.'³⁷⁹ Moreover, it noted that some parents lamented that they had not been so keen to place emphasis on 'reasoning' with their children over physically punishing them. A poultry farmer's wife, aged fifty-nine, believed that her decision to do so had created a 'problem child':

Children need the sense of security that discipline gives, and it is often less mentally exhausting for child as well as parent to smack rather than to reason. I wrote the above with a strong sense of how my husband and I failed in regard to our boy. I bought him up too much 'according to the book'. I reasoned and explained, instead of saying, as old fashioned parents did, 'Mother knows best, and If you don't do what I say you'll get a hiding!' I made him self-centred and quite undisciplined. He was a problem child – and I have no doubt we were problem parents, and all of us were miserable.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2.

We can see here that a sense of the wider cultural values in society could prompt a sense of regret for those who had already chosen the path of ‘reasoning’ over physical punishment. Here, a lack of such punishment is seen as the root of the ‘miserable’ experience of parenting that this woman experienced. Mass-Observation summarised that above all, a feeling for compromise between the past and present methods of child-rearing and discipline were most keenly desired amongst its respondents. Ideas pertaining to a greater equality between parents and children were approached with caution; the older generation had been ‘too stern’, yet the present-day parents were conscious that they were being pilloried for being ‘too slack’. Mass-Observation believed that ‘present attitudes are well illustrated in this final comment’:

My father brought up a family of five on it. I had thought it was wrong, for my kind of temperament anyway. However, as I get older and see the spoilt kids of to-day, I wonder if Dad was wrong. Maybe he was too severe and the moderns too slack, so a half-way would be the ideal. (Housewife, aged 48) ³⁸¹

Despite surmising that present day attitudes were ‘too slack’ with regards to corporal punishment, Mass-Observation conceded that its analysis of this particular directive had largely been drawn from the middle-class writers from its panel. Whilst Mass-Observation’s secondary survey speaks to the elasticity by which social opinion was shaped by social contexts, there is a marked absence of the broader question of corporal punishment in relation to contemporary concerns about child cruelty. Perhaps had the full survey survived this increasing contemporary concern may have been more clearly addressed, as it had been in Mass-Observation’s wartime survey. Whilst the father was reasserted positively as a disciplinary figure in the popular press, there was a marked shift in the post-war period as to what form fatherly discipline should take. The inter-war press was keen to endorse physical punishment as the most appropriate form of discipline to maintain within the family home. Yet there was a marked shift in the post-war press concerning parental punishment, particularly in more progressive publications such as

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.3.

the *Manchester Guardian*, that were keen to define punishment from notions of abuse. The law had always been somewhat ambiguous as to the limits of parental chastisement, stating that ‘moderate and reasonable’ corporal punishment was permissible.³⁸² Although, as we have seen, the wartime press reporting had been demonstrably hesitant to report cases that were deemed in breach of these limits in law, the post-war press was far more readily prepared to define how ‘moderate’ and ‘reasonable’ parents’ punishments actually were.

In October 1950, Fred Schofield, father of three, pleaded before the Radcliffe Magistrates court in Lancashire that his definition of reasonable chastisement was just: ‘I have always tried to stop my children becoming unruly. I was only doing what a father should.’ Schofield had been awoken by his fifteen-month-old daughter, and ‘hit her with a leather belt, raising a bruise seven inches long on her thigh.’³⁸³ Sentenced to ‘prison for six months for wilfully ill-treating the child’, the *Daily Mirror*’s acute detailing of the young child’s injuries sought to clearly define and condemn those who breached the limits of parental authority over a child’s body. Although in both social and legal terms there was a rejection of such severe punitive actions, the frequency with which the papers denounced such cases suggests that many parents’ definitions of reasonable chastisement were severe and in breach of the law. Moreover, far from seeing ‘the heavy hand’ of fatherly authority as a Victorian relic, as Mass-Observation’s more cosy post-war survey suggested, John Barron Mays’ survey of Liverpool in the 1950s found that:

There are still a number of fathers who when roused to anger employ an excessive amount of physical violence. It seems that ‘a good hiding’ or ‘a battering’ is the only method they know. The result is that many children genuinely fear their fathers and some mothers deliberately conceal their children’s misdemeanours from their husband because they dread excessive punishment. Children are quick, too, in such cases to exploit their mother’s sympathy to secure indulgence. It seems clear that training in parenthood is still at the most primitive level and, in so far as discipline goes, men and

³⁸² Bromley, P.M, *Family Law*, 3rd ed. (Butterworth, 1962), p. 329.

³⁸³ *The Daily Mirror*, 3rd October 1950, p.3.

women either imitate the treatment that was meted out to them as children, or react strongly in the opposite direction.³⁸⁴

This depiction of fatherly excess when employing corporal punishment is a recurring theme that runs throughout many post-war autobiographies. When Julia Pascal recalled her childhood for the influential anthology *Truth, Dare or Promise*, she recalled witnessing her brother often experiencing such excessive punishments:

They say he's naughty. My father straps him often with a leather belt. I never know why. One day I find him hiding in the toilet. Someone has just rung the doorbell. It is a bus conductor. We live on a main road and buses are having their windows broken by someone throwing stones. They say it is David. He says he didn't throw the stones. I believe him and as they strap him I cry with the injustice.³⁸⁵

John Davies, who grew up in South Wales in the 1950s, similarly recalled his father belting him and his siblings:

We would get picked on for something as trivial as playing out in the garden without permission. I can vividly remember my father lining us in the garden and interrogating us – hitting out with a leather strap he had specially made. He would use violence until one of us gave in to confess, then punish us even more. We would regularly be black and blue at our father's hands. He would fly into a rage at the slightest thing – dinners would end up all over the walls and we'd all get beaten.³⁸⁶

Whilst the more appropriate place for corporal punishment was centralised in the home, and in the hands of father, the popular press' increasing disclosures of fatherly brutality and biographies of the period suggest that fathers often continued to cross the boundaries of what was increasingly described as an archaic approach to disciplining children. Whilst John Barron May's and the Newsons' survey might suggest that working-class families were the more likely site for more violent acts of corporal punishment in the post-war period, Geoffrey Gorer's

³⁸⁴ Mays, J B, *Growing Up in the City: A Study of Juvenile Delinquency in an Urban Neighbourhood*, 1st ed. (Liverpool University Press, 1954) p. 83-84.

³⁸⁵ Pascal, J, 'Prima Ballerina Assoluta' in Heron, L (ed) *Truth, Dare or Promise: Girls Growing Up in the Fifties*, (Virago Press Ltd, 1985), p.28.

³⁸⁶ Davies, J, *Wales in the 1960s*, 1st ed. (Llafour, 1987), p.83.

extensive survey *Exploring English Character* problematized this notion, concluding that the English people of all classes were much preoccupied with the 'pleasures of severity'.

Exploring English Character

On the 31st December 1950, coupons appeared in *The People* newspaper asking for the participation of '...English, born in England of English parents' who had '...spent all or the greatest part of their school years in England.' In his efforts to explore English character, the anthropologist Geoffrey Gorer advertised to the second most read Sunday publication of its time, and emotions were of key concern to his study.³⁸⁷ He acknowledged his desire to elicit emotive responses in his methodological framework, referencing questions of childhood as particularly important in garnering such responses.³⁸⁸ In all his questionnaire garnered over ten thousand responses from *The People* newspaper, all of which answered the principal themes that Gorer wished to explore included home-life; friendships and leisure activities; ideas about sex, love and marriage; religion and attitudes towards the law and police; and crucially the upbringing of children.

Lena Aktar's study of wartime evacuation cited Gorer's survey of 1950 in her analysis of corporal punishment, stating that '...much of what Gorer says is evident in attitudes reflected by parents and householders of the 1930s and 40s.'³⁸⁹ But Gorer's survey was conducted five years into peacetime, and in comparison to the 1942 Mass-Observation survey analysed in chapter two - where fifty-two per cent of the respondents firmly supported corporal punishment for children, with an additional 17.7 per cent believing it should be used 'sometimes' - Gorer's work suggest a slight increase in attitudes toward the use of corporal punishment. Three-quarters of those who responded - 75 per cent - believed that physical punishment was an

³⁸⁷ Aktar, L, M, 'Intangible Casualties': The Evacuation of British Children During World War II, in *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 37:3 (2010).

³⁸⁸ Gorer, G. *Exploring English Character: Exploring the Morals of the English People*, 1st ed, (Cresset Press, 1955) p.6.

³⁸⁹ Aktar, L, M, 'Intangible Casualties', p.239.

appropriate punishment for children, whereas Mass-Observations 1942 survey suggested that at a maximum 70 per cent were in favour. In Gorer's words, there was an overwhelming '...preoccupation with the moral duty of punishing children and the pleasures of severity.'³⁹⁰ Moreover, the respondents frequently cited the war as a period of dislocation and justified their current feelings toward corporal punishment because of this dislocation. Gorer listed the most frequent reasoning's thusly:

Modern parents aren't strict enough.
 Children whose fathers were in the Forces didn't have proper discipline.
 Children who were evacuated weren't properly looked after.
 Modern schools aren't strict enough.
 People got into bad ways in the Forces.
 Young people follow the bad example of crime films and crime stories in books and on the radio.
 People are neglecting religion³⁹¹

There are many similarities between this list of contemporary reasoning that Gorer extrapolated and those that were present within Mass-Observation's two surveys. The war, and in particular the place and rigour of parental authority throughout the war, continued to loom large in the public consciousness. The lack of fatherly authority seems to be particularly present in this focus, compounded by evacuation and the role that conscription played in creating the absentee father.

These concerns go some way to explain the concerns about the division of parental authority that we have already seen throughout this chapter. Gorer found that sixty-one per cent of those surveyed believed that fathers should be the 'chief source of authority', and thirty-five per cent saw mothers as the more appropriate person to hold this power.³⁹² Gorer qualified that

³⁹⁰ Gorer, G. *Exploring English Character*, p.176.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.208.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p.176.

this emphasis was more readily found in the north and north-east, as opposed to the north-west, where this gendered difference was least apparent. What is more significant is that Gorer's survey suggested that the harsher paternal authority did not fall easily between class boundaries; his broad pool of respondents made this distinction far clearer than the surveys completed by both the Newsons' and Mays, who had specifically chosen the working-class areas within Nottinghamshire and Liverpool, respectively. Indeed, he suggested that parents from upper and working-class families were far less likely to approve of severe punishments, such as 'belting' and 'thrashing', than their middle-class counterparts.³⁹³ Whilst Gorer's survey suggested that fathers were the more punitive parents, and were often excessive between all classes, he noted that there were significant class distinctions that explained why parents chose to punish their children.

When asked the question, 'If you were told that a small child, say between 3 and 8, had done something really bad, what would you think the child had done?', only twelve per cent 'denied that a child of that age could do anything really bad; the remaining three-quarters of the population named some childish misdemeanour. Eighty-six per cent of those surveyed could name some type of aggression.'³⁹⁴ Gorer's results suggested that there were significant class differences concerning why children should be punished. For example, thirty-three per cent of fathers and forty-four per cent of mothers named theft as an act of aggression that would warrant the physical disciplining of a three-year-old child. These answers were chiefly notable in the responses from middle-class respondents in largely urban areas, and Gorer states that: 'This fear is comparatively little stressed by members of the lower middle and working classes, who tend to concentrate on more direct aggression or other moral faults'³⁹⁵ For example, a middle-class mother stated that 'most children of this age tend to steal things, or bite.... I think

³⁹³ *Ibid.* p.193.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.178.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p.179.

it is the developing age.’³⁹⁶ Whereas working-class parents were far more likely to cite instances where children had harmed other children or animals as examples of just and valid reasons for corporally disciplining children. For example, a thirty-two-year-old working-class mother from Barnes, Surrey answered, ‘From experience I might think the child had thrown a stone at another child or pulled the petals off every flower in someone’s garden.’³⁹⁷ A twenty-seven-year-old working-class mother from Harpenden stated she would hit her child if they ‘wilfully ill-treat an animal. Children as young as this rarely do bad things intentionally but they are inclined to be spiteful to animals or younger children’³⁹⁸

When discussing the appropriate use of physical punishment of older children, Gorer noted that ‘those who approve of this type of punishment appear to do so with considerable gusto’ and it is not hard to see why he concluded so from their answers. Indeed, Gorer decided not to provide the age or location of the examples he chose ‘to avoid any possibility of identification.’³⁹⁹ A middle-class engineer stated that ‘a boy should have his “seat” slapped until he screams for mercy and make him promise never to do the same thing again.’⁴⁰⁰ A middle-class man from Lincoln stated that, for a boy ‘punishment by hand or strap until it hurts, administered with shirt off’ and for girls, ‘same applies as to boy, but laid across knees and given smacks on the back-side until she really cried.’⁴⁰¹ A middle-aged working-class father from Kent stated that he would afford his children ‘the same as myself, a damned good hiding. I don’t agree with cruelty, such as going without meals’.⁴⁰² As these examples attest, drawn from a far larger cohort of similar viewpoints, punishments to induce ‘screams for mercy’ and slaps until children ‘really cried’ were not uncommon amongst the responses afforded in this

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.180.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ Gorer, G. *Exploring English Character*, 1st ed, (Cresset Press, 1955) p.194.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, p.195.

survey. They also demonstrate that such severity was not easily defined either side of class boundaries, existing rather more discernibly across them.

Whilst deprivation of some kind was the chief method employed by those who were against corporal punishment, there were again class differences that were apparent within Gorer's survey as to what kinds of deprivation were enacted. For example, middle-class respondents were more likely to withdraw pocket money than working-class parents. A forty-four-year-old middle-class man from Middlesex stated that:

I have found what hurts him is to stop his pocket money for a week and no pictures, and give him a good talking to has so far done the trick. Up until now I have never used a cane on him.⁴⁰³

Working-class parents who opposed corporal punishment and who favoured deprivation in this way were far less likely to withdraw any monetary or material goods but were more likely to withdraw the freedoms of liberty associated with childhood, such as the freedom to play, and/or the withdrawal of meals. A sixty-five-year-old working-class mother from Bournemouth stated 'locking her in the bedroom without food will soon bring her to her sense', and a working-class father from Penge qualified that 'stopping him for a time from going out to play or to the pictures' as a more suitable form of discipline than corporal punishment.⁴⁰⁴ Whilst emotional deprivation existed across class boundaries for those who believed corporal punishment to be an outmoded or unjust form of discipline, economic and material difference dictated the form that this deprivation should take.

An aspect of punishment that Gorer had not anticipated - but seems to have relished relaying - related to 'crimes' of a sexual nature. Although Gorer acknowledged that an extremely small percentage of people responded with such answers - 'a mere 3 percent' - his

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.* p.188.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.189.

attention to the subject speaks to a somewhat reticently spoken about aspect of the corporal punishment debate that, whilst presented as a ‘curiosity’ of this 1950 survey, would be much more present within later debates. Although Gorer demonstrated in his study that such ‘articulateness on this aspect of childhood development’ was ‘...uncommon’, he demonstrated that ‘a number of respondents linked sexual behaviour with aggression.’⁴⁰⁵ Gorer found that when acknowledging the subject of punishing children for masturbation, the terms ‘playing with her own personal property, or ‘playing with his private property’ were the most frequently delivered metaphor, particularly in older women.⁴⁰⁶ These ‘sexual’ acts were invariably mapped onto ‘violent’ and ‘animalistic’ behaviours that were believed to be best punished by physical chastisement.

Answering the question as to what a child could reasonably have done to warrant corporal punishment, a twenty-nine-year-old man from Hereford suggested that it might have ‘partaken in some premature form of enjoyment: either smoking, drinking dad’s beer, or some sex act.’⁴⁰⁷ Here a ‘sex act’ is mapped onto broader concerns pertaining to indulging in ‘premature’ enjoyment of other material forms of adulthood, such as smoking and drinking alcohol. Whereas a thirty-year-old-mother from Darlington mapped ‘sexual knowledge’, or masturbation, onto concerns of violence and cruelty: ‘Perhaps tortured or hurt a dumb animal, or another child, or set fire to something causing danger, knowing it to be wrong. Also “sexual knowledge” makes my flesh creep.’⁴⁰⁸ Similarly, a thirty-year-old father from Lancashire cited masturbation with a time-frame of ‘animalistic’ behaviour within children, placing sexual knowledge with acts of violence: ‘3-8 is unpredictable and too near the animal state to be above doing anything, from eating buns, playing with little girl’s/boy’s sexual organs, or setting house

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.182.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.183.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp.181-182.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.182.

on fire.’⁴⁰⁹ It is also important to acknowledge the disquieting requirement of some fathers to punish their children naked, which is completely uncommented upon by Gorer in his analysis; like a middle-aged father of two girls who believed ‘slapping posterior with hand whilst girl is completely naked’, or the ‘fairly young’ school teacher from Middlesex, who preferred his pupils to receive his cane on the ‘bare buttocks.’⁴¹⁰ Whilst ‘humiliation’ of a child may be read into these requirements, the lack of comment upon the appropriateness of this particular trait in punishing children seems striking in light of the concerns surrounding gender, sexuality and childhood that would emerge later in the century.

Gorer’s survey suggests, like the Newsons’ interpretations and Mass-Observation’s post-war survey, that corporal punishment was a common feature within the private family dynamic in early post-war Britain. Moreover, unlike Mays’ and Mogeys’ conclusions that particularly severe forms of punishments were more likely to be the reserve of the working-classes that they surveyed, Mass-Observation’s secondary directive on corporal punishment and Gorer’s exploration of the subject suggest that the ‘pleasures of severity’ were a cross-class experience.

Conclusion

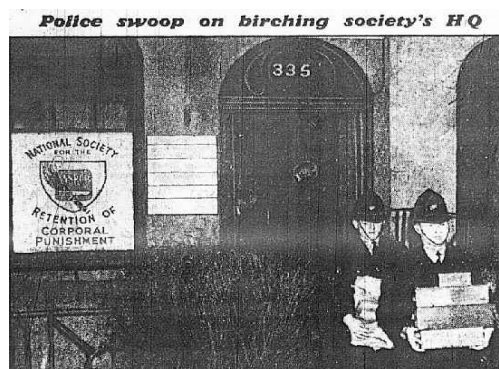


Figure 3.2: *Daily Telegraph*, 10th January 1958, p.5.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.194-195.

In April of 1958, Eric Wildman's offices were raided by the police, and his extensive collection of corporal punishment ephemera seized (Figure 3.2). Famed for campaigning for the retention of the birch ten years earlier, and for the receipt of 'six of the best' from dissonant school-pupils, Wildman exclaimed upon arrest that:

I don't know what this is all about. It has been done by my enemies, by the enemies of corporal punishment. I have been in touch with my lawyers, and they tell me that I shall have a good case against the police for this.⁴¹¹

Wildman had been part of a police sting. A female officer, Ivy Sibun, had visited Wildman's campaign offices to purchase some of the 'scientific' literature that he had been advertising in the popular press. Wildman had provided her with an extensive list of purchasable publications, which included titles such as 'Should girls be trained with the cane'. Sibun had purchased two for 10s. each. Intrigued by her choice of title, Wildman then offered her a more select publication at two guineas. The court found this particular acquisition, entitled 'Girls' Specialist' to be 'obviously pornographic'.⁴¹² His defence lawyer stated that although Wildman had an:

...ardent background there was no deliberate trading in pornography. Wildman is a man with a kink. Corporal punishment had got control of him.⁴¹³

Charged and found guilty under the Obscene Publications Act, 1875, Wildman was forced to pay £500 for possession of 'unfitting photographs' and on seventeen charges of publishing obscene libels.⁴¹⁴ Upon sentencing, the judge stated that 'I don't want to crush him out of existence. I want to give him a sharp lesson and, if possible, make him realise he is not the world's Messiah in this matter.'⁴¹⁵

⁴¹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 10th January 1958, p.5.

⁴¹² *Daily Telegraph*, 15th May 1958, p.8.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Wildman's arrest occurred within a period in which corporal punishment was questioned in two key and interconnected ways: was it effective and who should dispense it. Whilst children in 1948 actively demonstrated that for them Wildman was not a 'messiah' in the matter of corporal punishment, by 1958 the courts were publicly telling him so. His case also draws closer the subject of the seedier aspect of corporal punishment that was becoming more visible at this later date. Although Wildman's defence lawyer had defined his possession of 'obviously pornographic' materials as a 'kink' and claimed that 'corporal punishment had got control of him', his possession of the items had been defined comfortably outside of the legal limits of the law. And yet corporal punishment and titillation remained visible at the latter half of the 1950s. Michael Croft had been horrified by the assertion that his 1953 novel, *Spare the Rod*, could be better sold as a 'quickie' with 'a good sex angle', and yet a year after Wildman's public admonishment, the film *Bottom's Up!* was released in British cinemas. Corporal punishment met sleazy sex on the silver screen, with Jimmy Edward's headmaster's cane becoming erect whenever a young, attractive schoolmistress entered his classroom. (Figure 3.3).

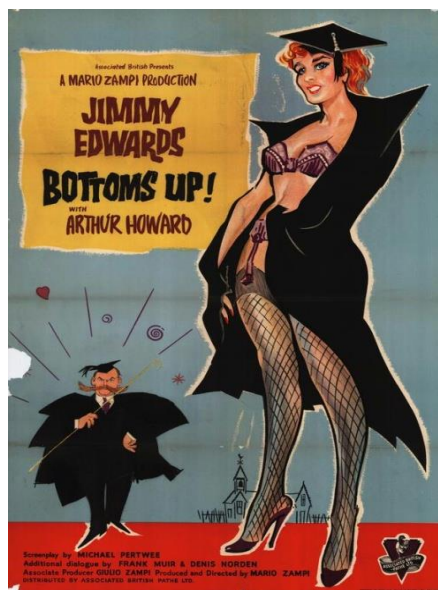


Figure 3.3: Poster for *Bottoms Up!* Warner-Pathé Distributors (1959)

The end of the birch in 1948 had been founded upon a consensus between the two major political parties of the post-war era, and yet its abolition saw an unprecedented public reaction against its loss. If the public sphere was no longer liable for the physical chastisement of juvenile delinquents, then the more legitimate place for corporal punishment in post-war Britain became the home. The birch's departure also brought into public discourse the appropriate nature and form of corporal punishment in schools. Whilst some campaigned to ban the practice in line with the removal of the birch, school surveys suggested that parents were more than happy for their children to be punished in line with their own methods. Psychological ambiguities on the subject of corporal punishment meant that social surveys of the era found that parents' disciplinary methods bore little relation to the child-centred, nurturing ethos of dominant scientific thought. Whilst corporal punishment remained a public concern throughout the early post-war, existing in schools, prisons and in reformatory institutions, the reassertion of fatherly authority in the post-war period centred the private sphere as the more legitimate space for discipline. But the seedier side of discipline would become a thorn in the side of the corporal punishment debate in the ensuing decades. Where Cadogan had, upon the eve of war, casually dismissed psychological arguments that connected flagellation with sexual perversion, concluding that there was no evidence to suggest 'either the victim or the person administering the punishment was deriving from it any masochistic or sadistic satisfaction', in the 1960s *The Advisory Committee of the Treatment of Offenders* was charged with evaluating whether it was appropriate that offenders in prisons who had been imprisoned for crimes of a 'sexual nature' should be flogged.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ Home Office, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment*. (HMSO, 1938).

CHAPTER FOUR

‘SHUT UP OR I’LL FORGET MYSELF AND HIT YOU ONE’:
GENDER, CLASS, AND DISCIPLINE IN A ‘PERMISSIVE’ SOCIETY
1960 - April 1968

‘Don’t go back making a fuss -- and don’t tell anyone else about it.’⁴¹⁷



Figure 4.1: *Daily Mirror*, 5th May 1961, p.7.

In 1961 Linda Elliot, sixteen, was told by her boss, forty-five-year-old Kenneth Harvey, that she would be sacked if she did not acquiesce to a private spanking for not fetching an office file. Harvey, married with children, pushed Linda into a ‘spare room’ and ‘smacked her bare bottom.’ After the assault, Harvey sat Linda on his knee, gave her a handkerchief to dry her tears, and told her: ‘Don’t go back making a fuss -- and don’t tell anyone else about it.’ But Linda did tell people about it. She gave evidence against Harvey at the quarter sessions at Penzance, Cornwall on 5th May 1961, having reported Harvey to the police. A police officer gave evidence in court that Harvey had confessed after his arrest: ‘I admit I smacked her. But it was outside her skirt, and I didn’t disarrange her clothing.’ In court, Harvey stated that he had

⁴¹⁷ *Daily Mirror*, 5th May 1961, p.7.

‘felt it necessary to reprimand the girl. He knew she came from a large family and did not want to dismiss her.’ The Recorder, Mr. Michael Lee, QC, ordered Harvey to pay £30 costs with the £20 fine.⁴¹⁸ Linda won her case against Harvey’s assault, but the media coverage of the case was both invasive and somewhat sensationalist upon the topic. The more private details of Linda’s assault were accompanied in the *Daily Mirror* by a photograph of the sixteen-year-old girl leaving court, accompanied, as was customary, by her home address. A catchy subtitle ‘A smack – or get the sack’ made somewhat frivolous the sexually driven assault (Figure 4.1). Whilst the sexual element of the assault is discussed in the press, Harvey had only been convicted of the physical element of the abuse he had inflicted upon Linda. Michael Lee, QC said: ‘I take the view that this assault was committed in a moment of exasperation.’⁴¹⁹

As Adrian Bingham’s study of ‘permissiveness’ in post-war Britain attests, the relaxation of the ‘censorship regime’ during the 1960s enabled a far broader circulation of sexualised images and narratives in popular culture.⁴²⁰ Eric Wildman had, as we saw in chapter three, been fined for distributing sexually explicit materials in the late 1950s. Yet throughout the 1960s the ‘spanking mag’ became a frequently stocked item within specialist purveyors. Within the history of salacious and sexualised imagery of corporal punishment, evidenced in the many marital ‘spanking’ scenes throughout early and mid-century cinema, the popularisation of spanking magazines which evoked a pupil/teacher relation may be seen as both an extension from and legitimisation of existing cultures. But this growth in legitimately purchasable ‘spanking’ porn occurred as women, like Linda Elliot, were increasingly forcing the law to define the rights they held over their own bodies.⁴²¹ These legal and emotional battle grounds problematise the notion that corporal punishment was somehow ‘phased out’

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁰ Bingham, A, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life and the British Popular Press 1918-1978*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.219.

⁴²¹ *Daily Mirror*, 5th May 1961, p.7.

for girls and women during the 1960s. Physical abuse of a child where sexual abuse also occurred remained a prominent feature of cases that came before Britain's courts. Such cases being brought before the courts were as low as 500 per year during the 1920s. By the early 1960s over 5000 such cases were being heard annually.⁴²² The continued references to sexual innuendo and corporal punishment in popular culture, even in children's television programmes such as *Whacko!* provides a flavour of how complex, and often disturbing, the topic really was during the 1960s. And yet culture was also being used to challenge the use of corporal punishment. The 1960s saw the rise of television documentaries which explored the private use of corporal punishment and forensically dissected the behaviours in households where corporal punishment had been abandoned: the 'permissive' parents. Cinema screens showed films suggesting that corporal punishment led to dangerous and rebellious rioting; an absence of trust deriving from punitive injustices. The fault lines of corporal punishment had never been so visible.

The word 'permissive' and the 1960s have enjoyed an inseparable coupling throughout studies of the period. What that coupling meant to those who wrote about it, however, varies significantly according to the author's attention to the complex and interrelated politics of gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality: all of which were significantly challenged during this period. Right wing commentators have defined the era as distinct because of periods of conservatism followed by 'permissiveness' which are traceable through changes at the top. Dominic Sandbrook's recent revisions of the period suggest that the shudder of Harold Wilson's victories created a new 'elite' which fundamentally re-patterned the fabric of Britain into a more 'commercialised, superficial and selfish' weave.⁴²³ This chapter will consider the

⁴²² Jackson, L.A, *Child Sexual Abuse in England and Wales: Prosecution and Prevalence 1918-1970*, <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/child-sexual-abuse-in-england-and-wales-prosecution-and-prevalence-1918-197> [Date last accessed: 03/12/16].

⁴²³ See Sandbrook, D, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties, 1964-1970*, 2nd ed. (Abacus, 2009) and see also Sandbrook's many publications in the *Daily Mail*, such as:

many structural shifts enacted by Labour, but chiefly it will ask *why* many of those changes were made. Many shifts, such as the Abortion Act (1967) which specifically defined some women as ‘deserving’ and other ‘undeserving’ of the right to legally abort a pregnancy, or the Sexual Offences Act of the same year, which made certain private sex ‘permissible’ but significantly increased arrests for public sex, were expressively and publicly reshaped by discursive and physical activism across the late twentieth century. Such ‘top down’ acts were only ‘permissive’ in that they gave permission to the few, but they consequently became sites of conflict; where the personal feelings and experiences of ‘ordinary’ people played a significant role in reshaping politics across the late 20th century. The private body, I will argue, while gaining significant legal status during this period, retained a dangerous hierarchy of privilege defined by gender, class and race. The shifting legal status of the child’s body and its inequalities was, for example, shaped by a culture of openness about sex in everyday life that made talking about such matters in public far easier. But, as Mathew Thomson states:

A more permissive attitude centred on expression of adult sexuality also led to debate about its limits (and this was sharply exposed by the issues of child sexuality and child protection). The emergence of a common language and consciousness of paedophilia was a product of both tendencies.⁴²⁴

In 1962, the French historian Aries stated that while children are ‘present in all cultures their presence has been and still is differently regarded’.⁴²⁵ The sixties saw the birth of the history of childhood as the landscape of childhood enjoyed its last ‘freedom’. The image of the ‘stranger’ would pervade and shift the barriers of childhood (and parental) freedom throughout the late twentieth-century.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2532051/Dominic-Sandbrook-50-years-ago-new-elite-came-power-Britain-Were-paying-price-contempt-ordinary-people.html> [Date last accessed: 19/06/17]

⁴²⁴ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.88.

⁴²⁵ Aries, P, *Centuries of Childhood*, p.44.

If permissiveness could define the limits of adult sexuality and the emergence of a consciousness of paedophilia we must ask why children from the 1960s onwards were told for another forty years after by the police that strangers were more likely to be dangerous to them than their private families or those with a legal responsibility for them, such as the state. In giving children the ability to cry ‘stranger’ when in danger, but by failing to explain anything about what that danger to them would entail – chiefly physical and sexual abuse – children were not given the ability to compose the narratives of the abuse they may already have experienced in public or were being subjected to in the privacy of their own family, or institution. So, impermeable was the stranger narrative in public discourse that the necessity to focus heavily upon a small number of current and ‘scientifically verifiable’ abuse trends, such as the ‘Battered Baby Syndrome’ with x-rays in the 1960s and R.A.D. later in the 1980s; provided much contested methods by which children could be better protected from bodily and sexual violence. As this thesis has been written amidst still definable waves of composure, such as the historic child football abuse inquiries and the *BBC*’s 21st Century folk devils Jimmy Saville and Rolf Harris, survivors of abuse continue to inform our understanding of the depths of institutional abuse across this period and measures that have been taken to keep the abuse hidden.

This chapter maps the various and often contradictory cultures of corporal punishment during the 1960s onto the significant legal and political challenges and shifts that occurred during this time. Angela Carter famously wrote: ‘I was twenty in 1960, and, by God I deserved what happened later on. It was tough in the fifties. Girls wore white gloves.’⁴²⁶ This chapter argues that corporal punishment remained a significantly used mode of correction, despite, as Deborah Thom argues, ‘right wing commentators having written about “the 60s” as

⁴²⁶ Carter, A. ‘Truly, it felt like Year One’, in Maitland, S (ed.), *Very Heaven: Looking Back at the Sixties* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 209-10.

a period when there was a “permissive turn” in which traditional methods of punishment and discipline were rejected, leading to social breakdown and social atomisation.’⁴²⁷ Social surveys, courtroom transcripts and life history demonstrate that significant numbers of children continued to be corporally punished throughout Britain, despite growing - and increasingly accessible - narratives recommending the abolition of the practice. Many parents, of all classes, continued to punish their children in the manner that they had been punished, despite a significant level of exposure to alternative methods for rearing children that ordinary people were exposed to. Private practice was divided and increasingly visibly so. Public corporal punishment, however, would be challenged significantly during the sixties. With the last prison flogging in 1962 and Labour’s abolition of the prison birch in their controversial Criminal Justice Act of 1967, public corporal punishment transformed into a preserve solely of childhood. That is not to say that women and men were not beaten after the 1960s, for they were. But the body won a significant shift in its legal status during this decade. Labour’s abolition of capital punishment took away the state’s ultimate control over life; their abortion act gave some women easier and safer choice about what happened to their bodies; and with comprehensive education, children were expected to be given a more equal start in life. This chapter will ask why significant gains were made in favour of the private body, but why children’s and women’s bodies remained significantly more in danger of bodily harm than those of men.

⁴²⁷ Thom, D. “Beating Children is Wrong”, p.263.

The physical effects of abuse in public approved schools, visually documented with glaring colour prints, led to an inquiry into public child abuse in Britain. But documented evidence and the inclusion of children's voices as witnesses to institutional abuse was not enough to sway the Labour government into asking how deep-rooted public abuse really was. Babies became uniquely privileged for consideration by the press during this time; the private probed through the 'Battered Child Syndrome' which scored high on their publication agenda. The private world of childhood danger remained, at times, stubbornly opaque. As the 1960s ended, it was predominantly women who would challenge the imperviousness of the private world. As feminism began to argue that the personal was political, and as feminist politics permeated public institutions, the battle for women's safety significantly challenged the structures by which violence was experienced by women and children across Britain. Feminism also directly challenged the notion that the home was a safe or positive institution.⁴²⁸ Whilst children were increasingly being protected in the courts at the beginning of the decade, they themselves joined the burgeoning bodies that fought for protection and rights on the streets by the end. The revolutions of second wave feminism and queer and black rights both facilitated and informed children's politics and, as the 1960s ended, children themselves would organise across Britain and challenge the system that demonstrably and frequently punished them. Children, as this thesis has documented, had protested, predominantly at their own institutions, many times across the twentieth century. As the decade ended, however, children unionised across Britain and worked across key boundaries to fight for the right to be heard and for protection of their bodies. This chapter will explain why.

⁴²⁸ <https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/campaigns-and-protests-of-the-womens-liberation-movement> [Date last accessed: 19/10/16].

‘I don’t object to the caning of the girls, but it should have been done in private.’

As chapter three revealed, the abolition of the birch in 1948 had not ended calls for its retention and re-introduction, nor had the method been abolished in private educational institutions and in state prisons. The topic of reintroduction had reached such a hostile level by 1960 that Conservative prime minister Harold MacMillan instructed his standing committee, The Advisory Council on the Treatment of Offenders (Home office, 1960), to consider the issue of bringing back the birch.⁴²⁹ As Raymond Guard revealed in his study of what became known as the Barry Report, Mr Justice Barry drew heavily upon the Cadogan Report of 1938 which erroneously concluded that corporal punishment had decreased. Rejecting the idea that corporal punishment should return to Britain’s courts, the Barry Report commented that:

For juveniles, the use of corporal punishment had almost died out by 1938; the more experienced juvenile courts evidently considered that other methods available to them were more effective.⁴³⁰

Chapter three revealed a deeply divided post-war Britain, between those who believed in the rod and those who did not. Cadogan had been wrong; the war saw a dramatic surge in the application of corporal punishment, and Mass-Observation and Geoffrey Gorer’s surveys had revealed a vast array of complex, subjective explanations as to why corporal punishment should be abolished or maintained for all children. Moreover, an increasingly ‘permissive’ press was regularly documenting the many instances when parents took those who illegally administered corporal punishment on their children before Britain’s courts.

The brutality that children experienced, both at home and in institutions, began to appear more regularly in print media during the early 1960s than it had done in the aftermath of war. Children could still be punished legally with implements, as was the case with six

⁴²⁹ Guard, R.L., *The End of the Rod*, p.125.

⁴³⁰ *The Advisory Council on the Treatment of Offenders*, (Home Office 1960), p.2.

teenage girls from Quarles Girls' Secondary School in Romford Essex. Their mass caning in June 1961 was a particularly public affair, the girls being punished in front of over six hundred other pupils at their morning assembly. The girls' absconding from school had warranted not just physical but emotional punishment: the public nature providing significant embarrassment and, no doubt fear for both victims and audience. One mother of the six girls, interviewed by the *Daily Mirror*, didn't 'object to the caning' but insisted that it 'should have been done in private', labelling the public nature of the punishment as a 'humiliating thing to do.' But, of the three mothers interviewed, she was outranked two to one: the majority believing the 'headmistress was right for "making an example" of the girls.'⁴³¹ Girl's beatings could be public, physically, emotionally painful and could be sanctioned by their family.

In July 1962 fourteen-year-old Kathleen Marsh was reported as missing to the Wiltshire Town police. Kathleen had not been seen since the last hours of school, Wroughton Secondary Modern, and her mother, Gladys, frantically sought confirmation of her safety from the public institution whose care her daughter was under. When the police returned Kathleen to her Mother thirty-six hours later it transpired that she had run away from school after she had been told that she would 'receive a beating for writing the date of a boy's birthday on her hand.'⁴³² Punishment books, as we have seen, rarely provide such specific detailing of punitive offence that Kathleen provided to the police; 'disobedience' related entries appearing almost as a standard entry. The punishment books from Wroughton Secondary Modern are, like so many, not archived, but had they been they would document that Kathleen had already received a caning. She told an *Express* reporter that 'it made big red marks come up on my hand. I just couldn't face it again.' Gladys prepared a note for Kathleen's teacher saying that 'she ran away because she was frightened.'⁴³³ But Gladys and Kathleen were acknowledging that the caning

⁴³¹ *Daily Mirror*, 8th June 1961, p.2.

⁴³² *Daily Express*, 5th July 1962, p.7.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*

would now go ahead, despite their emotional traumas. The emotions that corporal punishment engendered here, primarily fear, which had been induced because of a girl's emotions toward a boy, speaks to the gendered differences which we have already encountered in this study. Girls were punished differently to boys in that girls were held more culpable for intimacy than boys. This policing of gender through punishment continued to mutate as the ending of conscription into National Service in December of 1960 significantly reshaped the landscape and demography of youth, and fears about female sexuality shaped girls' experience of corporal punishment differently to that of boys.⁴³⁴



Figure 4.2: *Daily Express*, 3rd July 1964, p.7.

A vivid example of how much more vulnerable girls who expressed their sexualities were than boys can be unpicked from the court case of Headmaster John Guise in 1964 (Figure 4.2). Sixth form boys who had been ‘necking’ with two grammar school girls went unpunished. But the girls were made to choose between ‘a private spanking or a public disgrace.’⁴³⁵ The first of the girls explained to the police that Mr Guise had told her:

You have been necking with senior boys. Such things cannot be tolerated. I could make a public disgrace of the matter and strip you of your prefect's badge. Or we can keep it

⁴³⁴ See Kynaston, D. & Green, F. *Engines of Privilege: Britain's Private School Problem*, 1st ed. (Bloomsbury, 2019) pp.82-86 and Cannadine, D. et al, *The Right Kind of History: Teaching the Past in Twentieth-Century England*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴³⁵ *Daily Express*, 3rd July 1964, p.7.

private if you agree to a private spanking by Mrs Smith and me. Have you the guts to take your punishment and then forget about it?

He then ordered her to ‘take off jumper, skirt and underskirt, tuck up her knickers so that her buttocks were bare, and lean over a table.’ He also told the girl to ‘hold his hand and look at him. Then Mrs. Smith started to hit [her] across each buttock.’

She hit me pretty hard and it hurt me. I don’t know how many times she hit me, but I counted seven and then stopped counting. There were quite a lot after that. Mr Guise said: “Are you sorry? Are you ashamed?” and I said “Yes.” Guise then held her hands behind her back and gave her another beating.⁴³⁶

The fact that the boys, who had indulged in the same activity as the girls, were spared corporal punishment, but that girls were excessively beaten and made to feel ‘sorry’ and ‘ashamed’ shows just how unjust punishments for girls really could be.

The second girl informed the police that she objected to being spanked by Guise as he was not her father. Guise had told her he was ‘acting in loco parentis.’ The *Daily Express* reported that:

She, like the first girl, was told to undress and Guise told her to hold his hand and look at him while Mrs. Smith was spanking her. “It hurt terribly. I cried and looked away from Mr. Guise. Mrs. Smith stopped hitting me and Mr. Guise told me to get up and rub my buttocks. Mr. Guise then came and stood behind me and placed his hand on each of my buttocks and said: ‘Does this hurt?’”

Guise, explaining to the police why he spanked the girls, said:

Misbehaviour between boys and girls is something we have to take very great care about, especially in view of present trends. We have had cases of pregnant girls and I have been called in by parents over tragic cases. This situation did seem to me full of dangerous possibilities. He also explained: “My touching the buttocks was merely to check the degree to bruising.”⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ *Daily Express*, 5th July 1962, p.7.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

Guise and Smith both pleaded guilty and Guise, 60 was fined £50 with £15 costs, and Smith, 58, was fined £30 with £10 costs. Guise resigned and Smith was suspended. The choice of a private, bare bottomed spanking or a ‘public disgrace’ for a consenting expression of sexuality speaks to an alarming fixation of controlling female bodies from the agency of sexuality. The image of a teacher demanding a young girl look him in the eye as she is illegally beaten and, before he himself had beaten the girl suggests that John Guise took pleasure in breaking the rules of permissible punishment. If Guise had enjoyed his private punishments, as the newspaper suggests, then he, in this case, was using power to glean sexual gratification by means of punishing girls for expressing their own sexuality. Children’s emotions could be cajoled into false dichotomies by those in power; in this instance between the threat of a public disgrace about their own sexuality over a private -and illegal - violation of their private body. The Conservative’s Barry Report of 1960 had warned that the state had not physically punished men for ‘violence and sexual offences’ since 1861, and that psychological opinion was concerned by the psychological effects of returning to physically punishing men for such offences.⁴³⁸ But the case of Guise demonstrated that those employed by the state *were* still physically and sexually punishing not men, but young girls for what they deemed as ‘sexual offences’; namely expressing her own sexuality.

And yet the integrity of the child’s body was increasingly attended to, even within the realm of home. In 1963 two orthopaedic surgeons, Griffiths and Moynihan, published an article in the *British Medical Journal* with the subtitle ‘Battered Baby Syndrome’.⁴³⁹ It stated that the syndrome was a ‘more frequent cause of death than ... leukaemia, cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy.’⁴⁴⁰ Science, the paper claimed, through ‘clinical and radiological investigations

⁴³⁸ *The Advisory Council on the Treatment of Offenders*, (Home Office 1960), p.49.

⁴³⁹ Griffiths, D.L & Moynihan, F.J, ‘Multiple Epiphyseal Injuries in Babies (“Battered Baby Syndrome”)', *British Medical Journal*, 21 December 1963: pp.1558-61.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

could produce proof necessary for court convictions'.⁴⁴¹ As Harry Hendrick explores, Doctors in the wake of the syndrome saw themselves as the 'first line of defence' for children who were demonstrably being beaten and wrote of the syndrome as a 'widespread crime that can all too easily escape detection.'⁴⁴² In 1966 the British Paediatric Association stressed the role of doctors in using science to provide evidence of the physical abuse of children, and it spoke of the need to 'consult local-authority Children's Officers' calling for a 'link between medical authorities and the social agencies of the State'.⁴⁴³ But, as Hendrick argues, it was not until the early 1970s that the 'Battered Baby Syndrome' was treated as particularly 'significant by professional groups.'

The public and private nature of physical abuse was increasingly scrutinised by the courts, particularly in relation to gender, and increasingly cases were brought that could be verified by scientific methods. This led to an increase in prosecutions, fines and sanctions for individuals and institutions who demonstrably flouted the established conventions. It was chiefly because children and parents increasingly turned to the police when assaults had occurred by public officials that there is an increased focus upon gender and corporal punishment in Britain's courts during the 1960s. The myth of 'phasing out' of corporal punishment for girls is simply not held up by increased press reporting of girls receiving and fighting against corporal punishment during this era, nor in the punishment books that somewhat unreliably document the practice. Moreover, when the legal limits of corporal punishment were challenged in Britain's courts, expressing sexuality was an oft cited reason for physically punishing girls. Traditional methods were being contested, but crucially the existing laws on physically punishing children remained the permissible benchmark for legally hitting children. It is perhaps not surprising then that the early 1960s can be viewed as a period

⁴⁴¹ Hendrick, H, *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 1994), p.244.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.245.

where the practice of corporal punishment remained stubbornly defiant despite a growing prescriptive consensus against its use, and legal and medical measures to police the practice. To understand why the culture of corporal punishment was so deeply divided in society we must explore how the establishment conceptualised and utilised its practice within its private - that is to say 'public' - schooling system, and how this model and culture of punitive mores related to the increasingly contested boundaries of punishment within the state tripartite schooling system.

Cultures of Public and Private Punishment

When Eton opened its doors to the *BBC*'s cameras in January 1964, the documentary directly addressed the topic of corporal punishment with the audience. Indeed, discipline was shown to be underpinning specific methods by which behaviours relating to power and privilege were attained. Junior scholars, the youngest, would 'fag' - or be a general boy servant - to those older and senior within the closely defined hierarchy of the institution. The boy who had to fulfil any given menial task - at any time of the working day - was chosen as he had been the last to arrive at 'post' following a siren like long wail of the word 'boy up'.⁴⁴⁴ Whilst the sound of electric and hand bells dictated state school pupil's time, public and grammar schools were far more likely to utilise the impressive vocal chords of its senior pupils as timekeepers. Scholars would work their way up the 'system' by effort and by the merit of seniority. As children grew, they would enjoy the benefits of having their juniors fag for them, and as they reached the senior year, boyhood shifted to manhood and the elite transformed from beaten to beaters. The emotional soundscape of the sixteenth century buildings would often have been characterised with the sound of corporal punishment during the 1960s, and the practice was deeply rooted in its history. Whilst the headmaster defended the occasional use of

⁴⁴⁴ *Eton*, (BBC, 1964).

corporal punishment, he was less than frank about the complex and interrelated ways in which corporal punishment existed throughout the structure of the institution at that time. Both the *BBC* and Eton masked the complexity of corporal punishment at Britain's most prestigious school. Indeed, they showed only two of the six tiers of corporal punishment that scholars could encounter during their education.

The most common form of punishment at Eton was a 'siphoning'; a public beating in boy's dormitories by the captain of chamber (a fellow pupil) with a rubber Bunsen burner tube.⁴⁴⁵ Whereas children were permitted to corporally punish each other in many public and grammar schools, in secondary modern and technical schooling the cane, tawse, slipper and back hand were the preserve of adult implementation. The second form of punishment at Eton was a public caning by the School Captain or his deputy (Figure 4.3). Public also was the Head Master's punishment, which was held in a semi-public ceremony within the library. The offender's trousers and underwear were removed, and he was bent over a centuries-old flogging block: the Head's implement of punishment was a birch. The Head also caned and birched in his chambers and, similarly House Master's caned in their house chambers; an act dubbed as 'Screwing'. The ceremonial flogging block, now on public display, is visibly worn with use; the many centuries of birch twigs have carved away at the left-hand corner of the object (Figure 4.4). Much as the executioner's block on public display at the Tower of London bears the brutal scars of the headman's axe, the Eton flogging block bares physical witness to the pains and emotions inflicted upon, and witnessed by, children during its use throughout history. That flogging blocks were familiar objects to Eton's children as late as 1964 tells us something of the importance and longevity of ritual and tradition that lay at the heart of justifications for its continued use within such centuries-old institutions. The block also tells us of the role that

⁴⁴⁵ For a full analysis of the origins of the six different forms of corporal punishment at Eton see Benthall, J, 'Invisible Wounds: Corporal Punishment in British Schools as a Form of Ritual' in *Child Abuse & Neglect*. (1991) Vol.17, pp. 377-388.

material, ceremonial objects played in the maintenance of its practice. And yet after 1964 the erosion of the flogging block ceased and the Headmaster's public floggings stopped, although the Head retaining flogging rights within his private chambers. But corporal punishment remained a public affair at Eton long after the flogging block was set in its exhibition cabinet.



Figure 4.3 (Left): House Master's cane in Eton, BBC 1964

Figure 4.4 (Right): Eton's Flogging Block

Perhaps the most vicious, and purposefully audible physical punishment that marked both the soundscape and emotional landscape of Eton's quadrangles were the punishments carried out by the hereditary elite of the college's boys. The 'cream' of Eton were known as 'Pop', a self-elected group who formed the top society at the college.⁴⁴⁶ They held the privilege of administering a 'pop tanning'; a severe form of punishment administered outside of the faculty's control. In the same year that the *BBC* somewhat selectively filmed Eton's 'living history', a sketch of a pop tanning was published in *Eton Microcosm* by Cheetham and Parfit who had attended Eton (Figure 4.5). A close examination of the sketch by artist Edward Pagram reflects the vicious nature and reputation of the practice, and the delight that bringing extreme pain to another child engendered. The two-pop's awaiting their turn to strike bear notable grins

⁴⁴⁶ 'Pop' does not mean 'popular', as is commonly believed, but derives from the Latin 'Popina' or 'tea shop', where the original 1811 debating society met.

of delight. We only see the back half of the boy receiving the punishment in the illustration for his head has been jammed under a sash window, rendering him immobile from both punishment and his audiences. Boys often, and understandably, cried out during their pop tanning, almost always receiving more than fifteen strokes. The echoes of such sounds of emotions would have been all too audible around the quadrangle, but not to pop. The sash window served a further purpose: somewhat dulling the boys screams so as not to dilute pop's pleasure.⁴⁴⁷

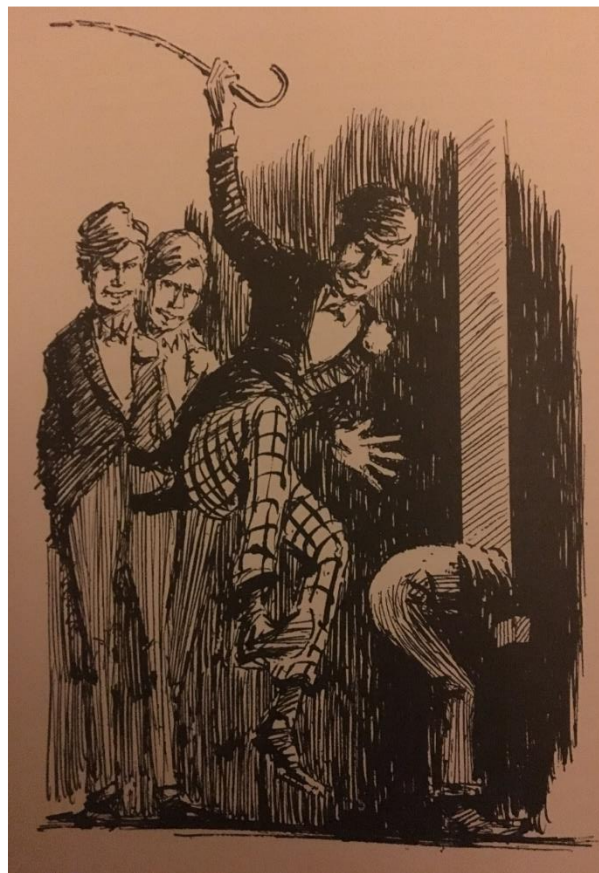


Figure 4.5: 'Pop Tanning' by Edward Pagram in Cheetham, A, Parfit, D, *Eton Microcosm*, (London, Sidwich & Jackson, 1964)

This system ensured that seniority of age and privilege of birth could control not only the emotions of an 'offender' but also the emotions of those who heard the 'offender's'

⁴⁴⁷ Pagram, E. in Cheetham, A, Parfit, D, *Eton Microcosm*, (London, Sidwich & Jackson, 1964).

emotional response to the physical harm. The persistence and regularity by which children could encounter the sounds and sight of another child's pain attempted to make normal the cycle: from beaten to beater, and its longevity of practice suggests that it often did. But Edward Pagram's illustration, sketched for witnesses, is a far more rebellious publication than the *BBC*'s selective documentary. It provides visual flesh to the spoken and written memories which document the often-brutal nature of Eton's punitive structures. The *BBC* praised the democratic nature by which Eton's boys are shown discussing the pros and cons of corporal punishment during their daily afternoon tea. The audience is informed that such debates have been known to sway a house master into relinquishing corporal punishment when a sufficient consensus and argument against had been made, although the commentator had earlier qualified, somewhat problematically, that such a manoeuvre was dependent entirely upon the enlightened attitude of any given house master. Moreover, the *BBC*'s silence about the number of other forms of corporal punishments that existed outside of the house master's remit made somewhat absurd the notion that children retained any kind of serious bargaining power as to the levels of physical punishment that they might endure.

The cultures of public-school corporal punishment remained defiantly complex, hierarchically structured, and stubbornly opaque during the early 1960s. By the time that Eton was repeated on *BBC2* in 1967 the documentary had been re-framed with a new introduction which showed a contemporary protest movement, the Radical Student Alliance (RSA), who stanchly and visibly opposed the private schooling of children.⁴⁴⁸ The *BBC* used the protests to question if the RSA was right to oppose the private schooling system; and in doing so the *BBC* somewhat unambiguously answered that question with a 'no'. But the establishment, much of which had been educated at Eton, would be greatly challenged by student activists as the 1960s

⁴⁴⁸ Adams, R, *Protests by Pupils: Empowerment, Schooling, and the State*, 1st ed. (The Falmer Press, 1991), p.50.

grew to a close. To understand why the rebirth of rebellion from 1968 significantly challenged the status quo of education, if not the cultures and values of society at large, it is incumbent to map the cultures and criticisms of state education and punishment of the early 1960s to better understand why alternative methods to corporal punishment were attempted alongside radical new approaches to state schooling, and why they were ultimately rejected by the government. I will then consider how Labour's radical move to provide 'grammar schools for all' won support of the electorate leading to their electoral victory in 1964.

Spare the Rod (1961)

Chapter three documented the many pitfalls that author Michael Croft had experienced during the mid-1950s when he had attempted to get the screen rights to his anti-corporal punishment novel *Spare the Rod* (1954). Max Bygraves, best known as a television presenter and singer, had been so determined to play the role of John Saunders (loosely based on Croft) that he invested his own money into the film.⁴⁴⁹ Croft sold the rights to the film, but he would emerge outspoken in the press when substantial sub plots that made more definitive Saunders heterosexuality, such as adding a wife who can't have children.⁴⁵⁰ Croft could plainly see that the subtext of Saunders' queerness, which shone most harshly in the teachers post-caning make up-cigarette, had been eradicated from the script. Although the Saunders wife sub plot was eventually dropped, the final script saw Bygrave's Saunders as an adoptive father-figure to boy pupil Harkness, and they never develop the casually queer intimacy of a shared cigarette. Saunders accepts Harkness' fag in the film, but he smokes it alone. Two substantial scenes were added to the script; a classroom riot, where Harkness is unjustly corporally punished by Saunders and, as Croft had so feared back in 1954, a schoolgirl seduction scene was introduced

⁴⁴⁹ Bygraves, M, *Stars in my Eyes: A Life in Show Business*, 1st ed, (Robsons Books, 2002), p.97.

⁴⁵⁰ Croft, M, 'Saga of Censorship', *The Observer*, 4th June 1961, p.28.

and was used to promote the social drama on the front cover of new paperback editions of Croft's book and on lobby cards in cinema halls (Figure 4.6 & Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.6 (Left): Croft, M, *Spare the Rod*, 2nd ed. (1961)

Figure 4.7 (Right): *Spare the Rod* Lobby Card (1961)

The least successful, and somewhat more disturbing, of the two additional scenes in the film was the 'seduction' scene that most visibly helped to sell the film. Saunders is persuaded by one of his fifteen-year-old students into walking the girl back to her parent's house to meet them. When Saunders arrives at the girl's one-room flat - occupied only by a much younger sister – she attempts to have sex with Saunders in front of her sibling on her truckle bed. Her returning parents are depicted as drunk, violent and, before Saunders is spotted, openly sexual in front of their children. Beaten by the girl's father, Saunders' escape from the dilapidated working-class flat is offered as a point of release for the audience; the privacy of the working-class home was depicted as a culturally, sexually, and behaviourally promiscuous sphere, and the young girl's sexual behaviours were explained as both a product of these cultures and almost *as* a product to sell the film. Female sexuality, not male, was presented as the more aggressive; despite, as this chapter has documented, the increasing media narratives that

mapped the dangers, illegalities, and sexual natures of the practices of male teachers and employers on young females in their care during this period.

The additional classroom riot scene, however, materialised successfully as the apex of the film. Saunders had been determined to resist the use of corporal punishment at Worrell Street Secondary Modern School in London. The manic tribal drums of Laurie Johnson's soundtrack to the film is used to suggest to the audience that Saunders faces significant challenges in overcoming the harsh culture of discipline at the school, which acted as the heartbeat of anarchy boiling up in inside of the school from below. Fuelling the flames of pupil discontent was the particularly sadistic teacher Arthur Gregory, whose excessive and brutal canings mark the path to rebellion. When the pupils are caught planning to riot, Saunders relents his promised principles and canes the hands of the boys involved. When asked why Harkness has been 'let off' a punishment, Saunders canes Harkness, not knowing that he had been trying to stop the others rioting. The smoulderingly raw saxophone that plays as Harkness tells Saunders that he should have known of his innocence conveys the weight of the trust that has been broken because of the injustice. As the cane struck Harkness' hand, the hard-earned trust between teacher and pupil had been shattered. This was the essence of Croft's message from his 1954 novel; corporal punishment fundamentally broke the trust required between pupil and teacher. Croft's criticism of the oft brutal corporal punishment that existed in secondary modern schools remained a bold, if not commercially successful statement in 1961. Saunders, troubled by the seemingly impenetrable cycle of corporal punishment at Worrell Street Secondary Modern, departs at the film's end for another institution where his approach to discipline will be shared more readily amongst the staff and pupils. By 1961 fiction had seeped into reality and one such idyll of 'permissive' punitive mores had opened in the form of Risinghill school in Islington, London. But the ideal of corporal punishment free education

was a controversial and much contested one at the beginning of the 1960s. By the decade's end, however, it would be a publicly fought for one.

Death of a 'Comprehensive'

Risinghill School was opened by the London County Council (LCC) in 1960; an amalgamation of four other Secondary Modern schools which, when combined, included children from nineteen different nationalities from many backgrounds and capabilities.⁴⁵¹ The first head of Risinghill was Michael Duane who, like Croft, had a career in teaching following discharge from the armed forces. Duane had a history of developing, as he put it, 'democratic, multi-racial and progressive policies which rejected corporal punishment'.⁴⁵² As Headmaster of the Howe Dell Secondary School in Hatfield, Duane had significant troubles in maintaining the support of the HMI, who increasingly disapproved of the school's policy on discipline during the 1950s. His experience would be no less so troublesome at Risinghill, which has been remembered as Britain's 'first Comprehensive' school, before Labour championed comprehensivisation. But the death of Risinghill Comprehensive in 1965 speaks to the significant institutional and cultural resistance to the intensive, pastoral care that Duane sought to achieve. Duane believed that there needed to be a bond between teacher and parent, and that relationships between the public and private spheres needed significant improvement. With nineteen different nationalities, customs and abilities, Duane sought to engender a tolerance of race and beliefs whilst treating each child as an equal in punitive terms. Duane's continued rejection of corporal punishment as a punitive method remained a controversial and much

⁴⁵¹ Limond, D, "You can't understand unless you know Mr. Duane": understanding Michael Duane [1915–1997]: The making of an Irish Rebel, *Irish Educational Studies*, (2003), 22:3, 29-44.

⁴⁵² Institute of Education Archives. "[Papers of Michael Duane MD/2 Howe Dell Secondary School, Hatfield](#)" Date Accessed: 19th September 2016.

resisted one. Just as Duane's first headship had ended because of this policy, so too after five years would Risinghill School.



Figure 4.8: Protest at Downing Street against the closure of Risinghill School, (1965, private collection)

Leila Berg's best-selling *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive* was published to much acclaim in 1968, three years after she witnessed the closure of Risinghill in 1965. It revealed that the LCC's Conservative majority attacked Duane because of his determination to comprehensivise Risinghill. Corporal punishment had emerged, yet again, as a key weapon to for the Tories to beat back the demand for comprehensive education, and Duane's insistence that the two should coexist at Risinghill became the perfect excuse to resist the shift.⁴⁵³ The sex education that Duane provided for both genders and from young ages also became a significant site for resistance for the LCC. In many ways, Duane had created a system that would be familiar to many of those who experience Britain's state educational system today. Multiculturalism, sex education, freedom from physical harm are all characteristic of the values upheld in state systems today. Berg's account, with hundreds of quotes from children and parents is an evocative documentation of the impact that Duane's policy against corporal

⁴⁵³ Berg, L. *Risinghill: Death of a Comprehensive School*, (Penguin, 1968) p.287.

punishment had on many of the parents of children who attended Risinghill; many of whom went on to themselves to reject the practice. The leader of the parent's group against Risinghill's closure, Bob Redrupp, explained to Berg that:

I used to hit my kid. Now I don't need to. I didn't have people from Oxford or Cambridge to teach me that. Duane taught me. This may not matter to people high up in education but it matters to me. The higher in the scale you go the bloodier the rat race is. I don't want to go any higher.⁴⁵⁴

Parents were not blind to how Risinghill closed. Duane posed a significant risk to the established order of schooling. Unable to sack Duane the LCC formally closed Risinghill after deliberately misrepresenting an interview with Duane upon the subject of corporal punishment in 1965. The elaborately named Alderman Sebag-Montefiore, Tory Whip, deliberately misquoted Duane's interview with Elspeth Huxley in *Punch* magazine, causing a media furore and the perfect climate in which to close the controversial school.

By reading out only the first part of Huxley's interview with a Duane, Alderman Sebag-Montefiore engendered a totally false, but convenient impression of chaos and disorder without the cane at Risinghill. The Alderman read:

You go through a period of sheer chaos with each incoming batch... The children don't believe there's no cane. They have to test your statement. They shout and yell and fight and make life impossible. You have to stand there and let them call you all the four-letter words and every obscenity in the language. You've got to go on talking and whatever happens keep your temper. It's a nightmare for the teachers and some of them can't take it. I don't blame them. But it's the only way!⁴⁵⁵

What the Alderman failed to do was finish the quote. Duane was talking about the past of Risinghill; the process by which he allowed children to test the veracity of his claims that they

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

would no longer be physically punished for ‘bad’ behaviours by him. What Alderman omitted to read aloud to the LCC was Duane’s reassurance that:

When the children grasp the fact that there really *isn’t* any cane, they calm down. In any case they get tired of chaos eventually and then you can start to talk to them like reasonable human beings. It works in the end. At any rate the school is orderly- the children are usefully employed and not carving up each other or the staff.⁴⁵⁶

The media furore that engulfed Risinghill was achieved by omitting to include Duane’s reassurances that children had eventually responded positively to life without the cane. The rapid and ferocious media focus on the school made easier the decision to protect the LCC’s reputation and close the ‘chaotic’ school that refused to punish. Despite vast protest by pupils and parents of Risinghill, including outside Harold Wilson’s No.10 (Figure 4.8) Duane’s ‘Comprehensive’ died. But Berg exposed the machinations by which the establishment could closedown institutions which refused to cane, and which sought a comprehensive approach. Comprehensivisation’s slow and reluctant emergence in the late 1960s following Harold Wilson’s electoral victories of 1964 and 1966 would continue to be shaped by the resistance of Tory held Education Authorities to submit to Wilson’s educational plans.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*



On 12th September 1964, a cartoon of Harold Wilson dressed as Father Christmas adorned the front page of *The Express* newspaper; his ‘well-received’ Labour manifesto ‘gifts’ spilling from his bountiful sack (Figure 4.9). Lord Beaverbrook’s death in June of that year saw a significant editorial shift in the publication’s approach to general elections. *The Express* had not only declared itself an ‘independent and classless newspaper’ but it increasingly scolded the Conservative party for their lack of attention to key policies which the newspaper championed.⁴⁵⁷ Although *The Express* ultimately supported Douglas-Home’s campaign, when Wilson’s efforts outflanked the Tories’ it did not refrain from telling its readers so. When Wilson appeared as Father Christmas, the publication afforded only four inches of their front page to Douglas Home’s policies. But *The Express*’ cartoon artist, Arthur Stuart Michael Cummings, had with this cartoon begun a pictorial campaign to undermine and ‘unmask’ Wilson; an effort which outlived Wilson’s Labour government. Although Cummings’ complained that Wilson’s face was ‘incredibly difficult’ to capture, likening it to

⁴⁵⁷ Butler, D & King, A, *The British General Election of 1964*, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.185.

the ‘underside of a chamberpot’, he succeeded by giving ‘him black and heavy bags under the eyes to make him look distinctive. Thank God he began to smoke a pipe.’⁴⁵⁸ If Wilson’s pipe was a godsend to Cummings, it was an essential trope that accompanied a carefully crafted image on Wilson’s part, who himself was a devoted cigar smoker. It is within Cummings’ version of Wilson’s eyes that the audience is invited to distrust him. His eyes certainly would not have matched the expectations of children who still believed in Father Christmas, nor appealed to the parents who facilitated the myth. If the pipe was a myth, were his manifesto policies simply a ‘golden handshake’ for voters, as *The Express* reported?

Cumming’s illustration alluded to the appeal to youth that Wilson had turned to during his electoral campaign. Promising to eradicate the segregation of children into separate schools, Wilson’s manifesto promised to abandon the 11-plus selection of the tripartite schooling system: ‘secondary education will be reorganised on comprehensive lines’.⁴⁵⁹ With the promise of ‘grammar schools for all’ Wilson forced Douglas Home’s campaign to somewhat awkwardly follow suit and appeal to Britain’s youth. Whilst Wilson courted The Beatles, who dubbed the Labour Leader ‘Good Old Mr Wilson’, Douglas Home’s campaign produced a book of collected election speeches including a transcript of ‘I Call on British Youth’ which began with the less than accurate sentence: ‘Few subjects fascinate the Prime Minister more than youth’.⁴⁶⁰ Wilson’s plans for comprehensive education drew heavily upon works such as Robin Pedley’s *The Comprehensive School* (1962) which had been so influential in Risinghill’s approach to comprehensivisation. Pedley called for mixed ability teaching, permissive discipline, and classrooms where ‘the people who matter – the children – [are] busily concentrating on their particular jobs’ with teachers ‘moving around unobtrusively’.⁴⁶¹ Wilson

⁴⁵⁸ <https://www.cartoons.ac.uk/cartoonist-biographies/c-d/ArthurStuartMichaelCummings.html> [Date last accessed: 28/10/16].

⁴⁵⁹ ED 147/826, ‘Labour government cabinet committee policy notes about setting up comprehensive school.’

⁴⁶⁰ Barker, A, *Peaceful change: a selection of speeches with a portrait of the author*. 1st ed. (Eldon Griffiths, 1964) p.69.

⁴⁶¹ Pedley, R, *The Comprehensive School*, 1st ed, (Pelican, 1963).

planned to ‘encourage more entrants to teaching and winning back the thousands of women lost by marriage’ to achieve such a measure.⁴⁶²

Wilson’s narrow victory in 1964 enabled the foundation of *The School’s Council* by Labour’s Education minister, Tony Crosland, who provided a brief to ‘do away with ‘arbitrary’ subject boundaries and teach a ‘whole curriculum’. As Selina Todd’s research reveals, Crosland’s request that local authorities should ‘reorganize secondary education in schools as socially and intellectually comprehensive as it is practicable’ was not an obligatory one.⁴⁶³ But his plea to give ‘all our children a more ample opportunity’ to fulfil their social and creative potential in the ‘democratic 1960s’ was genuine.⁴⁶⁴ So opposed were many Conservative authorities to adopting a comprehensive educational system that Labour felt compelled by their slim majority to implore local authorities but not demand.

Comprehensivisation was a slow process, particularly as Labour had not compelled local authorities to prepare to comprehensive. As Todd summarises:

Working-class children who attended comprehensives had as much chance of getting to university as those attending grammar schools. Comprehensives clearly expanded the chances of that majority of children who would otherwise have attended secondary modern schools.⁴⁶⁵

But resistance to comprehensives in safe Tory seats would mean that by 1970 only one-third of secondary school pupils attend them; for the rest the increasingly unpopular secondary modern remained their place of education.⁴⁶⁶ Resistance, as chapter five will further illuminate, came not from the parents whose children attended secondary moderns, which had come to

⁴⁶² Kavanagh, D, *Labour Party General Election Manifestos 1900 – 1997*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2007) p.115.

⁴⁶³ Todd, S, *The People*, p.856.

⁴⁶⁴ Crosland, A, *Comprehensive Education. Speech by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, at the North of England Education Conference, 7th January 1966*. (Labour Party, 1966), p.14.

⁴⁶⁵ McPherson, A & Douglas Wilms, J, ‘Equalization and Improvement: Some Effects of Comprehensive Reorganisation in Scotland’ in Halsey et al., *Education, Culture, Economy and Society*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 683-702.

⁴⁶⁶ Todd, S, *The People*, p.856.

symbolise failure and rejection from qualification, but from the parents of grammar school children, whose advantage was only attainable under tripartism. Wilson's government had provided Bridget, Lady Plowden, with circular 10/65, making clear that she should account for the government's plans to comprehensivise within her ongoing review of primary education. The publication of the Plowden Report in 1967 contributed to 'period of consolidation regarding the educational needs, accommodating more psychological as well as physical needs.'⁴⁶⁷

The Plowden Report (1967)

Although the report of the Central Advisory Council for Education into Primary Education, more commonly known as the Plowden Report, had been established by the Conservative Education Minister Sir Edward Boyle in 1963, Labour significantly shifted the terms of inquiry following Wilson's electoral victory the following year. Corporal punishment, still widely used, remained a closely scrutinised line of inquiry. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) submission to Plowden argued that although psychological discourses were 'conceding problems with corporal punishment', they held that 'school conditions necessitated that, in the interest of the majority of children, the right of the teacher to decide on the use of corporal punishment ought to be retained'.⁴⁶⁸ The NUT went on to state that:

Since a great deal is known about the emotional and psychological causes of delinquency, and since, even if the present verdict has to be 'not proven', there is grounds for questioning the psychological effects of corporal punishment, the teacher should use corporal punishment with circumspection when dealing with the behaviour problems of the individual child'.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁷ McKenzie, J, *Changing Education: A Sociology of Education Since 1944*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2001) p.197.

⁴⁶⁸ Newell, P, *A Last Resort?* p.29.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Plowden's response to the NUT was built upon the foundations of a clearly more child-centred approach than perhaps the NUT was expecting:

On theoretical grounds alone, we believe that the kind of relationship which ought to exist between teacher and child cannot be built up in an atmosphere in which the infliction of physical pain is regarded as a normal sanction. Our report makes it clear at many points that we believe in discipline. But it can only come from a relationship between a teacher and a child in which there is mutual respect and affection'.⁴⁷⁰

Cadogan had believed, back in 1938, that corporal punishment in schools should only be undertaken by a person whom a child knew and, crucially, was emotively attached to. By 1967 Plowden, like Croft before her, was suggesting that corporal punishment could damage the mutual respect and affection central to the kind of relationships that teachers and pupils needed to enjoy.

Plowden was methodical in her response to corporal punishment. She acknowledged that the overwhelming majority (between 80 per cent and 90 per cent) of the teaching profession were 'against the abolition of corporal punishment, though few support it except as a final sanction.' The report found that only one local education authority 'forbids its use' and that the 'great diversity in regulations', some of which had not been revised 'for 20 to 30 years'. Plowden believed that the inaction on the matter reflected 'public opinion and the lack of any pressure for change'.⁴⁷¹ Ultimately Plowden placed greater weight upon the 'associations of psychologists' who agreed that 'the advantages of corporal punishment are outweighed by its disadvantages' than the clear majority of those in the teaching profession who wanted to retain

⁴⁷⁰ Plowden Report: <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/plowden/plowden1967-1.html> p.271. [Date last accessed: 29/10/16].

⁴⁷¹ <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/plowden/plowden1967-1.html> , p.271. [Date last accessed: 29/10/16].

corporal punishment in both primary and secondary educational settings. Plowden recommended that:

The infliction of physical pain as a method of punishment in primary schools should be forbidden. Schools Regulations, which apply only to maintained schools, should be amended accordingly.⁴⁷²

When Lady Plowden spoke to the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in 1967, she was asked why her report did not reflect the views of the ‘majority of parents and teachers?’ Plowden responded that ‘You can’t always go with the mass. You sometimes have to take a lead’.⁴⁷³ Labour was certainly taking the lead when it finally abolished the use of corporal punishment in prisons in 1967, with significant media outrage promoting the ‘last resort’ argument of retention. Public opinion was still deeply divided about corporal punishment, and Labour’s abolition of prison flogging in 1967 meant that the last public places that corporal punishment could be inflicted in Britain were schools and correction centres. Plowden’s recommendations were, as the description suggests, only recommended to local authorities, much like comprehensivisation.

‘It is not pleasant to hear a boy screaming’



Figure 4.10: Court Lees Approved School, Redhill (1967)

⁴⁷² <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/plowden/plowden1967-1.html> , p.271. [Date last accessed: 29/10/16].

⁴⁷³ Newell, P, *A Last Resort?* p.31.

In the wake of Plowden's recommendation to abolish corporal punishment at primary schools, an enquiry into the systematic abuse at the Court Lees Approved School followed a scandal that brought the brutality of corporal punishment vividly into the public consciousness. On 2nd March 1967, an anonymous letter was published in the *Guardian*, detailing physical abuse at Court Lees Approved School, pictured above (Figure 4.10). The letter was written by whistle-blower Ivor Cook, a master at the public punitive institution. He wrote:

The school discipline is entirely negative, reinforced by a savage use of the cane that would horrify anyone not inured to it. It is not pleasant to hear a boy screaming (this is not exaggeration; it happens at this school every week; sometimes day by day). After such treatment, the boys' buttocks are covered with green and black bruises, extending from one side to the other in a band perhaps eight inches in width. I have known such bruising to be visible six weeks after the caning that caused it, although in most cases the bruises have gone within a month.⁴⁷⁴

Dismayed by the lack of response to his letter, Cook took the unprecedented step of taking colour photographs of boys' injuries and sending them to the press. The photographs were considered so shocking that newspapers initially refused to reprint the pictures. However, whilst describing but not showing the pictures to the public, the *Daily Mail* also published the reactions of Doctors who had been shown the photographs. A North London GP and former police surgeon believed that one of the beatings was 'excessive – the cane goes so deep it has caused severe bruising with flowing of blood'. The doctor of a 'leading public school' (private school) stated that he 'would have thought that this was far too brutal. I would be very concerned if a boy was brought to me with these injuries.' A consultant believed the photographs should be placed before the Ministries of Health and the Home Office, yet an 'eminent pathologist' thought the beating 'not much worse than we used to get at school,' though one was 'a pretty good 'un.'⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ *The Guardian*, 2nd March 1967, p.11.

⁴⁷⁵ *Daily Mail*, 5th May 1967, p.11.

A specialist at a London teaching hospital stated that one boy had received a ‘pretty solid beating.’ After examining the photograph under magnification, he concluded that one boy had received twelve strokes with a short thick stick.⁴⁷⁶ The illegality of the punishment at the approved school lay in this breach of the rules. Roy Jenkins, Labour’s Home Secretary ordered an immediate inquiry into the abuse at Court Lees. The inquiry concluded that the Headmaster of Court Lees had caned with ‘excessive severity’ and that the canes being used to beat the young boys were ‘thicker than authorised.’ It noted that boys were being caned without any other form of punishment being tried first; it was often the first mode of punishment for any given ‘crime’. It showed that boys often ran away from the punishment at the institution and that they received a brutal caning when they inevitably were returned or returned themselves:

Thus, it often happens that a boy who arrives at the school late at night, disconsolate, tired after a long journey and probably emotionally upset, is immediately caned. Any preliminary inquiry by the headmaster as to the reason for absconding is probably cursory.⁴⁷⁷

Condemning the brutality of a regime that routinely and without compassion physically punishes its custodians without engaging with reason or emotion, commentators failed to acknowledge that much of the establishment was trained at institutions, like Eton or Dulwich, where such punitive regimes continued to underpin the fabric of social discipline. There was nothing child centred about such a regime. Most damning was its admission that, like in the case of most the boys photographed by Cook, corporal punishment was rarely recorded in required punishment books at Court Lees, and no doubt many other contemporary institutions.

The Court Lees scandal was an event in which several threads from this thesis intersect. The charge that canes which were above the recommended weight and thickness were in use

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Daily Mail*, 5th May 1967, p.11.

at the approved school was upheld in the institution's financial records.⁴⁷⁸ Frequent payments throughout the 1960s were made to Mr Eric Wildman, who as chapter three revealed, was both publicly whipped by schoolboys during a pro caning speech and fined for selling and possessing indecent flagellation materials alongside canes in the 1950s. That Wildman found gainful employment selling canes and tawse straps to both state and private schools throughout post-war Britain - despite his conviction - speaks to the continued need for such implements at public institutions. This of course adds weight to the picture of the frequency and consistency by which children continued to be physically punished by implements across Britain. Moreover, Wildman's supply of canes to Court Lees which significantly exceeded the permitted density of canes in schools demonstrates that institutions were prepared to continue practices which had been defined as excessive and even abusive. One of corporal punishment's major fault-lines remained that those administering it were rarely diligent in truly recording how many times, and to what degree, pain had been inflicted on children's bodies. The brutal bruising that the Court Lees' photographs show is a vivid part of a thick and unique inquiry which documents - painful as it may be to examine - how severe and routine abusing children in the public sector could be. But Labour was, because of the inquiry, prepared to intervene. As prison flogging finally fell from the statute book in the Criminal Justice Act of 1967, Roy Jenkins revoked Court Lees' licence and the approved school closed. But so too, it is charged, did public governmental scrutiny close.

By New Year's Eve the boys of Court Lees were relocated to other approved schools and the *Sunday Times* became the first publication to finally publish one of the colour photographs taken by Cook. Following a thorough enquiry into the veracity of the colour print

⁴⁷⁸ NRA 23572 Hays Bridge, CC 89, Surrey History Centre.

- Court Lees Headmaster had doubted the validity of the photograph - the editor, attempting to put to rest the reliability of the image, stated that the *Sunday Times* had:

the pictures examined by the manufacturers and processors of the film and independent photographic and make-up experts. All affirmed in writing that the pictures were genuine.⁴⁷⁹

The brutality of the colour print fits into a culture of revisiting the ‘grittiness’ of the closing year in newspaper annual reviews at the dawn of the New Year, alongside the more celebrated and jubilant achievements of the year. Such inclusions still permeate the tradition of annual reviews; tragedies – human made or naturally born – often frame our memories of the Christmases in which they happened to occur. For those at Court Lees for whom justice was never served, the closure of the institution did not mean that their experiences of corporal punishment were over. By the early 1970s Ivor Cook was so determined that the full extent of corporal punishment at approved schools was made public that he wrote to the *Times Educational Supplement* producing classified evidence of the official punitive figures of Britain’s approved schools:

1966: 3,006
1967: 2,199
1968: 1,189
1969: 809
1970: 739
1971: 779⁴⁸⁰

Although these leaked figures suggested that corporal punishment was in decline in the latter half of the 1960s, the Court Lees inquiry’s acknowledgement of the relative unreliability of punishment books in accurately recording corporal punishment may suggest that numbers remained significantly higher throughout the 1960s than these figures allow. It would not be until the mid-1980s that the topics of physical and sexual abuse would be again granted the

⁴⁷⁹ *Sunday Times*, 31st December 1967, p.20.

⁴⁸⁰ *Times Educational Supplement*, 10th May 1974, p.11.

scrutiny of a public inquiry. As Roberts and Doig conclude, the Court Lees affair did not lead to ‘any widespread review of punishment practices in approved schools and there was no great public response of indignation.’⁴⁸¹ Whilst the Court Lees photograph remains an evocative disjuncture from the festive time that it was published, the press of 1960s had not shied away from the horrors that can occur at Christmas time. From the rising number of children and adults killed during in car accidents during the holidays to the notorious murders that dominated headlines, the sensationalism of shocking events that jarred with the essence the many meanings of Christmas help us to understand the faultlines in child safety for decades to come.

‘Shut up or I’ll forget myself and hit you one’



Figure 4.11: Henry’s Store, Market Street, Manchester (Christmas, 1964)

⁴⁸¹ Roberts, V, Doig, A, *Public Inquiries into Abuse of Children in Residential Care*, 1st ed. (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001) p.79.

A fortnight before Christmas 1964, ten-year-old Lesley was taken by her Mother's partner, Alan West, along with two of her brothers to see the grotto at Henry's Store on Manchester's Market Street (Figure 4.11). During their visit, Lesley and her brothers had their photograph taken with Father Christmas. On Christmas Day, Lesley accompanied her family to church where the congregation's children had their presents blessed. Lesley's favourite present was a small sewing machine which she had been keen to receive. It would enable her to begin making her own clothes and contribute to her home. Lesley didn't enjoy being away from home; when visiting north Wales with her Sunday School she had been so homesick that she had spent all her money on a bottle of scent for her mother, Ann. She took pleasure in 'treating her Mam.'⁴⁸² So, when Lesley was offered a large bottle of sherry in return for assisting a dark-haired lady to her car with a large box of shopping, she understood the values of such a luxury. But the emotional value of the material object that Lesley had been offered had been presented to her on a false basis. The black hair of the lady who offered it was also false; a wig covering the bleached blonde hair of Myra Hindley. Lesley had willingly accompanied Myra to her car and had driven away with her from the local Boxing Day Fairground. Many hours after reporting her missing, the Henry's photograph of Lesley was cropped by the police for posters; Father Christmas' white-gloved fingers still just visible on her shoulder (Figure 4.11). Six thousand posters were distributed across Manchester. Lesley's Uncle paid for another two hundred printed at his own expense and distributed them personally. It would not be until 16th October 1965 that Lesley's mother would hear her daughters voice again. Horrifically, the sound she heard was a tape recording of her daughter's violent death. Ten-year-old Lesley Ann Downey had been raped and murdered by Ian Brady at 16 Wardle Brook Avenue, Hyde Manchester, on Boxing Day, 1964.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸² Lee, C.A. *One of Your Own: The Life and Death of Myra Hindley*, 1st ed. (Mainstream Publishing, 2010) p.380.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*



Figure 4.11: Police crop of Lesley Ann Downey, (December 1964)

Lesley's body had been found buried in shallow grave on Saddleworth Moor on the same day that Ann had been asked to identify her daughter's voice. The recording had been found in a suitcase at a station luggage holding room following the murder of seventeen-year-old Edward Evans at Wardle Brook Avenue. As Lesley was heard begging for her life, it was Hindley's voice that was identified threatening her: 'Shut up or I'll forget myself and hit you one' clearly audible to the police scribes.⁴⁸⁴ Hindley maintained until she died that she had not been present at four of five murders committed between 1962 and 1965. Because of the tape, it was impossible for her to deny that she had both threatened and physically punished Lesley after procuring her for Brady. When the tape was played in court in 1966 the jury heard a woman abusing, threatening, and smacking an unknown child into submission. Horrifically the tape ends with a recording of a Christmas vinyl of 'Little Drummer Boy' and other Christmas songs, drowning out the unspeakable ending of Lesley's life. Myra Hindley became established as one of Britain's greatest monsters. Myra broke many contemporary expectations of femininity and this dislocation goes some way in explaining why the weight of revulsion lay heavier on Hindley's shoulders than Brady's. Hindley and Brady became the archetypal dangerous strangers: from this period, onwards children across Britain would be told about the

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.392.

danger that strangers posed to them. While this thesis documents many such instances throughout the twentieth century where person's unknown to children have abused children, Hindley and Brady had begun their killings by murdering a girl known well to Myra: Pauline Read, her sister's childhood friend. The complexities of the private nature of the murders of these five children, an event that became known as 'The Moor's Murders', was not reflected in the public message that strangers posed the greater danger to children.

As Mathew Thomson compellingly argues, the Moors Murders played a significant role in reshaping the landscape of childhood during the 1960s. Although Thomson concurs with Ian Hacking's view that there was no empirically based reason to think that child abuse had 'changed in a hundred years', cultural discourse upon the subject changed dramatically during the 1960s.⁴⁸⁵ The media furore surrounding Hindley and Brady marked a noteworthy shift in the levels of detail and column inches that the print media afforded to cases of child abuse and murder between the 1950s and 1960s. So much did the Moors Murders shift the tone of press reporting of child abuse that it marked a significant milestone of detail; whilst the press did not print the transcript of the tape of Lesley's death, the press vividly detailed the emotional reaction of the courtroom to it. Lesley had been a stranger to Brady and Hindley, but the couple had taken advantage of the vulnerabilities both of youths known to them and those who played freely as their parents before them had. Just as relative affluence had elevated the car as a high cause of child fatality and a key feature of modernity's curtailment of childhood freedoms during the 1960s, Hindley's Mini Van, Wardle Brook Avenue and Saddleworth Moor became notorious and much feared sites of horror, violation, gender betrayal and, most dangerously, mistrust. Hindley's infamous public mugshot (Figure 4.12 - centre), always accompanied a continuous stream of print media stories across the late twentieth century. Frozen in time, and supposedly displaying both the emotions of evil and unrepentance, Hindley would neither be

⁴⁸⁵ Hacking, I, 'The Making and Moulding of Child Abuse' in *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (1991), p. 274.

forgiven nor again see freedom for her role in the brutal murders of five children. Famously, over twenty local funeral directors refused to receive Hindley's body when she died in custody in 2002: 'Hindley was so noxious, it seems, that even the presence of her corpse for a few minutes in the back of one's hearse was too dangerous for comfort.'⁴⁸⁶



Figure 4.12: Myra Hindley's three mugshots (1965)

Psychologists Lisa Blackman and Valerie Walkerdine argue that femininity has been customarily linked to 'emotion, passion, desire, irrationality and madness' and argue that Hindley 'symbolically threatened the discursive fabric of gender'.⁴⁸⁷ Cathy Hawkins asserts that Hindley *had* committed untold harms to children; her monstrosity *had* been created because of her own crimes. But the fact remains that Ian Brady, whilst reviled, enjoyed far less revulsion as a monster figure than Myra Hindley. It was Brady who raped, murdered, and coldly buried the four children's bodies in shallow peat graves. The extent by which Hindley's deeds were culturally inscribed, Hawkins concludes, would pervade the debates around identity

⁴⁸⁶ *Morning Herald*, 23rd November 2002, p.9.

⁴⁸⁷ Blackman L, & Walkerdine, V, *Mass Hysteria: Critical psychology and media studies*. 1st ed (Palgrave, 2001), p.137.

politics, class, gender, and sexuality in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁴⁸⁸ Although many public cases of child abduction and murder have punctuated the latter half of the twentieth century, Hindley and Brady's monstrosity provided a real-life bogeyman from which the growing narrative of stranger danger emerged. Both the physical and emotional landscape of childhood would be gradually eroded following convictions of the Moors murderers. As Thomson maps, John and Elizabeth Newson's study of Nottinghamshire in the late 60s revealed that the media played a crucial role in engendering anxieties about protecting children from strangers.⁴⁸⁹ Their study documents that a builder's wife reported that her young daughter was:

A bit scared when she hears on TV about those little girls having been picked up – or such as the Moors murders - and we try, like, not to let her take too much notice of them.⁴⁹⁰

There is a palpable sense of torn desires for mothers in the wake of Hindley's place in the stranger narrative. On the one hand parents, may have wished their children could exist in much the same way that they had; somewhat oblivious to and yet in danger of abuse from a stranger. Yet the wireless, television and newspapers allowed children, often in front of their parents, the knowledge of the danger that children could be exposed to by strangers. A bus driver's wife said that:

...you read in the papers of such awful things happening about children, you know, being run off with and everything; well every night I say to her "Has anybody spoke to you or anything like that?" and she says "No", and I says "Well, don't you ever speak to anybody".⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Hawkins, C, 'The Monster Body of Myra Hindley' in *Scan: Journal of media arts culture*, Vol.1, Issue 3, (2004).

⁴⁸⁹ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.166.

⁴⁹⁰ Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment*, 2nd ed. (Penguin, 1976) p. 94.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Thomson further demonstrates that both local and national ‘networks of news, rumour and warning’; the local press linking ‘the dangers’ of childhood onto ‘the local landscape’.⁴⁹² A scaffolder’s wife reported to the Newsons’ that her daughter:

Always comes straight home - they all do, I’ve always drilled that into them. She seems to have got the message. ‘Cause the oldest girl, she went to Colwick Woods once, and a man got hold of her, but she had the sense to bite his hand – he put his hand over her mouth and she bit it; and he let her go, you see. But it frightened her and frightened the other too, because they knew about it.⁴⁹³

Although the stranger had become a significant figure that had begun to irrevocably shape the local landscape, ultimately the Newsons’ survey demonstrated how much freedom children could enjoy at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁹⁴ It was only during the mid-1970s through to the late 1980s that the landscape of childhood would dramatically shift.⁴⁹⁵ As Thomson points out despite engendering many narratives about the danger of strangers, neither the Newsons’ nor their interviewees ever labelled paedophiles as such. As the stranger gained its public name in the 1970s, acknowledgements of folk-devil-like stranger would many times eclipse the acknowledgements of the dangers and abuse that remained in relative silence in the private home. The horrific tape recording of Lesley Ann-Downey’s final moments provides a chilling glimpse into how vulnerable children could be from physical, sexual, and mortal harm. It also upholds much of what we already know about where corporal punishment is most likely to be found; when Hindley ‘fetched’ Lesley one to keep her quiet for Brady she was using corporal punishment in much the same way that child abusers are known to do: to silence children.

⁴⁹² Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.166.

⁴⁹³ Newson and Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment*, p. 94.

⁴⁹⁴ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.166.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Resistance

The 1960s saw a reluctant, yet at times horrifying, acknowledgement of the abuse that children across Britain were experiencing. Corporal punishment, as we have seen, was an effective – but at times fallible - method of keeping children quiet about their feelings. But by the end of the decade feelings about corporal punishment were thrust onto the mainstream world of light entertainment. The clear societal and institutional divisions that Plowden unearthed on the subject became a fruitful source of documentary inquiry. The *BBC*, for example, allowed the increasingly complex and divisive topic of corporal punishment to be explored by audiences across Britain. Shortly before the Court Lees abuse scandal broke, *BBC2*'s current affairs series *Man Alive* explored the topic of parental use of corporal punishments in the documentary *Six of the Best* (1967). The documentary failed to find anything like a public consensus upon the subject, suggesting, as Plowden would, that Britain remained deeply divided upon the subject. Mary, who had refused to use corporal punishment upon her daughter Lindsey, was shown in the documentary spending significant amounts of time fulfilling her child's needs. This child-centred approach was of inordinate fascination of the camera lens, and just how Lindsey's emotions were managed by Mary without a smack was almost forensically presented to the audience. Lindsey's emotions, wants, and desires largely dictated her mother's daily existence, rather than the rigidity of parent-led control. As Lindsay's mother explained in an interview:

We tell them lots of things, all sorts of things. We tell them 'don't do this, don't do that' and they have to try and make sense of everything we tell them.⁴⁹⁶

Allowing children, the time and space to make sense of the deluge of information that children are exposed to and desire was not a practice that John Ladbury and his wife bought into. As self-confessed disciplinarians with four young children, the Ladbury's regularly beat them with

⁴⁹⁶ *BBC, Man Alive: Six of the Best*, (1967).

canes for a large variety of misdemeanours. Caning, they argued, was an effective deterrent; the gentler approach, such as Mary's with Lindsay, a useless one. When asked if they believed that their use of the cane meant that they were 'strict' parents, the Ladbury's replied:

Mrs Ladbury: Oh yes, we're very strict. I should think we come under the heading of the older discipline...

Mr Ladbury: ...oh I don't know... I...

Mrs Ladbury: ...We do use the cane, we do cane them...

Mr Ladbury: ...oh yes.

Interviewer: For what sort of thing?

Mrs Ladbury: Well when they get... hooliganism. Hooliganism is a thing we can't tolerate.

Interviewer: How hard do you cane them?

Mrs Ladbury: Well it stings. But you know it hurts me more than it hurts them. But they have a little weep and then they're quiet and the next morning it's all forgotten.

Interviewer: Are you sure it's all forgotten?

Mr Ladbury: Well, even if it isn't... so what? (laughs) ⁴⁹⁷

The Ladbury's disciplinarian approach to caning their children couldn't have been further removed from the child-centred approach that Mary had adopted for Lindsay. Lindsey's wants and needs were almost always fulfilled; the Ladbury's children were deemed 'hooligans' for bouncing on the sofa and were physically punished for doing so. The documentary paints a stark picture of methodological and cultural difference in parental approaches to corporal punishment during this period. Parents, such as the Ladbury's, were not oblivious to the 'progressive' methods employed by Mary, they simply resisted them. Mr Ladbury's casual dismissal of his children's feelings and emotional responses to his physical punishment laid bare the key difference in parental approaches; Lesley's emotions were central, the emotions of the Ladbury's children, peripheral.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Children's feelings were, however, about to take central stage. The *BBC's* second documentary about corporal punishment, entitled *Children Thinking: 'Cos it's Naughty* (1968) broke several boundaries, none more so than allowing children to speak about *their* feelings about corporal punishment.⁴⁹⁸ Allowing children to speak about their feelings was the brain child of Joan Bliss. Bliss had, unlike her parents, benefited from tripartism, attending a grammar school, and gaining a place at the University of Geneva studying child development with the psychologist Jean Piaget.⁴⁹⁹ Her training in listening to children was key to the development of the programme. Allowing children's feelings about being corporally punished to permeate through the television sets of Britain and into the homes where such punishments were likely to take place was a bold and significant step for the *BBC* to make. But it was Bliss' desire for the children to speak on their feelings about being punished, rather than focusing on their parent's thoughts on the subject that made the documentary so unique. Bliss asked a group of young girls at play from school:

Joan Bliss: What's the worst kind of punishment?

Girl: A daddy smack.

Joan Bliss: A daddy smack?

Girl: Yeah, not a mummy smack. Well a mummy smack is quite hard but you know what daddies are like.⁵⁰⁰

There is much humour amongst the girls when the topic is discussed, the topic engenders a playfulness and at time embarrassment in the answers that the children gave. A 'daddy smack' gained far more giggles than a 'mummy smack', and the child's qualification that 'you know what daddies are like' seemed both an invite from the girl for Bliss to agree with the statement and an acknowledgement that greater fear of a 'daddy smack' was a generally well established

⁴⁹⁸ BBC, *Children Thinking: 'Cos it's Naughty* (1968).

⁴⁹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/jun/08/joan-bliss-obituary> [Date Accessed: 1st December 2016.]

⁵⁰⁰ BBC, *Children Thinking: 'Cos it's Naughty* (1968).

belief amongst her peers, who giggled along too. Indeed, all of the children shown during the documentary had been smacked.

When Bliss probed children as to how effective corporal punishment was in dissuading them from the behaviours that had gained them the punishment, the children were mixed in their responses. For example, when Bliss asked two brothers if the smacks they received stopped them doing it again:

Joan Bliss: And does it stop you doing it again?

Older boy: No

Younger boy: Yeah, yes it does!

Joan Bliss: It stops you? Does it stop you?

Older boy: No, not so much.

Younger boy: But he gets two smacks if he does it again.⁵⁰¹

Here we can see the complexities of familial disclosure when the children build their narratives together. The older boy insistent that the ‘scrubs’ (as he called a smack) didn’t change his behaviour, whilst his younger sibling insisting that they did, and that he was doubly punished for repeating his behaviour. There is a sense of pride in the older boy’s first dismissal of defeat, and a sense of annoyance when his younger brother discloses the reality of his parents’ practice.

Bliss often allowed children space to develop their feelings about the alternatives to being physically punished. For instance, with another young boy of five she asked a series of questions that asked if his mummy were simply explained clearly why he should not act in a certain way, rather than smacking him, did ‘think that would help’:

Boy: Yes

Joan Bliss: Why?

Boy: I don’t know why.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

- Joan Bliss: Don't you think smacking is as good? Or do you think it would be better to explain to you?
- Boy: I think explaining would be a good way. It would show you why you shouldn't do it. And maybe it would stop you *from* doing it.⁵⁰²

Here Bliss demonstrated that a boy of five was being punished without often understanding why. The issue that Bliss located was that the child had never been asked his opinion upon the matter before. He could articulate clearly to Bliss that an alternative method made sense to him, far more in fact than the system he was experiencing. There is a sadness to Bliss' interview with this boy, and the emotions of the documentary did not go unmissed.

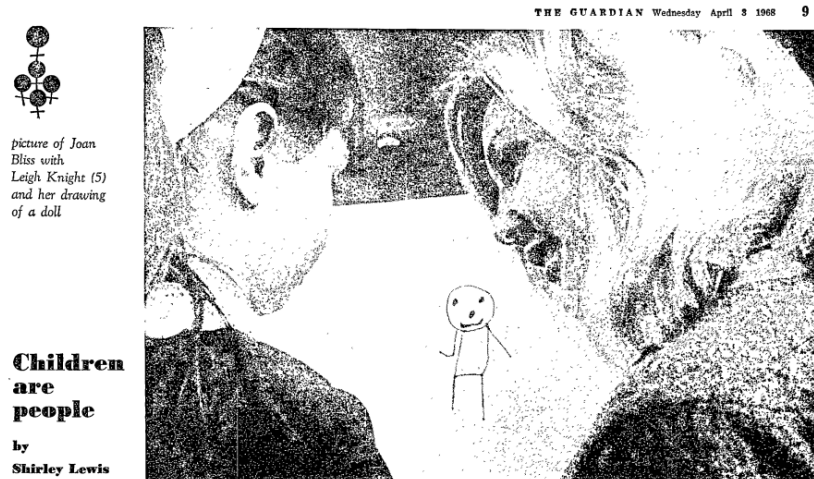


Figure 4.13: *The Guardian*, 3rd April 1968, p.9.

Bliss' *Children Thinking: Cos it's Naughty* had been broadcast on 8th April 1968, two months before the Ford sewing machinist strike of 1968 and one before Mai '68. When Bliss was interviewed by Shirley Lewis about her documentary, she explained that: 'Too many people still look upon their children as creatures to be manipulated for their own convenience.' (Figure 4.13)⁵⁰³ She went on to state that:

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*

⁵⁰³ *The Guardian*, 3rd April 1968, p.9.

Most people think of them as *children*. A separate category entirely. Something you can put out of the way and forget. Parents should take them more seriously so that they can get to understand them more.⁵⁰⁴

The title of Lewis' article was 'Children are people' and Bliss' plea was for parents to accept that their children were people with agency and emotions and that they should engage with them. It is an evocative plea upon the eve of a period of activism that would see women visibly withholding their labour, employing their academic labour toward the discriminatory nature of the Abortion Act which was due for a free vote in the Commons, and youth across Britain, Europe and America demanding revolutionary change.

Below Lewis' article about Bliss in *The Guardian*, Madeleine Simms, who had worked across the 1960s for the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA), wrote an article entitled 'The Bowlby Generation'.⁵⁰⁵ Simms had campaigned tirelessly for change after the role of thalidomide in causing birth defects was established in 1961.⁵⁰⁶ In it she wrote that the 'cousins' of the ALRA, the 'National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospitals, the Association for the Improvement in the Maternity Services, the Pre-School Play Groups' were:

Little remarked upon by the sociologists and the commentators of the swinging London scene, possibly because it is so at odds with everything this scene supposedly represents.⁵⁰⁷

In the article, she deconstructs the demography of the ALRA's membership to demonstrate the scope of its support. Three fifths of the membership were women and two thirds of whom had higher education qualifications.⁵⁰⁸ Over a fifth of ALRA's members were doctors, psychiatrists, nurses, or medical social workers. Nine per cent were teachers, six per cent

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ *The Guardian*, 3rd April 1968, p.9.

⁵⁰⁶ *The Guardian*, 12th October, 2011 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/12/madeleine-simms-obituary> [Date last accessed: 22/11/16].

⁵⁰⁷ *The Guardian*, 3rd April 1968, p.9.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

university lecturers and four per cent social workers.⁵⁰⁹ Simms was demonstrating the weight of academic support for legalised abortion, and that primarily women were putting their weight behind the campaign. She was also academically demonstrating that the ‘extremists’, as the ALRA had been charged as being, were primarily academic in occupation:

Clearly, it is only extremists about good causes who get actively involved in campaigning for them. Or can you feel moderately about anything that you are promoting actively? I can’t.⁵¹⁰

When the Abortion Act eventually came into effect on 27th April 1968 the questioning of whether the act went far enough in terms of giving women choice would permeate the latter half of the twentieth century. Feminisms were challenging the status of women, the role of patriarchy and the status of feelings.

Conclusion: If... (1968)



Figure 4.14: The ‘crucifixion’ flogging in Lindsay Anderson’s *If...* (1968)

On 19th December 1968 Lindsay Anderson’s *If...* was first broadcast to cinema goers across Britain. The film was shot during May of that year, as such and has been long associated with the 1960s countercultures. Anderson’s filming technique was heavily inspired by Jean Vigo’s surrealist style, and the events within the narrative, structured at a private school that employed

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

a similar system of corporal punishment as that of Eton. Anderson shot many of the sequences in both black and white and in colour, and as it had been filmed at Anderson's alma mater, Cheltenham College, for Anderson, this surrealist autobiography was personal.⁵¹¹ At times, it is hard to distinguish Anderson's portrayal of public-school life from the *BBC Eton* documentary of 1964, and this was done intentionally. When the students eventually rioted, and machine gunned down the 'establishment' - the masters, the bishop, the guards, the parents - Anderson wanted the children's revolution to feel real. What had caused the spark of revolution was a 'pop tanning' style flogging of the protagonists of the revolution; their resistance growing from injustice. In what has often been described as a 'crucifixion' scene, the boys are shown ritually and severely flogged by their peers (Figure 4.14). Cut between shots of the boys waiting for their own flogging, shots of the faces of boys who could hear the flogging and the flogging itself, the brutality of Anderson's flogging scene has become legendary. It showed the public nature and brutality of private school punishment, and, despite being released as an X certificate, it inspired children to act.

The children's response to the ritual humiliation was anarchic and bloody revolution; girls and boys manning machine guns and ripping apart the patriarchal system. It was an evocative statement in the wake of the student revolutions across Europe, and somehow chimed with the mood of youth rebellion afoot. Less than a year later, the School's Action Union (SAU) used Anderson's flogging scene on the front of their student journal, *Vanguard*.⁵¹² In their quest to abolish corporal punishment, school uniform, establish school councils and abolish gendered school subjects, the SAU forever changed the debate on corporal punishment in Britain's schools. They also shook the new inhabitant of no. 10 Downing Street, when Edward Heath won a shock election in 1969. The 1960s had brought emotions to the streets to a degree that

⁵¹¹ Sutton, P, *If... Film Guide*, 1st ed. (Taurus & co., 2005), p.67.

⁵¹² Schools Action Union, *Vanguard*, Issue 4.

would characterise the 1970s as a period of militancy and division. Chapter five will explore the communities and cohesion of thought that pervaded the personal politics of that period and ask how children contributed to the struggle to protect their bodies.

At the beginning of the decade resistance could be found in the courts when parents and children refused to accept levels of bodily harm that had been defined illegal. As the decade closed children were themselves arguing that acts, such as caning, should be included in that list of illegal bodily harm. Adults joined them in their quest, and increasingly weaponised their arguments by repeatedly reminding retentionists of the seedy, sexual side of corporal punishment which was increasingly visible in popular culture. Sexual perversion became the thorn in the side of corporal punishment, and the increased exposure of paedophilia in the 1970s only made the sore worse. Yet the stranger remained ominously fixed in the public and political consciousness of child danger, while the private abuses of the familial home would remain comparatively hidden in public discourses – particularly those found in the print media - for years to come.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL?
RESISTANCE, GENDER, AND IDENTITY: 1968 – 1979



Figure 5.1: Still from Pink Floyd's video for *Another Brick in the Wall*, 1979

In November 1979, Pink Floyd's single version of their rock opera *Another Brick In The Wall* was released onto the UK market, selling 340,000 copies in the first three days.⁵¹³ Holding at the poll position, their haunting anti-corporal punishment, anti-establishment anthem stayed on to Christmas number one in the year that Margaret Thatcher came to power and challenged the post-war consensus. It was also the last number one single of the 1970s. The message embedded in the monosyllabic choral chant could not have been clearer: the brutality of the practices of corporal punishment in schools moulded children either into a compliant, unthinking brick wall or into a rebellious collective intent on smashing that wall down. Chanting 'we don't need no education, we don't need no thought control', Floyd's inclusion of a children's chorus placed the children's voice at the centre of the performance; they stood as a collective cry of resistance. The single's secondary music video, with graphic scenes of whipped children compliantly marching into a meat-mincing machine wearing distorted, horrified face masks (Figure 5.1), was rarely shown on television; broadcasters opted rather for the partly animated and more placid first version, which had been rushed through

⁵¹³ Thomson, D, *The Man Behind the Wall*, 1st ed. (Backbeat Books, 2013), p.43.

owing to the unexpected popularity of the track. This cautious approach ensured that the secondary video's school riot scene, where the children smash up and then burn down the school, was exchanged for sweeping shots of more placid playground activity.⁵¹⁴ Despite this visual dilution, the song's message garnered public criticism.

Sixteen-year-old Kevin Ashton wrote to the *Daily Mail*, concerned that Floyd's single 'seems to encourage young people to rebel.' Anxious that teachers 'have an increasing struggle to maintain peace in the classroom' he hoped that 'it is the catchy rhythm and not the lyrics that have appeal to people who buy the record in such large numbers.'⁵¹⁵ The *Daily Mail* ran an expose on the 'progressive' comprehensive, Islington Green, with its 'controversial and trendy' headmistress, who had allowed pupils to record the track during school time, despite having a 'bad academic record.'⁵¹⁶ Conservative opposition chief whip, Mrs Patricia Kirwain, of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), stated that:

It seems very ironical that these words should be sung by children from a school with such a bad academic record. It is scandalous that it should be allowed to happen in school time and it can only lead to other children who hear the record to emulate the attitudes expressed in it. The grammar is appalling.⁵¹⁷

The message of children's liberation espoused in the message of the song was somewhat undermined when the *Mirror* then revealed that the children of Islington Green chorus hadn't been paid for their labour.⁵¹⁸ Their school, however, had been paid a thousand pounds and given a platinum album. Banned from appearing in any of the videos by the school, the children were replaced by others from a local stage school.⁵¹⁹ This, of course, wasn't the first time that anarchy had been linked to corporal punishment in popular culture. As chapters three and four explored,

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.49-52.

⁵¹⁵ *Daily Mail*, 12th January 1980, p.32.

⁵¹⁶ *Daily Mail*, 16th January 1980, p.3.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵¹⁸ *Daily Mirror*, 23rd January 1980, p.11.

⁵¹⁹ Thomson, D, *The Man Behind the Wall*, p.52.

anxieties toward both *Spare the Rod* (1954/1961) and Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1968) had been expressed in response to films which depicted children rioting after excessive corporal punishment. Yet the visible revolt of school children against the cane had arguably already happened in Britain when *Another Brick in the Wall* hit the number one spot.

The tension and anxieties that surrounded *Another Brick in the Wall* – the fear that popular culture could encourage children towards revolutionary or anarchistic activity – were, in part, a reaction to the Children's Liberation Movement that had been grown out of the 1960s liberation movements and which permeated into the counter-cultural liberation movements of the 1970s. Floyd's number one hit had been inspired by Alice Cooper's equally rebellious single *School's Out* from 1972, which also featured a children's chorus, and which proved to be equally as controversial. As Edward Heath took Britain into the Common Market, Britain stood alone as the only flogging nation amongst the union. 1972's *School's Out* sound tracked some of the most visible activities of the Schools Action Union; a children's movement who ran a visible nation-wide campaign against corporal punishment from 1968 until 1974. The Schools Action Union (SAU) were about as revolutionary as the corporal punishment debate got during the twentieth century. As this chapter will demonstrate, their efforts were both fruitful in gaining widespread media attention to the topic of corporal punishment and frustrated by an increasingly hostile government. Part of a growing shift in the expression of subjective feeling within political thought, the SAU embodied and, in many respects, realised the idea that children should participate in their own liberation; that children should gain participatory rights to facilitate their involvement in decision making. This was the era when resistance against corporal punishment became visible; when localised sites of childhood resistance against corporal punishment merged into a collective who then made their resistance public.

This period of activism coincided with and was informed by, the separate adult body of the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP), whose membership of teachers also extended to solicitors, psychiatrists and those engaged more broadly in social work. STOPP grew from a fringe group of like-minded professionals in late 1968 to a prominently featured pressure group of increasing membership by the end of the 1970s. Growing academic study of corporal punishment both informed and was part of the activism, with interdisciplinary academic analysis forming much of the literature produced under STOPP's banner. As the SAU fell apart in much the same manner that other radical liberation movements did, STOPP became the dominant voice against the cane in schools. And yet, as the concluding chapter will demonstrate, corporal punishment would be abolished not in the interest of children's rights, but of parents. *Another Brick in the Wall's* rebellious spell at the number one spot in 1979 was one of the last rallying cries from an era which approached the issue of children's rights very differently to the decade that would follow. 1979 was also the International Year of the Child (IYC), and it marked a watershed moment in the history of children's rights. The focus of activity, as Annie and Bob Franklin argue, veered from educational liberation to the social and welfare arena.⁵²⁰ Focus shifted from participatory rights for children, involving children in their own liberation, to winning rights on behalf of children to protect them. This chapter will ask why.

The 1970s was the decade when the discussion of corporal punishment, for and against, was most visible. It saw unparalleled groupings of movements sympathetic to the anti-corporal punishment stance. Joe Moran rightly warns us against packaging 'decades as entities' for, as this thesis has so far demonstrated, events that demonstrably denote shifts in thought and

⁵²⁰ Franklin, A & Franklin, B, 'Growing Pains: The Developing Children's Rights Movement in the UK' in Pilcher, J & Wagg, S (eds.), *Thatcher's Children?: Politics, Childhood and Society in the 1980s and 1990s*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1996), p.97.

practice in the corporal punishment debate did not coalesce into ‘neat decadal slices’.⁵²¹ Yet as Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton have argued, as the decade is bracketed with the surprise election of Edward Heath at its beginning and the election of Margaret Thatcher at the end, the 1970s has become ‘adjectival and popular shorthand for certain political, economic and cultural characteristics’.⁵²² This chapter marks the election of Heath’s Conservative government as of particular significance to the corporal punishment debate, owing to the unprecedented and extensive efforts it made to suppress the ever-audible voice of the children’s liberation movement. Yet this increasingly public movement against corporal punishment emerged in the wake of the European-wide student campus strikes in May 1968. Chris Warne notes how the student revolt in Paris during May-June of 1968 had marked a shift where French society had:

Moved into a stuttering relationship to its younger members, marked by a series of uncomfortable confrontations when it apparently discovers hitherto unrecognised aspects of their behaviour.⁵²³

As Gillian Whiteley points out, the ‘significance of 1968 sits uneasily in the popular imagination, bound by myth and cliché yet profoundly marked by libationary discourse and revolutionary politics’.⁵²⁴ This chapter will demonstrate how the SAU’s own efforts and those of the intersecting and interrelated movements around them brought to the fore an equally ‘stuttering’ relationship between British society and its youth and did so by directly challenging previously unspoken or unrecognised aspects of school life. For a time, at the beginning of the decade, in the spirit of the 1960s liberation movements, children’s experiences and feelings emerged as a dominant voice in the corporal punishment debate. At the decade’s end, the move

⁵²¹ Moran, J, ‘Decoding the decade’, *Guardian*, 13th November 2009, p.13.

⁵²² Black, L, Pemberton, H & Thane, P (eds), *Reassessing 1970s Britain*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 2013), p.3.

⁵²³ Warne, C, ‘Music, Youth and Moral Panics in France, 1960s to Present’ in *Historia Actual Online*, No. 11 (Otoño, 2006), p.51.

⁵²⁴ Whitely, G, “‘New Age’ Radicalism and Social Imagination’ in Foster, L & Harper, S (eds) *British Culture and Society in the 1970s: The Lost Decade*, 1st ed. (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p.38.

against progressivism had gained broad purchase, and the corporal punishment debate was back in the hands of adults.⁵²⁵

The Children's Rights Movement

The Children's Rights Movement, much like the Women's Liberation Movement and the Gay Liberation Movement who intersected with it, was never a homogenous or centralised entity, and existed outside or between established institutional frameworks. Its common aim was to bring about social change. What was distinctive about this at times disparate movement was the shared belief that children should play a role in their own liberation.⁵²⁶ For example, in 1967, the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) published feminist author/journalist and activist Nan Berger's *The Rights of Children and Young Persons*.⁵²⁷ It forcefully argued that children were being denied fundamental human rights afforded to adults. The arena, she submitted, where these rights were most comprehensively denied was the school.⁵²⁸ Between 1970 and 1971, eight more publications under the collection *Children Have Rights* were published, the first of which was entitled *Children in Schools*.⁵²⁹ It argued that the structure of the education system needed radical reform, from the abolition of corporal punishment to the right of children to organise in school unions. Emerging from this run of publications was the NCCL's first national conference, 'Children's Rights' in October 1971. Although the NCCL advanced the subject of attaining children's rights through a traditional law reformist route, the publications that emerged from this endeavour had a far more revolutionary approach.

The establishment of the *Children's Rights* periodical in the wake of the conference followed an edited collection of the same year. As Nigel Wright's research shows, although

⁵²⁵ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.215.

⁵²⁶ Franklin, A & Franklin, B, 'Growing Pains', p.97.

⁵²⁷ Berger, N, *The Rights of Children and Young Persons*, (NCCL, 1967).

⁵²⁸ Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, 2nd ed. (Open University Press, 1989), p.75.

⁵²⁹ NCCL, *Children in Schools*, (NCCL, 1970).

endorsing the more traditional reformist NCCL approach, it was overwhelmingly focused on the broader role of the child in society.⁵³⁰ It acted as a nexus for many of the key characters in the post-war corporal punishment debate that this thesis has already charted, such as Michael Duane of Rasinghill fame; Leila Berg who had penned the popular study of the demise of Duane's anti-corporal punishment school, and in his last years, the 'father' of progressive, anti-corporal education, A.S. Neill of Summerhill. As has been demonstrated, sex education had been of key concern to these progressive post-war actors, and, in Duane's case, had played a role in his project's demise. *Children's Rights* brought a new dimension to the movement. Nan Berger quoted William Morris in the first edition: 'Children have as much need for a revolution as the proletariat have'.⁵³¹ The abolition of corporal punishment was held as a key vehicle for change, but children's sexualities were also increasingly held as an essential point of liberation. Instead of the traditionally Marxists view that class was the 'root of social problems', *Children's Rights* proffered that 'sexual repression' and 'patriarchy' were:

The sickness inducted into the child is that of our society; anti-sex, anti-life, the giving of greater importance to power and money than to love... The importance of the rights of children is that by recognising them, we will break the chain of continuity.⁵³²

Children's Rights continued to push the boundaries of the confluence of attaining children's rights through sexual liberation: '...the integration of sexuality in the life of persons of any age is one of the major objectives of our fight for the rights of children.'⁵³³ History Workshop held one of its earliest conferences on the theme of 'Children's Liberation' in an attempt to uncover the deeper roots of the children's liberation movement, with Dave Marson giving a paper on 'Children's Strikes in 1911' and Anna Davin sharing research on the 'London Work Girls'.⁵³⁴

⁵³⁰ Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, p.76.

⁵³¹ Berger, N, 'The Child, the Law and the State', in *Children's Rights*, no.1 (NCCL, 1971), p.179.

⁵³² Ollendorf, R, 'The Rights of Adolescents' in *Children's Rights*, no.1 (NCCL, 1971), p.114.

⁵³³ 'Sex and the Teenager' in *Children's Rights*, no. 1 (NCCL, 1971), p.19.

⁵³⁴ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.203.

Education, as Bob and Annie Franklin argues, ‘was the arena in which this drama of rights was enacted; the school was the villain of the piece.’⁵³⁵ Two leading American figures in the *Children’s Rights* circle were Paul Adams, a psychiatric journalist, and John Holt, the author of *How Children Fail* and *The Underachieving School*, which not only attacked mainstream education but advocated ‘the idea that real learning was what went on outside of school altogether.’⁵³⁶ Critically, their influence encouraged *Children’s Rights* to not only address like-minded teachers but to address children themselves.⁵³⁷ Listening to children became seen as a prerequisite of enabling children to liberate themselves. The names of children-led magazines such as *Braindamage*, *Fang*, *Miscarriage* and *Blazer* were soon advertised within its pages.⁵³⁸ Also advertised within its pages was *Vanguard*, the magazine of the London branch of the Schools Action Union. As this chapter will argue, the SAU grew from and informed this environment which centred childhood expression within Children’s Liberation. Yet, as the question of liberating children through sexual liberation took purchase more broadly, and as progressive approaches in institutions came under increased scrutiny, the notion that children existed within, and could be liberated from a single landscape of childhood would be challenged from within the Children’s Rights movement itself.

The School’s Action Union⁵³⁹

The Schools Action Union did not begin from a single moment but grew from a series of sites of localised resistance, some of which were rooted in a broader European context, and

⁵³⁵ Franklin, A & Franklin, B, ‘Growing Pains’, p. 97.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.202.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁸ Holland, P, *Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery*, 1st ed. (I.B Taurus, 2004), p.72.

⁵³⁹ Some sources and arguments from this chapter were published by the current author in Emmerson, O, ‘No To The Cane’ in *Jacobin*, October 2017 <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/10/scotland-corporal-punishment-britain-schools-action-union> [Date last accessed: 31/08/18]

others were in response to specific events and experiences. For example, in March 1968, hundreds of pupils from the Myles Platting Secondary Modern school in Manchester staged a school strike in response to the excessive use of the tawse by teachers.⁵⁴⁰ Soon after, key students from the strike formed the Manchester Union of Secondary Students. This was shortly joined by the Swansea Union of Progressive Students, the Bristol Sixth Form Alliance and the Cardiff Union of Secondary Schools.⁵⁴¹ Fifteen-year-old Tricia Jaffe, who was a founding member of the SAU, was in Paris during the volatile period of civil unrest during May 1968. She had formed a friendship with Jean-Claude Deroubaix and Nicolas Baby of Comites d'Action Lyceens.⁵⁴² When back in England, Tricia was able to draw upon the successes and failures of her fellow comrades and became part of the Free School's Campaign (FSC) in October 1968. She organised the FSC conference in January 1969, where these separate children's movements came together for the first time. With her connection to senior members of the Comites d'Action Lyceens (CAL), the conference sought to bring together children and youths to find common ground between both members of international liberation movements, and those emerging across Britain. In a letter from Jean-Claude Deroubaix to Tricia Jaffe in anticipation of the conference, Deroubaix states:

Let us compare the lessons we have learnt, so that the failures of one can be spared to others, so that the victories of one can give confidence to others, so that the inexperienced do not have to rediscover everything for themselves, so that 'solidarity' between school students will not be an empty word.⁵⁴³

The conference gained much publicity, with extensive Television coverage from ITV's *World in Action*, and a heavy police presence in response to an invasion by members of the National

⁵⁴⁰ Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, p.61.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴² Present Author: Interview with Tricia Jaffe.

⁵⁴³ Private Collection, Letter from Jean-Claude Deroubaix, September 1968.

Front.⁵⁴⁴ Despite these surprising inclusions – the FSC had asked for no press - the conference, after a ‘heated’ session, agreed on a seven-point programme of demands for the future:

1. Freedom of speech and assembly and the right to organise inside schools; no censorship of school magazines, clubs and societies.
2. Effective democratic control of the school by an elected School Council, subject to instant recall, made up of representatives of students and staff.
3. The abolition of exams in their present form.
4. The abolition of corporal punishment and all arbitrary forms of punishment, and of the prefect system.
5. A free, non-segregated (by class, race or sex), comprehensive education system.
6. Educational establishments to become local evening centres of educational and cultural activity and discussion.
7. Full maintenance grants to all receiving full-time education over school-leaving age.⁵⁴⁵

Although the conference had been envisaged as a point of unity between movements, ultimately it proved to divide them. Michael Duane made an impassioned speech to the students at the end of the conference, telling them that ‘you have to decide whether you want education with a little politics, or politics with a little education’.⁵⁴⁶ The FSC chose the former route, choosing to be identified as an apolitical association who eschewed any kind of centralised organisation, and as such lasted less than a year.⁵⁴⁷ Those, then, who chose ‘politics with a bit of education’ formed under the banner of the Schools Action Union.

The SAU’s founding demands were similar but distinct from those briefly shared with the FSC:

- 1 Control of the schools by all students and Staff
- 2 Freedom of speech and assembly (sic)
- 3 The outlawing of corporal punishment
- 4 The abolition of school uniforms

⁵⁴⁴ Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, p.61.

⁵⁴⁵ Private Collection, SAU, ‘Report on Free School Campaign Conference’, 1969.

⁵⁴⁶ Sandiev, R, ‘The Free School Campaign’, p.11.

⁵⁴⁷ Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, p.62.

5 Coeducational comprehensive schools
 6 More pay for teachers.⁵⁴⁸

The SAU, while making some of the shared demands between the movements more concise, added a revealing extra: that of greater remuneration for teachers. The SAU wanted radical change, and unlike the FSC, chose to organise alongside other overtly political movements. It understood that it needed to change teacher's minds and that it needed to gain their solidarity to succeed: 'far from being against our teachers, we want and need the support of most of them against their authoritarian and disciplinarian colleagues and superiors'.⁵⁴⁹ Within its first few months, the children of the SAU organised nationally. When teachers went out on strike, as they did on November 20th, 1969 'London SAU printed and distributed its own leaflets about the teachers strike, and also had a contingent on the demonstration.'⁵⁵⁰ When relationships had been built with local teachers, they were invited to one of the SAU's 'teach-in socials with films', where, for example, on 4th July 1969 the attendees watched:

films on the May revolution and the social struggles in France, the Chicago riots, and the Hornsey Arts College occupation. The films were followed by discussions on education and then Vietnam.⁵⁵¹

At first, the SAU's demonstrations - or 'strikes' as they called them - were predominantly about publicising the organisation and gaining new members, as well as assessing the responses of both children and adults to their central aims. The SAU planned from the offset to be able to raise enough funds to be able to rent a 'place of our own', and at the many local and national meetings in their first year, they devised methods of raising such money. From the establishment of a national and local magazine, *Vanguard* and *Rebel* (the London-branch magazine) at the price of a 3d fortnightly subscription fee, to film nights and

⁵⁴⁸ SAU, *Vanguard*, No.1, 1st January 1969, p.1.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.3.

⁵⁵⁰ SAU, 'Democratic Schools', p.5.

⁵⁵¹ SAU, *Vanguard*, No. 5 (undated) p.6.

‘Guerrilla Theatre’ performances, the children of the SAU raised enough money to obtain office space in North Gower Street, next to Agitprop – the ‘radical information agency’ – and the newly established *Gay News*.⁵⁵² Having a place of their own meant that the students could write, organise and discuss issues with a degree of autonomy that had previously been impossible owing to having been facilitated by the institutions the children wished to challenge or at the behest of parents. Sharing space with a radical printer like Agitprop, who advertised themselves as a ‘communications service for the Left, working to build up distribution channels for pamphlets, news and contacts’, meant that the SAU children came into contact with a broad variety of left-wing groupings.⁵⁵³ Having a radical printer as a neighbour also greatly enhanced their communication possibilities. Whereas the first issue of *Vanguard* had been reproduced from a school copybook, the SAU’s growing relationship with Agitprop gave them access to knowledge about the preparation of artwork from films, such as *If...*, and the ability to litho print future editions (Figure 5.2). It allowed children to use images from popular culture in a new and engaging way, alongside their own political opinions, letters and criticisms.

⁵⁵² Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, p.63.

⁵⁵³ *Marxist Studies*, Vol.2 (1969), p.33.

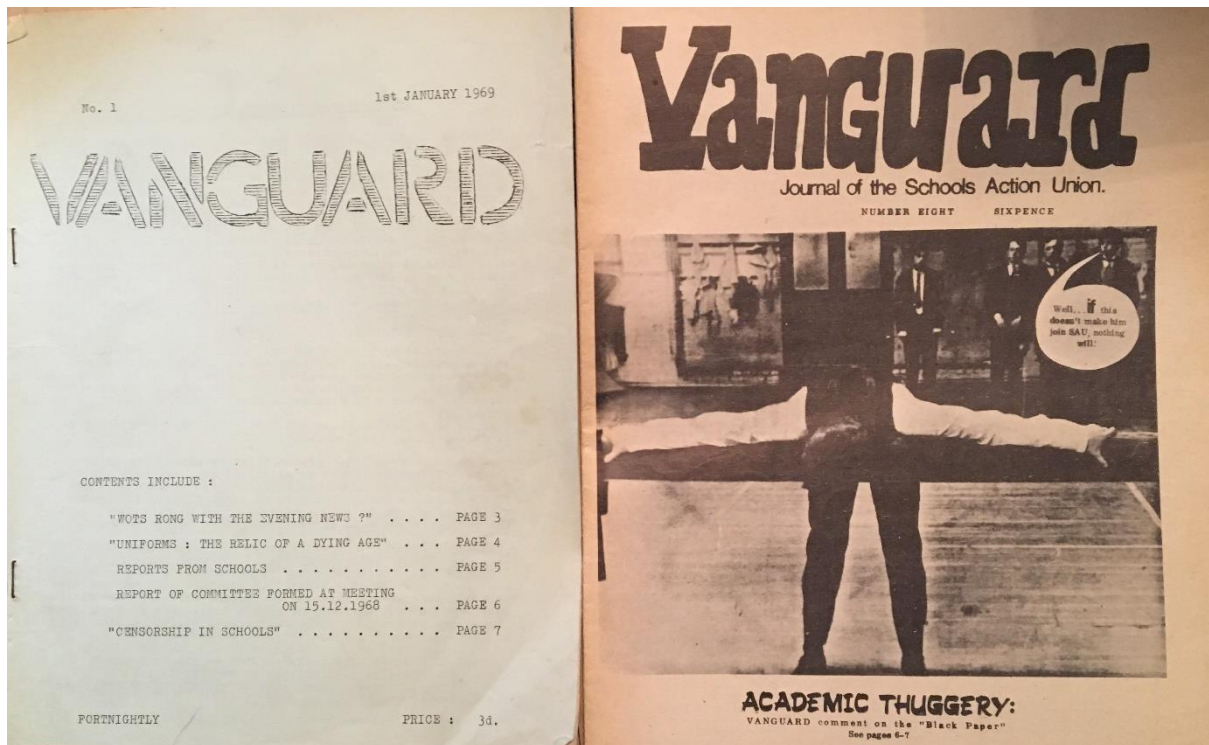


Figure 5.2: *Vanguard*, Vol.1 (left) and *Vanguard*, Vol.8 (right)

By the summer of 1969, the SAU had twenty-seven branches across the country, had held three national conferences (two in Birmingham and one in London), and had held numerous strikes across the country. The Autumn of 1969 was punctuated by a period of further teachers strikes, and the NUT, still as vehemently opposed to the question of the abolition of corporal punishment as they had been when submitting evidence to Plowden, were ‘rather alarmed to find students, carrying the SAU banner, joining their demonstrations.’⁵⁵⁴ Nigel Wright’s research shows that although the SAU had emerged chiefly from secondary modern and comprehensive school protests, those children who were regularly paying subs to the union came predominantly from older school children from a more middle-class background. Many of the high-paying members also came from grammar schools. This trend shifted dramatically as the developing politics of Children’s Rights honed in on the school as a problem of class and not a universally shared experience by all students. When Edward Heath promised in 1969

⁵⁵⁴ Wright, N, *Assessing Radical Education*, p.63.

to ‘end six long years of hard labour’ and to ‘cut down on wild-cat strikes by updating the law on industrial relations’, the SAU gained a significant majority of working-class members.⁵⁵⁵ When Heath defied the pollsters on 19th June 1970 and won the general election with a majority of thirty, the SAU entered arguably its most successful phase.

Nigel Wright’s chapter on the SAU in his 1989 monograph *Assessing Radical Education*, while keenly addressing the changing class relations of the movements gives very little information about the gender relations of the Union. As a young teacher Wright had encountered the Union and, as his introduction details, his chief reason for documenting the history of the student’s movement was a ‘personal one’. Wright considered the student movements as part of a series of personal and political failures.⁵⁵⁶ Ken Livingstone, former Labour London Mayor, who used SAU meetings to recruit members to the Labour Party, was equally dismissive of the SAU in his autobiography, stating that the London branch of the SAU was united only ‘by a loathing for Jack Straw, then president of the National Union of Students’ and believed that ‘Maoism drove most of the SAU members away’. Having picked who he believed were ‘the best of the recruits’ for the Labour Party, Livingstone concluded that the remainder of the SAU ‘split into pro-dope or anti-dope factions and were never heard of again.’⁵⁵⁷ Interviews undertaken for this research, with Tricia Jaffe and Liza Dresner, who joined the SAU in 1970, problematises both Livingstone and Wright’s somewhat dismissive narratives of the Union. Female members of the SAU accounted for well over half of the Union’s membership and played a significant role in shaping and challenging the movement itself. Liza Dresner and Trisha Jaffe locate the substantial time they dedicated to the SAU as a period of significant spatial, emotional, and material change for themselves and for many of the children involved. When Sheila Rowbotham wrote about her relationships with SAU

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.63.

⁵⁵⁷ Livingstone, K, *You Can’t Say That: Memoirs*, 1st ed. (Faber and Faber, 2011), p.112.

members, she fondly remembered a sociable and positive female presence within the Union, and Liza Dresner's perspective as a prominent female member of the Union illuminates how complex and significant the SAU's relationships with other contemporary movements were.⁵⁵⁸

The Second Wave

Liza Dresner was fourteen years old when on Saturday 7th February 1970 her mother placed a *Guardian* article in front of her at breakfast and asked her: 'what are you going to do about that?' The article in question reported that five pupils from Kingsdale comprehensive school in Dulwich were to be permanently expelled for staging a strike during school hours. Three girls aged fifteen and two boys aged thirteen had absented themselves from school in answer to a 'strike call by the Schools Action Union' and were protesting the 'excessive use of corporal punishment'. The parents of the five children appealed to Labour's Secretary of Education, Edward Short, and asked the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) to postpone the expulsion until Mr Short had made his decision. Short's response was brief and precise: 'I have no powers to intervene in the affairs of a particular school'.⁵⁵⁹ With no scope to appeal any higher than the school's governing board, the pupils were advised that their expulsion would stand unless they 'accepted punishments as truants'; that punishment being the cane – the very practice that the children had been protesting against. Refusing to accept the punishments, the children were subsequently expelled from Kingsdale comprehensive. The Kingsdale five were not alone in their refusal to yield to the conditions laid out by educational authorities in response to their direct action against corporal punishment in schools. When thirteen-year-old Kevin Duckhouse was suspended from Dame Elizabeth Cadbury comprehensive school in Birmingham for contributing an article entitled 'Academic Thuggery' to the SAU magazine *Vanguard*, he was told by the headmaster that his reinstatement at the

⁵⁵⁸ Rowbotham, S, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties*, 1st ed. (Verso, 2001), p.216.

⁵⁵⁹ *Guardian*, 7th February 1970, p.5.

school would only be met on the condition that he provide a ‘written undertaking to obey school rules and halt his “disruptive activities”’.⁵⁶⁰ Duckhouse told the *Daily Mirror* that he would ‘not apologise’ and would ask ‘Birmingham education chiefs to move him to another school.’⁵⁶¹ Whilst the press were principally opposed to the activities of the SAU, their continued reporting of their actions played a significant role in recruiting children across Britain to its cause.

Harold Wilson’s manifesto pledge to comprehensively restructure Britain’s secondary education from Attlee’s Tripartite system was significantly challenged by the conservative-held council’s resistance to the recommendary policy, and Heath’s 1970-74 government ensured that the road to comprehensivisation was significantly hampered as considerably more LEA’s operated under Conservative control. It was during this period that Liza describes that the SAU started to ‘take over her life’; but she did not “fit” into the highly gendered structure of the secondary modern system:

I was doing O-level domestic science...girls did biology, boys did chemistry and physics.... I wasn’t very good at school, you know, and I didn’t fit really. I was too argumentative. And so, the School’s Union started to take over my life really which was great. I made a role, I found a place. And it felt like the right place for me because I knew things were wrong in my school. Particularly corporal punishment. I’d never been hit by anyone in my life before then.⁵⁶²

The fact that Liza was never corporally punished by her parents, and that she and her friends were constantly subject to beatings at school played a significant role in her desire to abolish what was alien practice. As Liza immersed herself in SAU activities, however, she soon realised that although the movement she had joined was chiefly made up of children who shared her aims, it was operating in a distinctly gendered way to meet them.

⁵⁶⁰ *Daily Mirror*, 4th November 1970, p.2.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² Present Author: Interview with Liza Dresner.

The considerable labour that went into executing the more practical elements of the SAU was often being carried out by female members, while the boys more occupied at a 'theoretical' level. As Liza remembered: 'I remember being in a room, on the floor painting endless banners while the boys were in the meeting.'⁵⁶³ However, being immersed in the rapidly expanding milieu who intersected through the Agitprop printing community provided girls, such as Liza, with new ideas and new spaces in which to formulate them. Spheres of sisterhood ranged from women working and researching at the LSE who helped the children with the organisation of their conferences, to the women who provided free contraceptive advice at Brook Advisory Centre who offered much-needed shelter, support, and solidarity.⁵⁶⁴ Agitprop printed materials from many different social movements, and in 1970, only months after Liza joined the SAU, it began printing pamphlets and periodicals for the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), who held their first national conference in Oxford that year. From the famous Ford machinist strike in 1968, the twenty-thousand strong marches of the Leeds clothing workers strike of February 1970 to the very public Miss World protests in November of 1970, women's activism had commanded significant media attention and criticism. Influenced by her relationships with members of the WLM, she established a role as SAU spokesperson, and sought to re-shape how the SAU approached the media. *Vanguard* began recommending key feminist texts to its readers, such as *Women's Liberation and the New Politics*, *Bread and Roses*, and *Psychology Constructs and the Female*, all of which were being printed through Agitprop.⁵⁶⁵ Within this relationship, Liza began to challenge the often overt misogyny that existed within the SAU. For example, when Tariq Ali called Liza 'honey' when she refused to move aside for him on a staircase to give him precedence, she knew it was 'about male/female' status and directly challenged him.⁵⁶⁶ Liza locates her relationship with

⁵⁶³ Present Author: Interview with Liza Dresner.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁵ SAU, *Vanguard*, Issue No.8, p.12.

⁵⁶⁶ Present Author: Interview with Liza Dresner.

women engaged in feminist politics as fundamental in shaping her increasing management of gender politics within the movement: ‘they treated me as an equal, and listened to what I had to say, and gave me answers to things I was confused about’.⁵⁶⁷ How the SAU intersected with other organisations such as the WLM and later the GLF, helped the children of the SAU to better organise, and overwhelmingly these movements did so on the SAU’s own terms; the children’s own personal subjectivities appear to have continued throughout this period to underpin their political arguments against physical punishment.

Controlling the message that the media would broadcast was not always easy, but with advice from her ‘comrades in the WLM’, Liza garnered significant media attention for the SAU during the tumultuous summer of 1972. As unemployment exceeded a million for the first time since the 1930s, and two states of emergencies followed the Miners and Dockers strikes, the SAU began to become a regular feature of both local and national news. The idea that the SAU was ‘controlled’ by hidden adult activists was a consistent point of media interest. Liza Dresner, acting in her role as spokesperson for the SAU was repeatedly questioned on national television as to who the adults were that were influencing the children’s movement. When Independent Television News (ITN) interviewed Liza Dresner in her parents’ house in the wake of the SAU’s London demonstration on 17th May 1972, she was repeatedly questioned as to who was influencing the union. Robert Kee asked, ‘isn’t it true that there are grown-up’s, not school children, in the organisation who are influencing it all?’, to which Liza responded:

No, absolutely not. I mean, we accept advice from anybody, people who respect us we respect. There’s no person pulling strings, paying us. I wish someone was, we haven’t got any money! We’re just working, we’re school students who are fighting for revolutionary change.⁵⁶⁸

Similarly, when Dresner was invited onto David Frost’s primetime show, *The Frost Programme*, Frost asked again if ‘adults were really running the show’, and asked if ‘Russia

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁸ *ITN*, 18th May 1972.

was providing money to fund' the SAU.⁵⁶⁹ Whereas she had been mildly entertained by ITN's news slot, she remarked that the experience had been quite different on Frost's show: 'I was terrified, they were very unpleasant.'⁵⁷⁰ Perhaps aware of her discomfort, and in response to announcing how little money the SAU had, the Actor Colin Welland, who had played the more placid teacher in the film *Kes* (1969), and who was also on Frost's show, afterwards wrote the SAU a large cheque which paid a large chunk of their rent.⁵⁷¹ Liza's ability to negotiate the very adult and particularly masculinist realm of television provided a level of exposure that had previously been impossible. Her negotiation of this adult arena despite the discomfort proved to be particularly fruitful and ensured that subsequent demonstrations numbered not hundreds, but thousands during this volatile period of social unrest.

Many SAU children, including Liza, travelled independently to new cities, met different classes of children as grammar schools joined the union, and experienced the privilege of space which other children enjoyed. These independent experiences significantly challenged the aims and objectives of the Union. With such a broad National base to learn from and experience, Liza at just fourteen regularly hitchhiked North from London to Birmingham and Manchester to engage in person with fellow members where she:

met just every sort of person. And that was really exciting because we all tend to move in very small networks. And to discover suddenly there were other types of people out there. I was up and down; I was literally hitching lifts every week.⁵⁷²

If experiencing life outside her local spatial environment was a positive and transformative experience, so too was experiencing the unknown spaces and material privileges of more local and exclusive spaces to home, such as Grammar schools. When Liza decided to attend the local

⁵⁶⁹ *BBC*, 20th May 1972.

⁵⁷⁰ Present Author, Interview with Liza Dresner.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*

Grammar School with the intention of recruiting further members she was ‘outraged’ by the comparative privilege of space that her contemporaries enjoyed:

I was just outraged by the unfairness. And then of course I started to meet people in new schools that were *so* different from mine. More different than I could ever imagine. I’d never even been to my local grammar school. I had no idea. We had *so little* in the way of power actually. We had bus passes, we had telephone boxes. It’s very difficult to organise a revolution using bus passes and telephone boxes.⁵⁷³

There is something quite profound about the way that Liza relates the outrage she felt at witnessing the material inequalities inherent in the educational system to the comparatively meagre bus passes which facilitated the SAU’s political aims. Liza’s sense of victory stands in stark contrast to the aforementioned narratives composed by men that chart an overwhelming sense of failure of the movement. I would suggest that this discord is a result of the differing objectives of the children involved that were often defined by gender. While the SAU were united by demanding more power for children, the victories felt by Liza were founded upon an imbalance of gender power relations that existed and that were challenged during this period. As Liza surmised ‘there are powerful women around me now; there weren’t when I started on my journey, and for me that’s my history. And you know that gives me power.’⁵⁷⁴

There is an overwhelming sense of enthusiasm and achievement within the minutes of branch meetings and within their own publications. In the wake of a targeted SAU campaign throughout 1971, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) defied pressure from the teaching unions and announced that by 1974, corporal punishment would be banned in all inner-London primary schools, a move that was claimed as a clear victory within the pages of *Vanguard*.⁵⁷⁵ When Alice Cooper’s *School’s Out* hit the number one spot in July of 1972, twenty or more SAU kids were given tickets to hear the track played live on *Top of the Pops*

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁵ SAU, *Vanguard*, Vol. 11, p.2.

following a demonstration. The episode was so riotous that it drew the attention of Mary Whitehouse who complained to the BBC of:

the gravest concern over the publicity which has been given to Alice Cooper's record 'School's Out'. For weeks now 'Top of the Pops' has given gratuitous publicity to a record which can only be described as anti-law and order. Because of this millions of young people are now imbibing a philosophy of violence and anarchy. This is surely utterly irresponsible in a social climate which grows ever more violent.⁵⁷⁶

Whitehouse wasn't alone in her fear that the children of the SAU were getting out of control. The SAU understood the impact of direct action, particularly if that action resulted in media coverage and an opportunity to have their say on air. When the SAU called scores of children to the streets, such as in March 1969 and May 1972 when numbers were nearing ten thousand, they were met with a large, co-ordinated police presence, who often picked out key SAU persons at points of tension, and who were never afraid to flex their muscles in front of the press.



Figure 5.3: SAU demonstration and arrest, 17th May 1972 (left, private collection) and *The Sun*, 18th May, 1972 (right)

⁵⁷⁶ Mary Whitehouse to Mr. Cotton, 21st August 1972, cited in Thompson, B, *Ban This Filth!: Letters from the Mary Whitehouse Archive*, 1st ed. (Faber and Faber, 2012), p.74.

The children who skipped school and joined the SAU's marches often did so at a great personal cost. Some children were arrested, many were sent on seemingly endless marches away from each other, achieved by police diversions. A flyer from the SAU strike on Friday 26th May 1972 demonstrates how external pressures had shifted the movement's demands. The strike was held in response to the policing of an earlier demonstration on Wednesday 17th May, and the ultimately unsuccessful appeal of Max Hunt on Thursday 18th May, where key SAU members were called to give testimony that Hunt had not assaulted two police officers at the protest against the Industrial Relations Bill at Wood Green in London. Hunt had been convicted at Tottenham for insulting behaviour (supposedly chanting 'kill the pigs') and for assaulting police. The *Daily Mail* had run an expose on Hunt and the SAU on the day of the May 17th March, naming Hunt as the 'mastermind' behind the SAU. Hunt used the witness box to confirm that whilst he was involved in the activities, it was 'not correct that he was the organisation's master-mind'.⁵⁷⁷ Both Liza Dresner and Simon Steyne denied that Hunt had struck an officer. Dresner declared that she regarded the 'police as tools of the ruling class' whereas Steyne said that 'as far as I can see he did nothing wrong legally. The only thing is that he is a Communist – and that is a crime in this country.'⁵⁷⁸ As Figure 5.3 shows, SAU children's arrests on 7th May were particularly rough ordeals, and as pictures of arrests appeared on the front pages of national newspapers like *The Sun*, the children were exposed to particularly public scrutiny.

The SAU's first demand had now changed to 'no victimisations – reinstate all suspended school children', a reflection of the pressures children faced when disobeying truancy rules to march with the SAU. It also demanded that 'the police drop all trumped up charges against our militants! We demand an end to all police brutality and harassment.'⁵⁷⁹ The

⁵⁷⁷ *Daily Mail*, Friday 19th May 1972, p.9.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ SAU, Flyer, 'Strike: Schools must SERVE the PEOPLE', Friday 26th May 1972.

external pressures that members of the SAU were experiencing in both their own direct action and in the direct action of those who intersected with the children's movements were shaping their aims and objectives. The cost was public scrutiny and both public and private consequences. The fact that the SAU now called for the reinstatement of suspended students tells us that children were facing public consequences of truancy. Newspaper scrutiny suggests that children were also facing private consequences too.

Positioned below the article on Max Hunt's appeal was an article entitled 'Parent Power' strikes a blow.' Mr Caldwell, the headmaster of Holloway Comprehensive, wrote letters to the parents of all of the thirty-six children from his school who had attended the demonstration. He said that the next day it was 'obvious the parents had a thing or two to say, and a few backsides had felt the benefit of their wisdom.'⁵⁸⁰ Despite parental intervention, sixteen of the thirty-six pupils were suspended for adhering to their unions strike. Headmaster Crispin of Peckham Manor School confirmed that seventy of his pupils had attended the SAU strike and stated that 'we spoke to a number of them today, but parents had already taken action.'⁵⁸¹ The SAUs fluctuating membership was certainly shaped by the external public and private pressures on the children who took up the SAU cause, and the likelihood of both educational and domestic repercussions for direct action meant that resistance came at a cost. The fact that that cost could be the very action that the children were protesting either galvanised member's position or pressured them out of the direct action. Another outward pressure that the SAU faced, of infiltration, has only recently been possible to prove. Although the children were unable to evidence their suspicions, they were public about their belief that the government was monitoring their cause. Recently opened files show that the children were right.

⁵⁸⁰ *Daily Mail*, Friday 19th May 1972, p.9.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Conspiracy, Obscenity, and Infiltration.

While Labour's Edward Short was clearly concerned about the activities of the SAU, it was Prime Minister Edward Heath's government who employed the security services to infiltrate, monitor and to uncover an 'adult puppet-master' within the SAU. Recently opened files provide a fascinating insight into the paranoid climate of No. 10 during the Heath Government and, crucially, it gives us another perspective of the intersecting counter-cultural movements which interconnected with the SAU. Covert surveillance commenced in late 1970 and continued throughout Heath's term as Prime Minister. Heath was presented with a dossier of information about the SAU shortly after the demonstration on 17th May, having requested detailed information about the event on 16th, the day before.⁵⁸² His concern was that 'when a similar development occurred in France in 1968, it caused a good many problems and proved very difficult to get under control.' Heath asked for 'special attention at particular schools, to try to isolate the ringleaders of the militancy.'⁵⁸³ Of particular concern was the prospect that working-class children were becoming radicalised. The documents show that Margaret Thatcher, then Education Secretary, seemed reassured when a report by a serviceman who had infiltrated an SAU meeting suggested that: 'The leaders spoke with Cockney accents and spoke illogically. It seemed there were a number of middle-class kids who were dressing badly to look working class.'⁵⁸⁴

The security services dossier, presented to Heath and Thatcher, provides a detailed analysis of how they believed the SAU had been infiltrated by radical adults. One of the movements close to the SAU was the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) who had been established in Britain the wake of the Stonewall Riots in America and had formed in 1971. Initially meeting

⁵⁸² ED 207/125 Letter from Robert Armstrong to P.H. Halsey, 16th May 1972.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁴ ED 207/125

through the Agitprop hub, Liza regularly went with her SAU comrades to what they called ‘the GLF house’ (above the Agitprop bookshop) in Muswell Hill. Liza remembered ‘the acceptance of everyone who came in the door... it was just fantastic. And a lot of them were very young and got involved with us, so there was a lot of reciprocity.’⁵⁸⁵ The exchange was not just intellectual but also extended to the material. The GLF partly-funded the costs for the SAU to reproduce its journals at Agitprop which, as Liza explained was, by 1971 being ‘raided all the time by the police’. Heath’s Government’s surveillance of the SAU fits into a broader movement to break up predominantly working-class self-organisation during the early 1970s that Lucy Robinson charts in her research into the GLF and the Angry Brigade during this period.⁵⁸⁶ Whilst the surveillance files of the SAU reinforce Liza’s mapping of the Union’s intersections with the major self-organising adult groups, they ultimately never pinpointed the desired adult puppet master which they were intended to locate. Adults were undeniably influential in challenging the SAU’s at times unbalanced codes of practice. Yet children’s own objectives and their subjective understanding of and reasonings for them remained the overwhelming drive of those who organised the union. Somewhat perversely then the only identifiable body which clearly and actively infiltrated the SAU’s activities was Heath’s government. The SAU’s connections to the wider counter-culture, uncovered by Heath, and the measures taken to suppress them during the many obscenity trials of the decade began to split the movement into opposing directions.

The Little Red Schoolbook

The Little Red Schoolbook (LRSB) was first advertised in March 1971 in a quarter-page advertisement in *Bookseller*, promoting the book as ‘a practical education manual for

⁵⁸⁵ Present Author: Interview with Liza Dresner.

⁵⁸⁶ See Robinson, L ‘Carnival of the Oppressed: The Angry Brigade and the Gay Liberation Front’ in *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History*, Issue 6, 2003.

schoolchildren from 12'.⁵⁸⁷ It added that the Danish *Den Lille Røde Bog For Skoleelever* (1969) had not only been translated but had been 'completely re-written to suit British conditions' by 'teachers and pupils' who had been recruited by the editor, Stage 1, for the purpose.⁵⁸⁸ Revisions to the Danish original were substantial, and as David Limond's research reveals, over twenty additional UK-specific pages were added to the UK text.⁵⁸⁹ The most controversial chapters of the original text - those on sex and drugs - were substantively the same in the UK edition. What was most obviously different in the UK context were that of religious education, the eleven plus examination and information about the difference between public and private educational settings. The UK LRSB also made direct links to the National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL), the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), the SAU and STOPP. It appears that a considerable amount of time and effort was made on the part of Stage 1 to give children information about new contemporary political ideas and issues and to provide children with the name and address of the movements currently challenging them. In this sense, the LRSB emerged as a nexus of contemporary thought on the many differing subjects that were emerging at this point in terms of children's rights and liberation. Giving information on a broad array of topics, including the current structures of education, how to make a complaint about teachers, the issue of corporal punishment and its abolition, sex, drugs and the role the school played in society, the LRSB's publication in the UK in 1971 provided children with a framework by which children could challenge existing social mores.⁵⁹⁰ If the LRSB acted as a nexus of contemporary counter-cultural ideas about children's rights, Mary Whitehouse emerged as the focus for those who wished to hold back the tide of its seemingly radical potential.

⁵⁸⁷ *Bookseller*. Advertisement. March 27th 1971, p.1686.

⁵⁸⁸ Limond, D, 'The UK edition of The Little Red Schoolbook: a paper tiger reflects' in *Sex Education*, 12:5 (2012), p.525.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁹⁰ Hansen, S & Jensen, J, *The Little Red Schoolbook*, Trans. Thornbury, B. 1st ed. (Stage1, 1971).

The LRSB's section on corporal punishment challenged the practice in a number of different ways. It told children how the education system worked and how the system worked against them. Moreover, it told children that the system was damaging and defunct, and that studies had demonstrated this for some time. Parents and teachers were the stubborn or ignorant upholders of an outmoded and harmful custom:

The best way of teaching is to use encouragement and rewards, not punishments. Psychologists discovered this a long time ago. But not all teachers and parents have discovered it yet.⁵⁹¹

LRSB explained to children the premise of *in loco parentis* and explained that there was no 'law' on corporal punishment, only the direction from 1956 that all punishments should be recorded in a punishment book, which should be kept for three years and should be open for inspection. It explained that because there was no 'established definition of what "improper or excessive"' punishment actually meant, few cases were consequently brought before the courts where teachers or parents were prosecuted for doing just that.⁵⁹² Moreover, it told children that because regulation of corporal punishment was decided at Local Education Authority level, the rules on 'maximum length and thickness of canes', who was entitled to punish, and how were inherently 'unjust' because children were being disciplined in such a varied manner across Britain.⁵⁹³ Under the heading '*Should it be abolished?*', the LRSB gave a resounding yes:

Corporal punishment in schools is obsolete and should be abolished. It's been abolished in British prisons and in the army and navy. It's been abolished in schools in most other Western countries. Why is it still used in most British schools? ⁵⁹⁴

The answer was that 'most parents and teachers still support the use of corporal punishment, both in school and out.' It argued that parents and educators were simply enacting what had

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.62.

⁵⁹² *Ibid*, pp.62-63.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid*, pp.64-65.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.65.

been done to them, and by refusing to listen to those in authority, in this sense were still treating children ‘as they would treat a dog which “misbehaved” on a carpet.’⁵⁹⁵ What parents and teachers were either refusing to accept or were ignorant of was the potential for corporal punishment to not only physically but psychologically damage children. ‘Studies’, the LRSB claimed, demonstrated that ‘corporal punishment can do serious harm to disturbed, backward or mentally handicapped children. Yet it is most frequently used on precisely these children.’⁵⁹⁶

More broadly, the LRSB argued that corporal punishment was an oppressive barrier between classes:

In many schools, working-class children resent the middle-class attitudes of the teachers. They feel the school wants them to “talk posh” and to adopt middle-class standards of behaviour that are foreign to them... Instead of trying to understand them and talk to them, the school tries to beat it out of them, literally. This just makes the children more resentful, more difficult to communicate with. And it widens the gap between “them” and “us”.⁵⁹⁷

Moreover, it told children that psychological thought concurred and that the Plowden Report’s recommendations which upheld that corporal punishment is ‘ineffective in precisely those cases in which its use is most hotly defended.’⁵⁹⁸ The LRSB famously stated that ‘all parents are paper tigers’, its only real connection to Mao’s *Little Red Book*.⁵⁹⁹ By telling children that their teachers and parents were simply ignoring a burgeoning consensus against corporal punishment, or were ignorant of it, they were asking children to evaluate how thin (or thick) their ‘paper tiger’ parents really were.

The LRSB acted not just as a source of information on the subject of corporal punishment but also provided information that enabled children to challenge its use better. It

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.66-67.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.67.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

reassured that ‘some parents and teachers are against corporal punishment, and more and more organisations are starting to campaign against it.’⁶⁰⁰ It listed STOPP and the SAU as the apex of this burgeoning move against the cane and noted that although there was a ‘lot of ignorance and lazy thinking to be fought before they win... corporal punishment will eventually be banned in Britain.’⁶⁰¹ It advised children that if they were hit ‘brutally’ they should make a formal complaint, providing them with a template letter.⁶⁰² If this proved to be ineffectual, the LRSB pressed children to take the matter further:

Be prepared to take your case to a higher authority or to the press if necessary. Don’t let yourself be intimidated by any threats if you are in the right... you shouldn’t put up with continued bad or unfair treatment. You’re told often enough about your duties. Remember that you have rights too.⁶⁰³

Although the LRSB indicated that adults were in the process of establishing children’s rights in terms of banning physical punishment in schools, it made clear that the children themselves had a significant role to play in the process:

Every little thing you change in school may have results in society. Every little thing you change in society may have consequences in school. Work for change always starts with you. The struggle is carried on by many different people in many different places. But it is the same struggle.⁶⁰⁴

By laying down the limits of the existing law, the LRSB showed children where they had an existing right to protection in law. By compelling them to peruse such cases, the LRSB invited children to challenge current boundaries; to play a role in reshaping children’s rights through individual experiences.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.67.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.66.

⁶⁰² *Ibid*, p.54.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid*, p.71.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p.207.

It was the frank discussion of sex and drugs that was the focus of much of the criticism that befell the LRSB's publication. Now seen as one of the first examples of a 'harm reduction' approach to the question of sex and drugs education - by neither condemning nor condoning the practice, but seeking to mitigate any potentially harmful effects - social purity campaigners, such as Mary Whitehouse saw only a 'political and revolutionary primer.'⁶⁰⁵ Whitehouse argued in a letter to the *Spectator* that the LRSB attempted to strip away the 'fundamental right of a child to be a child' stating that it was 'the duty of mature people to ensure that childhood is protected against the inroads of those who would exploit its immaturity for political, social or personal gain.'⁶⁰⁶ The *Times* was apt to agree:

A short, cheap, clear, informative compendium of facts and ideas about education, sex, drugs &c (sic) designed to arm left-wing school children in the generation struggle against grown-ups, who are dismissed as "paper tigers."⁶⁰⁷

Whitehouse had known about the publication of the LRSB for some time, before its publication had been announced, and reported the fact to the Director of Public Prosecutions in March 1971, who declined to intervene stating that private prosecutions could not be brought on such grounds.⁶⁰⁸ Turning then to the police, the Stage1 offices were raided on 31st March, and a thousand copies of the LRSB were seized (approximately 19,000 copies had been previously moved by the publisher and secreted).⁶⁰⁹ Tried in June of 1971, the LRSB was charged under obscenity laws for failing to mention the age of consent and their use of sexually explicit language.⁶¹⁰ John Mortimer QC acted as defence counsel, and witnesses such as the psychologist James Hemming, argued that:

⁶⁰⁵ Whitehouse, M, *Quite Contrary: An Autobiography*, 1st ed. (Pan, 1993), p.41.

⁶⁰⁶ *The Spectator*, 6 August 1971, p.23 (<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/7th-august-1971/23/little-red-school-book> [Date last accessed: 12/02/17]).

⁶⁰⁷ *Times Literary Supplement* Review. 2nd April 1971, p. 373.

⁶⁰⁸ Limond, D, 'The UK edition of The Little Red Schoolbook', p.527.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.528.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid*.

adolescents are forced to lead a double life. School demands much of their attention, but has little relevance to their inner world of personal struggle ... the arts of association and friendship, coming to terms with the other sex and personal sexuality.⁶¹¹

Yet arguing that the LRSB was, in essence, providing guidance for the more ‘personal struggles’ where schools were failing to do so did not assuage the primary concern in the law of the language by which such guidance was being provided. Banning the LRSB had been sought primarily because of its revolutionary potential, and yet, in reality, it was banned for what it *didn’t* say in regard to consent laws and for *how* it approached the topic of sex.

Although Mary Whitehouse was never called to the stand, she attended court daily and was emboldened by her eventual victory. Stage 1 publishers lost their case and were fined a nominal sum but suffered considerably more financially through legal costs and loss of sales. In many ways, Whitehouse had orchestrated the banning of the LRSB. She had understood its revolutionary potential but equally had learnt from her ‘Cleanup TV Campaign’ that in legal terms, language was the most efficient method by which to censure such publications. Although the LRSB was banned in its current form, Tony McEnery rightly questions Mary Whitehouse’s overwhelming sense of victory over the banning of the LRSB.⁶¹² Within a matter of months, the revised edition of the LRSB was available across the country, and a considerable number of the thousands of forbidden first editions secreted from the police were illegally distributed by organisations such as the SAU. Fundamentally the second edition was the same book, with added information about consent. Before the LRSB trial had begun, the writer/broadcaster life peer Baroness Stocks had counselled that although she concurred that the LRSB was ‘subversive of discipline and authority’ she had warned that a ban might ‘make it an undercover best-seller’, an outcome she maintained, would be ‘regrettable’.⁶¹³ In many ways, with the

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹² McEnery, T, *Swearing in English: Bad Language, Purity and Power from 1586 to the Present*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2009), p.126.

⁶¹³ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, volume CCCXVI, 21 April 1971, columns 640–689 and 701.

added publicity boosting sales and adding currency to the banned copies, her fears had been justified. Moreover, the accumulative effect of the substantial number of ‘social purity’ moves against such counter-cultural materials, particularly publications which challenged children’s rights, was to provide perhaps the only certain point of solidarity between these often-contradictory movements. If Whitehouse saw the potential for revolutionary kids as a result of reading the *LRSB*, then *SchoolKids Oz*, a special edition of the popular counter-cultural magazine edited by teenagers, must have seemed like evidence of that potential.

The Trials of Oz

SchoolKids Oz (May 1971) was the twenty-eighth edition of the underground magazine and was put together, in great part, by teenagers between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. Most of the special edition contained writing by children on the topic of school, exams, music, drug use and corporal punishment. *Oz* magazine had been established in 1967, a year after the publication of Britain’s counter-cultural magazine *IT*. *Oz*’s special editions in the past had been closely tied to the liberation movements, with magazines edited by gay men and women from the women’s liberation movement. *IT*, *Oz* and comic books such as *Nasty Tales* were all subject to prosecutions during the early 1970s. *Oz*, like many other contemporary counter-cultural publications, attempted to ‘blend art and politics in a new way’, and *Oz*’s unique visual orientation held it apart from other such examples. As Lucy Robinson argues, all three publications ensured that the body - what could be ‘put into it’ and what could be done to it - ‘became the political stage’.⁶¹⁴

IT magazine had been targeted in late 1969 because of its publication of homosexual adverts within its pages. As Robinson reveals, the publication of homosexual adverts was about as immersed as the magazine got in terms of reflecting upon the relationship between

⁶¹⁴ Robinson, L, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain: How the Personal Got Political*, 1st ed. (Manchester University Press, 2007), p.54.

homosexuality, the counter-culture, and the left, but its involvement proved to be enough to close the publication down.⁶¹⁵ *Nasty Tales*' prosecution in the same year proved to be a resounding victory for the counter-culture, with the comic book's charges of obscenity quashed shortly after *IT*'s prosecution. In the wake of the successful prosecution of the LRSB, the 'Trials of Oz', as the *Schoolkids Oz* trial became known, emerged as the longest obscenity trial in British history, sitting from June to 5th August 1971. The specific charge, 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals', differed to that levied against the LRSB in that it potentially carried the maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The archaic charge and the potential severity of the outcome made only more electric the proceedings. The employment of John Mortimer, QC, who had unsuccessfully defended the LRSB, provided further continuity to what was being identified as a wholesale attack on both the children's rights movement and the counter-culture more broadly.

The charges read out on the first day of the proceedings stated that the defendants had been accused of:

Conspiring with certain other young persons to produce a magazine containing obscene, lewd, indecent, and sexually perverted articles, cartoons, and drawings with intent to debauch and corrupt the morals of children and other young persons and to arouse and implant in their minds lustful and perverted ideas.⁶¹⁶

The prosecution further stipulated that 'it deals with homosexuality, lesbianism, sadism, perverted sexual practices and drug taking.'⁶¹⁷ John Mortimer famously read out the illustrious names of those who subscribed to *Oz*, upholding the defendant's assertions that although the edition had been created by children, the magazine was intended for an adult audience. Sex would perforate through much of the proceedings. Particular emphasis was placed on the

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ *The Times*, 23rd June 1971, p.3.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Rupert the Bear cartoon strip, created by an SAU member Vivian Berger, where the iconic bear's head had been pasted onto a graphic pornographic cartoon.⁶¹⁸ The ill-fated former headmaster of Risinghill Comprehensive, Michael Duane, was called for the defence, and was repeatedly questioned as to his involvement of the SAU, and compelled to answer if the SAU were actively trying to abolish teachers and headmasters.⁶¹⁹ Duane refuted the claims made by the prosecution that the SAU wanted to tear down existing structures, rather, they wanted involvement in that structure:

They want participation in the existing and the present structure. They want obviously the abolition of such things as corporal punishment but in terms of the actual syllabus and curriculum of the school they want to be consulted much more effectively about what shall happen and how they shall learn themselves, but they want consultation, not control.⁶²⁰

One of the submissions to the *SchoolKids Oz* edition was made by another, anonymised member of the SAU. Entitled 'Schools Action Union Miscarriage' the anonymised article conveyed how the reality of the external pressures on the movement, from teachers and parents, were stifling any revolutionary potential the movement had:

It was easy to leave the meetings full of enthusiasm, prepared to face anything for our rights, but once back in the very sober atmosphere of school, we'd find ourselves holding back... it didn't take us long to discover even a mass revolt has ringleaders to be victimised, and who were going to be the ringleaders?⁶²¹

It conceded that the price of resistance was simply too high for most kids; 'martyrs' were dissuaded by the need to pass exams. It is an extraordinary account of the bitterness and overwhelming sense of defeat that could be experienced by those children who expected to be heard far more effortlessly than they had. As a cautionary tale to anyone who wished to engage

⁶¹⁸ *Schoolkids Oz*, *Oz*, No.28, (May 1970) p.15.

⁶¹⁹ J 82/1936: *Oz Obscenity Trial*: Transcript Volumes 7 – 8.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶²¹ Anonymous, *Schoolkids Oz*, p.13.

in social movements, ending with ‘don’t get burnt’, it also served as an admonishment to the reader, reminding them that the SAU had often ‘stood defenceless’ for their beliefs, and had suffered for it. It is perhaps the best evidence that at least this author understood that they were writing not for children but for adult readers.



Figure 5.4: *Schoolkids Oz*, Vol. 28, p.11.

Images that connected corporal punishment to scenes of sexual gratification on behalf of the teacher ran throughout the *Schoolkids Oz* edition, with one sketch showing school masters caning each other’s bare buttocks drawing particular interest from the prosecution (Figure 5.4).⁶²² Another cartoon showed a smoking teacher masturbating whilst fondling a child, who was then vomiting in his bag of sweets.⁶²³ It was this graphic and violent theme depicting sexual violence that sealed *Schoolkids Oz*’s fate; all three defendants being found guilty not of conspiracy, as had been charged, but of obscenity. The fallout of the *Oz* verdict brought significant media attention to the children caught up in the editing process and, as was the case with the earlier trial of the *LRSB*, drew media attention to the movements closely connected to *Oz*, including the SAU. With continued media scrutiny during the final months

⁶²²See: J 82/1936: *Oz* Obscenity Trial: Transcript Volumes 7 - 8 and, *Schoolkids Oz*, p.11.

⁶²³ *Schoolkids Oz*, p.10.

of its existence, a period of self-reflection, where numerous surveys of the SAU membership were carried out to establish the shifting political make-up, was followed by what appears to have been a paranoid flurry of expulsions of ‘all Trotskyists, Anarchists, Liberals and Reformists’ from the SAU. Abandoning reports from local-level activity as membership fell, its articles became longer, more didactic and ultimately less readable for its young membership. The remaining members of the SAU blamed ‘apathy’ for the retreat of its membership, but more likely the cause was constant hostility – from parents, teacher, police the media – which underpinned the waning number of children willing to risk the consequences of making their voice heard.

As central as the Trials of *Oz* were in bringing a collective sense of cohesion between the complex social movements, it also served as a moment which underpinned their differences. For Marsha Rowe, who had worked for *Oz* throughout the trial, and who went on to co-found *Spare Rib* magazine, the Trials of *Oz* was a moment where politics relating to gender both emerged from and, ultimately, challenged the ethos of the counter-cultural underground:

During the trial the prosecuting barrister accused the community of which the magazine was a part of being without love. Richard Neville responded that, on the contrary, *Oz* was against the guilt and obsession of repressed sexuality and that “*Oz* was trying redefine love, to broaden it, extend it and revitalize it, so it could be a force of release and not one of entrapment”. The irony of this was that, while this may have been true for men, it was rarely the case for women. The underground press used sex-objectifying images which has developed from being fairly romantic to stridently sadistic. The women who worked in its magazines and newspapers served the men and did the office and production work rather than any editorial work. After a time on *Oz* I had worked for the defence in the *Oz* trial, and the cover of that issue was a montage of pictures of a naked women in erotic display. In November 1971, three months after the trial, I went to the women’s liberation demonstration outside the Albert Hall, the second against the Miss World competition, and was beginning to feel contradictions exploding in my head.⁶²⁴

⁶²⁴ Rowe, M, *Spare Rib Reader*, 1st ed. (Penguin Books, 1982), p.51.

Marsha Rowe's sense that men were experiencing a sense of liberation from their endeavours in counter-culture where women were not, speaks to many of the same fundamental issues that Liza Drenser and her contemporaries had experienced in the SAU at this time; female members doing the 'office and production' roles rather than any of the editorial work. Moreover, the 'stridently sadistic' tone by which publications such as *Schoolkids Oz* approached the complex issue of sexual morality had begun to jar. *Spare Rib* was launched in June 1972, declaring that 'there is the most urgent need for a magazine that will reach ALL women – for women who are frustrated by the limitations of existing magazine.'⁶²⁵ Its publication marked one of more chiasmic fault lines appearing in the liberation movements. As the first women's refuges opened in Britain, and the first UK rape crisis was formed, the idea of children's sexual liberation would be tested to its limits. The more liberal moral tendencies of psycho-social experts, such as Westwood and West, to downplay the dangers of certain sexual offences in the early post-war, seen in chapter four, were now 'co-opted' by a new movement that challenged the limits of the children liberation model, as well as others.⁶²⁶

A Movement Too Far

As Lucy Robinson and Mathew Thomson's research demonstrates, in post-1967 Britain issues which centralised around the age of consent grew from the clear discrepancy between homosexual and heterosexual consensual sex in law which resulted from the considerable number of amendments that were negotiated in order to pass Labour's 'permissive' Sexual Offences Act. The age of sixteen had been set for heterosexuals and the age twenty-one for homosexuals. Counter-cultural attitudes toward child sexuality, sex education and child rights were 'seeping' into the 'fringes of local government, education, and

⁶²⁵ *Ibid*, p.1.

⁶²⁶ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.169.

social work' during the mid-1970s.⁶²⁷ *Schoolkids Oz* and the *Little Red Schoolbook* had shown that the discussion of childhood sexuality within the context of children's liberation had already provided the means by which the limits of the 'permissive society' could be tested. As notions of childhood were being publicly challenged by those seeking to further children's rights, the mid-1970s saw the emergence of a group who drew upon the burgeoning liberation movements' arguments, and who embedded their own argument for liberation in children's rights. and, more specifically, to the increasingly public anti-corporal punishment banner. The Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE) was formed in the mid-1970s and was one of two movements during this period who adopted contemporary liberation arguments in an attempt to legalise sex between adults and children.⁶²⁸ Paedophile Action for Liberation (PAL) had been outed as 'the vilest men in Britain' by the *Sunday People* in May 1975, and its counterpart, PIE, formed in the October of the same year.⁶²⁹ As PIE was forged in the ashes of PAL, whose membership had included members of the GLF, PIE was able to write its own history as having almost organically 'branched' from the gay rights movement.⁶³⁰

PIE would of course later emerge as one of the most reviled organisations in contemporary British history, and as the full extent of its activities continues to appear, the more the media ask 'how' such a moment could have happened. PIE was not 'hiding in plain sight' as is now commonly said of contemporary actors such as Jimmy Saville. PIE wore their identity with pride. They 'came out' and had 'come together' – the GLF's first two revolutionary steps. As violent demonstrations against PIE showed, there simply was no

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.172. As Thomson points out, this transition from counter-culture to local government was not unique to Britain, as detailed in Bourg, J, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought*, 1st ed (Montreal, 2007), pp.204-218. See Hampshire, J and Lewis, J, "The ravages of Permissiveness": Sex Education and the Permissive Society' in *Twentieth Century British History*, 15, (2004), 290-312. See also Davidson, R and Sauerteig, L (eds.), *Shaping Sexual Knowledge: A Cultural History of Sex Education in Twentieth Century Europe*, (New York, 2009).

⁶²⁸ Robinson, L, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain*, p.130.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

discernible public support for any of their aims with regards to children. And yet, in this specific cultural and political climate, ‘when conservative intolerance shifted from homosexuality to paedophilia’, there was a definable period when some members in the left toyed with the idea that PIE’s voice should be heard, especially since PIE claimed to be the next frontier in sexual liberation.⁶³¹ That publications such as the *Guardian* and that journals such as *Community Care* could entertain the discussion of paedophilia being something to be at least pitied gives us an indication of how persuasively the liberation argument could be stretched to fit PIE’s own perversion of it. PIE claimed that by liberating themselves, they would liberate the child. What made the climate for PIE’s attempts to align to the liberation movement so potentially dangerous was that physical abuse, not yet sexual abuse, was the dominant focus of both child and social care, dominant media narratives, and that of the children’s liberation movements themselves. PIE’s attempt to legitimise its cause grew into a space that existed where physical abuse was the dominant focus of concern and where sexual mores were being fluidly and radically reconceptualised. But just as PIE gained a degree of what it defined as ‘legitimacy’, the space it had once occupied would quickly be eradicated as the depths of PIE’s aims surfaced, and as a more public consciousness of sexual abuse emerged later in the century. There lay a contradiction at the heart of PIE: on the one hand, as Lucy Robinson argues, they offered a ‘Wolfenden-type appeal to professionalism’, and on the other, they sought to inhabit the burgeoning politics of the counter-cultural sexual liberation movement.⁶³² It was a particularly difficult contradiction to negotiate, particularly as behind the scenes its members were also aiding and abetting the distribution of child pornography and many were abusing children.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.* p.172.

⁶³² *Ibid.* pp.131-132, and Moors, C, *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth-Century Britain*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.190.

PIE emerged onto the political scene at the same time that other self-organisation paedophile groups did so across Europe and the United States.⁶³³ Like its counterparts, PIE developed as an entryist organisation, contacting GaySocs, social workers, probation services as well as organisations such as MIND and more traditional academic departments.⁶³⁴ As Robinson's research shows, the contradictory nature of consent laws ensured that PIE's campaigns fed into many issues faced contemporarily by young men and women. PIE's public statements of solidarity towards the Gay Youth Movement indicated that they were particularly fostering relations with youth organisations.⁶³⁵ The fact that PIE both aligned itself to and started its own campaign for the abolition of corporal punishment gives us an indication, more broadly, that the corporal punishment debate was believed to attain a particular form of currency during this period, by which, no doubt, PIE believed it could gain alignment and support. For example, in 1976 PIE established its publication *Childhood Rights*.⁶³⁶ The first edition held several articles on the subject of corporal punishment: one entitled 'New from the Front', an article on 'Europe and corporal punishment', and a double-page spread entitled 'The Facts about Corporal Punishment in Schools'.⁶³⁷ PIE distributed *Childhood Rights*, free of charge, across a broad spectrum of current organisations, movements and institutions, and the responses which they published in subsequent issues suggest that it was generally well received. They received a letter of support from the philosopher A.J. Ayer, and a congratulatory letter from the sociologist/criminologist and Labour Peer, Baroness Wootton of Abinger, whose bill to end the cane in schools had failed in the Lords in 1973. The Labour MP, Jo Richardson thanked PIE for sending her a copy and was quoted as having written 'of course I'll support the campaign against corporal punishment.'⁶³⁸ These fleeting, yet supportive letters

⁶³³ Robinson, L, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain*, p.130.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid*, p.132.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid*.

⁶³⁶ *Not to be confused by the ill-fated earlier *Children's Rights*.

⁶³⁷ *Childhood Rights*, (1976) Vol. 1, No.1.

⁶³⁸ *Childhood Rights*, (1977) Vol. 1, No. 3

form only part of the broader support that PIE was able to command from parts of the left during its brief attempt to significantly lower the age of consent.⁶³⁹ The methods by which PIE's members were being prosecuted were all-too familiar to those in Gay Liberation movements. As solidarity was forged in the wake of the media exposes and conspiracy trials that marked PIE's demise, a significant schism emerged between female and male perspectives of childhood sexuality.

Efforts to establish links between the position of women, especially lesbians, were made during PIE's ongoing conspiracy trials, and in doing so, it forced a decisive breach in the ever-volatile question that had divided the Women's and Gay movements.⁶⁴⁰ For example, Bea Campbell and Susan Hemming's responses in *Spare Rib* labelled the assumed connections between paedophilia and the WLM as an 'irresponsible' move that sought to blackmail women into a position they fundamentally rejected.⁶⁴¹ It marked a decisive point in which the boundaries between these key movements were profoundly breached. As Robinson beautifully summarises, 'in the divorce case following the short-lived romance between the women's and gay liberation movements, the feminists gained sole custody of the children.'⁶⁴² PIE's fleeting and wholly disingenuous dalliance in the corporal punishment debate has largely been expunged from the subject's history. Reminiscent of the lurid tale of Eric Wildeman, whose capitalisation of the retention debate in the early post-war masked a far more sinister hidden practice, in the cold light of the media PIE's mask of legitimacy irrevocably crumbled. The only organisation still active in the corporal punishment debate remained the STOPP, and acutely aware of the pitfalls that had befallen its contemporaries, it shifted the corporal

⁶³⁹ Robinson, L, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain*, p.137.

⁶⁴⁰ Thomson, M, *Lost Freedom*, p.169.

⁶⁴¹ Robinson, L, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain*, p.138.

⁶⁴² *Ibid*, p.137.

punishment debate away from the more ideological realm of revolutionary change - with children playing a central role in the process of liberation - and into a protectionist stance.

STOPP

There are two discernible phases of the Society of Teachers Opposed to Corporal Punishment (STOPP), which can be characterised as a period of significant introspection, research and publication in the first instance (1968-1975) and of targeted, legal challenges in the second (1976-1986). STOPP had been founded in September of 1968 following union action against an experimental ban on corporal punishment by the Cardiff Education Authority. The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) had halted the much-anticipated year-long trial in Cardiff city primary schools after only a matter of weeks.⁶⁴³ The founding members of STOPP, aggrieved at the long-held teaching union consensus against abolition decided that its efforts should be to ‘raise the levels of discussion by collecting and disseminating accurate information.’⁶⁴⁴ In realising that the long history of corporal punishment hadn’t yet been written, like other movements of the time it wrote its own. Drawing upon the deeper roots of the corporal punishment debate, from the Children’s petition of 1667 to STOPP wrote the ‘History of The Move toward Abolition’ as something of an antidote to the more militant taste that had been left following the very public direct action of the student’s unions. Indeed, STOPP’s history of corporal punishment fails to mention the existence of the five-year-long activities of the SAU, despite detailing at some length the Children’s Right movement from which it had also emerged. STOPP’s history suggested that although children were historically successful at communicating their opposition to being corporally punished, painstaking

⁶⁴³ Newall, P (ed), *A Last Resort?* p.35.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

charting historical (yet not contemporary) student ‘movements’, adult intervention, it concluded, had been more successful in bringing about meaningful legislative change.⁶⁴⁵

The result of STOPP’s more introspective phase was a number of well-reviewed publications, including a *A Last Resort: Corporal Punishment in Schools* (1972) and *Discipline in Schools* (1974). *A Last Resort* brought together the aforementioned history of the abolitionist stance and combined contributions from abolitionist teachers and methodical analysis of punishment books. *Discipline in Schools* brought together abolitionist grandees, such as Michael Duane who in rejecting the *Children’s Rights* more radical sexual developments, focused on the need for an emotionally harmonious relationship between pupil and teacher in order to facilitate ‘meaningful work.’⁶⁴⁶ Alongside anti-corporal punishment teachers and more traditionally Freudian academic analysis, STOPP also gave a platform to teacher and parents who both used and upheld the use of corporal punishment. It had taken this approach to balance the ‘schism’ between the demand for ‘total freedom’ for children’ and, as they argued, the need to preserve ‘most traditional standards as an essential bulwark against the risks of social disruption.’⁶⁴⁷ STOPP understood that without the teaching union’s support, they would be unable to make any meaningful change. Establishing colleagues’ support was therefore a key objective, and these publications were designed to provide ‘practical advice to those just beginning a teaching career with the groundwork on which to base her own conclusions’⁶⁴⁸ It located a generational gap between practice and more permissive attitudes toward corporal punishment, and saw the ILEA’s successful abolition of primary school corporal punishment following a shift in local NUT teacher support, as the model by which to achieve abolition in other Labour held Education authorities, such as Liverpool. As the NUT dug in its heels on the

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp.13-40.

⁶⁴⁶ Turner, B (ed), *Discipline in Schools*, 1st ed. (Ward Lock Educational, 1974), p.7.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

question of abolition, STOPP tried its hand at wielding the propriety of practices against the teaching unions.

In 1977 the Greater London Council gained notoriety across the British press as it was revealed that for the past three years, the 5000 canes it had purchased for use in its schools had been supplied by a basement shop in Wellington Street, Leeds. Mr Brown, the proprietor, also specialised in ‘porn magazines, sex aids and ‘28 inch sex canes’.⁶⁴⁹ *The Sun* caught the GLC’s spokesperson off-guard, and when shown a ‘sex aid catalogue’ from the Leeds establishment, was quoted as having said ‘we do not really want to appear to be fishing in this particular pond, do we?’.⁶⁵⁰ Inspired by both the publicity and the embarrassment the sex-shop cane debacle had garnered, STOPP exploited the very obvious concern that school discipline was being supported by the burgeoning sex industry. Whereas ‘obscenity’ had been levied as an argument against parts of the counter-culture for corrupting children through sex, STOPP turned the argument on its head and argued that corporal punishment retained not only the capacity for sexual gratification for the punisher but could also sexually ‘pervert’ the punished child. Tacit was the idea that children needed protecting *because* they could be ‘perverted’. When STOPP’s spokesperson Tom Scott confronted an GLC spokesperson on *ITN* about the ‘propriety of their purchases’ and was refused an answer, Scott saw the potential to shift the debate toward the more contentious area of pleasure and perversion.⁶⁵¹

By 1979, STOPP had gained enough media presence to be offered its own television slot. The half-hour documentary aired on 25th January 1979 on BBC Two. The BBC’s ‘Open Door’ series handed ‘over air time to the public’, and STOPP advertised their content thusly:

Contrary to popular belief, corporal punishment in our schools is still in full swing. Is it really credible that British children, virtually alone in Europe, can only be educated by means of physical assault?⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁹ *The Telegraph*, 28th October 1977, p.11.

⁶⁵⁰ *The Sun*, 28th October 1977, p.4.

⁶⁵¹ *ITN*, 31st October 1977.

⁶⁵² *BBC*, ‘Open Door: STOPP’, 25th January 1979.

Punctuated with intercut footage of young children being caned, and footage from a contemporary ‘spanking’ porn magazine, STOPP drove home the sexual side of corporal punishment to a broad viewership through the overlapping commentary:

It is common knowledge that there can be a sexual element to corporal punishment and one sees it in the spate of pornographic magazines that one can buy in Soho. They make this quite explicit. The fact that you can make a lot of money selling these magazines, a lot of which are to do with the beating in a school context, should tell us something. All we are saying here is that there is clearly a sadomasochistic element running throughout society, and if you want to develop this sadomasochistic element then the best way of doing it is by continuing to beat children.⁶⁵³

This contentious argument remained a persistent thorn in the side of the retention arguments throughout STOPP’s ultimately more successful campaign. As the last chapter will detail, the significance of STOPP’s sadomasochistic message became particularly pertinent as increasing media attention to severities of key individual cases emerged across the 1980s. In 1969, Bruce Kemble of STOPP had asked the question ‘when are the Teachers’ Unions going to answer the case against caning?’⁶⁵⁴ In reality, its battle with the Unions would span the rest of its campaign, as it turned instead to the ultimately more fruitful route of the law courts and further afield to Europe.

Conclusion

On 25th September 1979, the *BBC* launched its new topical debating show, *Question Time*. Mrs Dingwall of South London asked Robin Day and the four panellists if they could give ‘...any reasons why corporal punishment should be retained in our schools?’⁶⁵⁵ The panellists were divided in their responses. Derek Worlock, Archbishop of Liverpool, believed that there was no ‘absolute right or wrong’ but that he found it ‘personally offensive’. Edna O’Brien, who had been introduced as a ‘beautiful novelist’ by Day, was similarly opposed.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁴ Kemble, B, ‘Britain’s Unique Deterrent’ in *Education + Training*, Vol. 11, Issue 7, pp. 286 – 287.

⁶⁵⁵ *Question Time*, 25th September 1979.

Teddy Taylor, Conservative MP, gave an impassioned speech as to why the cane and tawse was not only desirable for maintaining ‘...discipline, but for helping learning to take place.’ He added that he would be ‘in favour of extending the availability of corporal punishment to our juvenile courts.’ Michael Foot, deputy leader of the Labour party, was wholly against corporal punishment, stating that it was ‘degrading to all concerned’. He also claimed that the propensity of Britain’s private schools to wield the cane resulted in politicians willing to ‘abolish public libraries and take away security benefits from striking miners.’ When Robin Day challenged Michael Foot’s own public-school education in light of his assertions, Foot quipped that he had to ‘resist all these endearments.’

When Day took comments from the audience, a young female teacher took exception to the headmaster of her school for his advocacy of corporal punishment only for boys owing to them being ‘rational creatures’, as opposed to girls ‘for whom it therefore wouldn’t work’; a point that raised boundless laughter from the audience. When a fifteen-year-old schoolboy protested vehemently that the ‘only group of people who can be legally assaulted in society are school pupils’, the audience laughed down his point when Day extracted the schoolboy’s age; his continued protestations disappearing into the collective mirth of the audience. In stark contrast to the relative ease by which members of the SAU were able to command a legitimate platform via the media at the beginning of the decade, the dismissive way that the *Question Time* audience silenced the only child in the room suggest that the period where children were recognised as key actors in the punishment debate had passed. The corporal punishment debate had shifted from the participatory education rights movements of the early 1970s back into the social and welfare arena, where adults sought protection rights on children’s behalf.

The Children’s Liberation Movement had provided a complex network of movements in which children were included as an essential actor within their participatory approach to ‘facilitating’ revolutionary change. As childhood sexuality emerged as a more centrally

embraced component to these movements, solidarity could be forged by more male-centred movements in ways that fundamentally undermined the core beliefs of those held by women. As the corporal punishment debate negotiated Thatcher's Britain, participatory rights once again would be sought as the age of the paedophile emerged in the public consciousness. Yet parents' rights, not children's rights provided the legal basis by which the ardent 'flogger' and retentionist Margaret Thatcher's government would dramatically fail to keep hold of the cane.

CHAPTER SIX

ABOLITION: THE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT DEBATE
IN THATCHER'S BRITAIN, 1979 – 1986

*'We did not cry – you can't do that in front of your friends. Even if it hurts you hold the tears back and pretend nothing has happened.'*⁶⁵⁶

On Monday 4th June 1979, the *BBC* broadcast the first instalment of a week-long series of programmes dedicated to the 'feelings and opinions' of children under sixteen-years-old. Commissioned to mark the International Year of the Child of that year, *A Child's Place* questioned the place that children held in contemporary British society through five key areas of their lives: school, home, local authorities, play and the Welfare State. All of these would be dramatically challenged under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government as she broke the political consensus that had framed the post-war period. *The Daily Mail* advertised the programmes as a 'rewarding early-evening series' that ensured children were both 'seen and heard' for an 'adult audience'.⁶⁵⁷ Corporal punishment featured heavily in *A Child's Place's* first interrogation of the school, presenting complex divisions on the subject. The National Union of Students (NUS) and the Society for Teacher's Opposed to Physical Punishment's (STOPP) opposition to corporal punishment in the programme were dismissed because of their propensity to cite psychological harm when numerous children themselves in the programme and newspapers attested that it had not adversely affected them psychologically. *A Child's Place* did, however, flesh out STOPP's central point of psychological damage with an exploration of school children who were taking medication like valium because of the mental distress they were experiencing because of corporal punishment.

⁶⁵⁶ *Evening Standard*, 30th January 1981, p.9.

⁶⁵⁷ *Daily Mail*, 2nd June 1979, p.22.

Fourteen-year-old Susan explained that she had been absent from school for four weeks because of the threat of the cane:

I was meant to go to a detention, but I kept on avoiding it because I knew I'd already done it. But they wouldn't have that. So, they was going to give me the cane. So, I told them no. 'Cause every time I do have it I get ill, and I end up taking tablets and that. The pills I'm taking are Valium to calm me down cause of my nerves. I kept getting nerve rashes, and I've lost two stone since June.⁶⁵⁸

Susan's mother added that: 'I always know when Susan's been caned when she comes home from school because she's in a very distressed condition.'⁶⁵⁹ Children were seen not only to be taking prescription drugs to aid their internal, mental distress, but audiences were hearing Susan describe the mental and physical symptoms of her fear of being corporally punished. As Joanna Bourke's research shows, the burgeoning medicalisation of pain and distress, and the new approaches to alleviating them, began to play a role in questioning why pain was being induced across society.⁶⁶⁰ Physically and emotionally punishing children in an age where Calpol was offered as a means of easing children's pain may have seemed counterintuitive to some, but as Bourke's research shows, the medical professionals themselves were still unconvinced as a body that babies and infants experienced pain in the same way as adults well into the 1990s.⁶⁶¹ Corporal punishment continued to permeate children's lives throughout much of Thatcher's Britain, and children who had experienced and supported the use of corporal punishment were also given their say.

Fifteen-year-old Ian from Northamptonshire begged 'to differ' when responding to the claim that 'a caning achieves very little'. He argued that his boarding school's use of corporal

⁶⁵⁸ *A Child's Place* (BBC, 1979).

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁰ Bourke, J, *The Story of Pain: From Prayer to Painkillers*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

punishment was employed when laid out rules had been broken and claimed that ‘few boys get caned twice for the same thing’.⁶⁶² He used his own experience to evidence his defence:

The only time I have had the cane was last term when I was caught smoking while I should have been doing athletic training. The master took me straight to his classroom where he produced a cane and after a brief telling off I found myself touching my toes in a very nervous state of mind and getting four strokes of the cane. The pain was very intense -- in fact I suffered considerable discomfort for several days. In my case a good caning achieved three purposes in the few minutes it took to administer. It punished me for my misconduct, it has ensured I have not smoked since, and I have not missed any more training sessions.⁶⁶³

For some children like Ian, the experience of nervousness, intense pain and considerable discomfort was an accepted and demonstrably effective method of maintaining a disciplined school. In tying his own experience of submission to his argument, his intervention joined several other children’s voices, some of whom featured in *A Child’s Place*, who were prepared to say that they recognised that inducing pain and fear had effectively curtailed the more problematic aspects of their agency. This recognition and acceptance of this particularly masculine discourse of discipline, submission and the hierarchies of power established between that dynamic, continued to play out throughout the 1980s, within the corporal punishment debate, and this line of argument permeated throughout the chamber of the House of Commons on the night that corporal punishment in state schools fell.

Yet children’s voices also continued to be utilised by the press to challenge audiences’ perceptions of the psychological effects of physical punishment. Fourteen-year-old Shirley appeared in the *Daily Mail*’s letters section, explaining ‘why we girls are shaking in our shoes’:

Although some women teachers do unofficially slap girls on the back of their legs for minor offences, the ultimate threat of being sent to the headmistress for the cane is sufficient to make most girls shake in their shoes. The humiliation of a teenage girl

⁶⁶² *Daily Mail*, 1st September 1979, p.7.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

having to hold out her hand like a naughty little child is punishment enough, without the actual physical pain.⁶⁶⁴

Shirley's description of an environment governed by the fear and humiliation of corporal punishment is a thread that continued to run through many of the themes that this chapter will explore, and her disclosure of 'unofficial' corporal punishment suggests that the propensity for teachers to flout the established rules was still alive and well in the 1980s. *A Child's Place* was part of a progressive, child-centred approach to the question of children's rights, and it invited children to participate in that debate. However, Thatcherism was a decisive move away from the child-centred approach that had defined the activism of the 1960s and 70s. The International Year of the Child bought forward the prospect of the first UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, but Thatcher's Britain was the only country to vote it down, suggesting that it was unnecessary.⁶⁶⁵ Parents, not children, would emerge as central to the question of children's welfare.

This final chapter will map the abolition of corporal punishment in state schools, which finally came seven years after Thatcher came to power. In 1979, Thatcher was as resolute that the cane should stay as she had been during her time as Education Minister in the 1970s. Had she been available to vote, she almost certainly would have voted to retain the practice. In a hair's breadth vote of 1, the parliament of 1986 was as divided upon the subject of corporal punishment as Britain itself. With Scotland abolishing all corporal punishment on children in 2019, and England and Wales retaining the practice, it appears that division is still present. In 1986, the decision to abolish corporal punishment was by no means a certainty. Indeed, as this chapter will demonstrate, the hairs-breadth vote could easily have gone the way of Thatcher's Government had the vote been held on another day.

⁶⁶⁴ *Daily Mail*, 11th December 1982, p.20.

⁶⁶⁵ Franklin, A & Franklin, B, 'Growing Pains', p.103.

Abolition was won in a particularly febrile political moment, when a constitutional crisis rocked Thatcher and her ‘uncaring’ governmental policies. Although the government was determined to retain corporal punishment, campaigning by organisations such as STOPP brought the debate to a crescendo in the Commons, with daily newspapers utilised to demonstrate in graphic detail the excessive force by which corporal punishment was still being employed. Emotion remained a contested category of analysis within the House. As I will demonstrate, many MPs focused upon the emotional effects of the physical act, while others rejected emotion from the debate, even dismissing points based upon their ‘emotionality’ and subjectivity, as perceived as the opposite of a ‘rational’, objective and ‘reasoned’ debate. Much was made of Labour’s three-line-whip on the matter, yet Labour attacked the divisive nature of the Government’s dual-punishment compromise, arguing that it would be illogical to punish children in two different ways. As circumstance swung the vote toward abolition, the divisions between those for and against intensified. Corporal punishment in state schools fell out of use just as messily as the abolition of other forms of corporal punishment had.

Culture continued to play an important role in the public consciousness of the corporal punishment debate, and it both reflected and challenged its use. The public exposure to ‘battered baby’ syndrome and wider practices of extreme physical violence on children in the 1960s and 70s permeated throughout culture, and it did so as light began to be shone upon the other abuses of children, which had largely been absent from public media discourse. Although tensions arose around how corporal punishment was being explored in cultural representations, there was also a visible yearning for a return to the more carefree and humorous representations that had been more commonplace in earlier decades. When *Billy Bunter* was revamped for Thatcher’s Britain, commentators used their platforms to invoke a sense of nostalgia around the earlier, more entertaining descriptions and depictions of Bunter’s episodic canings. Toning down the thrill of Bunter’s just deserts was received as somehow depriving the comfort of

continuity amid change. While the subject matter of corporal punishment could still be approached with a camp air of humour in the 1981 film *Mommie Dearest*, later films such as *Lady Jane* in 1986 railed against this more humorous and melodramatic approach and presented a brutal and forceful message against its use. The landscape of corporal punishment on screen was beginning to shift away from the era where the beating of children and women was a normalised trope to one where its presence was questioned according to contemporary abolition discourses, even if they were conveyed to the audience in 1553 costume.

Though not exclusively, this cultural shift was undoubtedly emanating from the left of politics during the 1980s. As trade unions began to relent upon their long-held opposition to abolition, and as the Labour Party adopted an abolitionist stance, previously fringe arguments were beginning to play a more central role in political discourse. Europe would also play a significant role in the abolition of corporal punishment, and it was two women from Scotland who turned to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to decide the fate of Britain's long-wielded cane. Moreover, direct action by children in schools themselves continued. These sites of resistance were not organised in the way they had been in the late 1960s to the mid-70s, but they do speak to the volatile relationship between adult authority, and children's acquiescence to it, which had spanned the century. Children continued to use their collective voices to have their say in the ongoing children's safeguarding debate. These sites of resistance were rarely fruitful at the time for the children who participated, and like those who resisted in the previous decade, they could be shut down by employing the very punishment the children were organising against. As these sites were reported in the press, accumulatively many children were able to show their resistance to a practice that was being rejected by teachers' unions, political parties and by the parents and teachers who stood behind children's right to bodily protection.

This chapter will argue that the fall of corporal punishment in state-funded schools was an anomaly amongst Thatcher's socially conservative agenda and one that she continued to argue against until the vote was cast. Abolition was primarily secured by the actions of ordinary working people who had joined those who railed against the long-contested practice across the twentieth century. As mainstream politicians and trade unions began to adopt an abolitionist stance, and as Institutions like the ECHR facilitated the appeals of ordinary women, the corporal punishment debate was elevated into the burgeoning discussions about child welfare and safeguarding. What made these debates so distinct from the last decade was the relative absence of children's involvement in discussions about their liberation. Children remained politically active on this subject throughout the 1980s, yet their sites of resistance were far more disparate and isolated than those organised by the children active in the 1970s. Corporal punishment's sudden departure from the state-funded classroom was not a foregone conclusion – indeed it is essential to acknowledge that circumstances outside of Thatcher's control played an important role in its demise.

Resistance/ STOPP

As Thatcher came to power in 1979, the landscape of corporal punishment was shifting considerably, particularly at a local level. Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) were continuing to ban corporal punishment, with the Labour-controlled Borough of Haringay becoming the first educational authority to ban corporal punishment in all its maintained schools in the winter of 1979.⁶⁶⁶ In 1980, both Waltham Forest and Brent LEAs committed to abolition.⁶⁶⁷ However, other LEAs, like Buckinghamshire, voted overwhelmingly to reintroduce corporal punishment for infants after seven years of abolition. Their vote came only

⁶⁶⁶ Newell, P, *Children are People Too: The Case Against Physical Punishment*, 2nd ed. (Bedford Square Press, 1989), p.135.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

days before a thirteen-year-old boy was ‘found dead with shotgun wounds’ in his house in Woonton.⁶⁶⁸ The boy had turned the gun on himself because he ‘feared a school caning.’⁶⁶⁹

As chapter five revealed, the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP) had ignited as a movement at the same time that the Schools Action Union (SAU) had emerged into the debate. Rather than utilising direct action as the children of the SAU had, STOPP had been far more active in collective research, publishing that research, and participating in the more public debate as it arose in the media. As STOPP negotiated the 1980s, it grew by establishing a more solid place within the burgeoning media discussion on children’s protection rights, and on many occasions led that discussion. While STOPP would regularly submit comments on events that the media had chosen to report, STOPP would also initiate stories based upon research and events that they wished to highlight. For example, in 1980 there was a furore about the use of corporal punishment in social services homes in the Tory-run Nottingham council when a fifteen-year-old-girl was subjected to a ‘barbaric’ caning.⁶⁷⁰ An expose in *The Sun* revealed that sixteen other boys had been subject to the same over the past year, but that this had been the first instance that a girl had been caned since ‘the council reintroduced corporal punishment three years ago.’⁶⁷¹ The British Association of Social Workers condemned the caning, stating that:

It is appalling to flog children in care. Beating them is not the proper solution to disciplinary problems. There are more effective ways.⁶⁷²

STOPP’s official spokesperson and Education Secretary, Tom Scott, was asked to comment upon the case, and he responded that: ‘caning boys is bad enough, but beating a young woman is totally barbaric. God knows what harm it has done to her.’⁶⁷³ Scott pointed out that corporal

⁶⁶⁸ *Daily Mail*, 9th January 1979, p.5.

⁶⁶⁹ Newell, P, *Children are People Too*, p.135.

⁶⁷⁰ *The Sun*, 4th November 1980, p.11.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*

⁶⁷³ *The Sun*, 4th November 1980, p.11.

punishment for women and girls had been abolished by use of the courts as far back as 1820, and that ‘the council have become known as The Floggers of Nottinghamshire – a disgraceful and disreputable reputation.’⁶⁷⁴ Nottingham Council’s leader, Herbert Bird, was nonetheless resolute: ‘I believe in cane ‘em and birch ‘em. If girls, ask for punishment they should get it. There are too many do-gooders in this world.’⁶⁷⁵ The Nottingham caning affair was part of a much larger media discourse about corporal punishment, and the media were emerging as a central player in the debate.⁶⁷⁶ Commenting on existing press furores around corporal punishment was an effective way of engaging audiences with STOPP’s abolitionist stance, but leading the debate was a harder and at times costlier affair.

STOPP’s use of research-based arguments required the collection of raw data and a place for their findings to be communicated. Obtaining punishment statistics was not always easy, and often required teachers to gather and leak the data. The teachers who gave documents to STOPP did so at danger to their livelihoods, as was the case for Alan Corkish, who sent STOPP the slippering figures from Litherland High School in Sefton for 1979/80. The statistics showed that in one year alone, 1,985 slipperings had been recorded. Corkish was summarily sacked when it emerged that it was he who had fed STOPP the data.⁶⁷⁷ Their access to leaked statistics meant that STOPP could ascertain how many recorded punishments were occurring. STOPP also attempted to chart the corporal punishment that occurred that wasn’t officially recorded.

In 1984 STOPP punished *Catalogue of Cruelty*, a 91-page booklet that detailed examples of extreme contemporary uses of corporal punishment in Britain. Its introduction was an open letter from STOPP’s Education Secretary to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Keith Joseph, whom STOPP recommended should ‘put this dossier of child-beating incidents

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ *Thatcher’s Children?* p.98.

⁶⁷⁷ Newell, P, *Children are People Too*, p.135.

on your personal reading list.’⁶⁷⁸ Within STOPP’s dossier were numerous examples of parents objecting to the extreme punishments that had been meted out across the country, and who were questioning how a teacher could be acting *in loco parentis* if they as parents objected. By 1982, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), as we later will explore, had ruled that ignoring parental objections to corporal punishment was an infringement on the parent’s human rights, and by 1984 STOPP was not only documenting a surge of parents willing to take their cases to Strasbourg, they were actively encouraging parents to do so.⁶⁷⁹ STOPP’s *Catalogue of Cruelty* was designed to question the boundaries of abolition by demonstrating how complicated the debate was. For example, it highlighted the practice of corporally punishing disabled children, or children with epilepsy, with heart defects and children who were beaten in care and it questioned where the line could be drawn when corporally punishing identifiably vulnerable children. It also went to lengths to demonstrate how trivial some of the incidents for which corporal punishment had been employed often were. This was a documentation of the extremities of a system that sanctioned violence, and it showed how complex the fault lines between sanctioned violence and abuse were.

Catalogue of Cruelty exposed how corporal punishment could be abused and could be seen as questionable when male teachers were employing punishment to both female and male children with bare hands on bare bottoms.⁶⁸⁰ It also exposed children with cerebral palsy being beaten on the bare backside with a wooden spoon for things as trivial as forgetting to lower a flag raised on his desk after being allowed to speak.⁶⁸¹ There were also cases where parents had been prosecuted for punching teachers following unsanctioned and excessive uses of corporal punishment.⁶⁸² STOPP also demonstrated how children’s refusal to be corporally

⁶⁷⁸ STOPP, *Catalogue of Cruelty*, 1st ed. (STOPP London, 1984) p.5.

⁶⁷⁹ Newell, P, *Children are People Too*, p.135.

⁶⁸⁰ STOPP, *Catalogue of Cruelty*, p.38.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, p.51.

punished led to their temporary suspension from school, such as the case of Tricia (anonymised) who refused to be given the tawse in her West Midlands school in 1982. Her two brothers also refused to be tawsed, and the family submitted five complaints about the school to the LEA.⁶⁸³ STOPP detailed many such instances of childhood and parental resistance to corporal punishment and demonstrated how they might be in contravention of the ECHR ruling. This was not only an expose of a 'catalogue' of unjustifiable cruelty, but a handbook for parents or pupils to join the number of parents who took Thatcher's government to Strasbourg. Partly because of Thatcher's refusal to sanction the 1979 proposal for a convention of the rights of children, and her refusal to make adjustments in the light of the ECHR's ruling, this intervention sought to undermine many of the arguments that the government had made which sought to downplay the severity and regularity of incidents where 'reasonable chastisement' was self-evidently 'unreasonable.'⁶⁸⁴

Not only were children's voices and experience being utilised by adults in child protection activism, but children also continued to act as agents against the violence they experienced in schools. Just as they had throughout the century, children chose to use direct action against their schools, and the continued use of corporal punishment continued to underpin these sites of resistance. As Robert Adam's research demonstrates, the sudden fragmentation of children's movements like the National Union of School Students (NUSS) at the end of the 1970s was part of much broader fracturing of political groups on the left as Thatcherism took hold.⁶⁸⁵ This apparent absence of more centralised and organised children's activism, however, must not detract from the very much active localised sites of resistance that continued to colour the landscape of the corporal punishment debate. These sites are no less important than the more organised forms of collective resistance that coloured the 1970s, and yet they are far opaquer

⁶⁸³ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁶⁸⁵ Adams, R, *Protests by Pupils*, p.62.

to us, for unlike these earlier organised struggles, these localised and more transient forms of protest lacked the ‘at times articulate dialogue with authorities, in both television, the press, and its publications.’⁶⁸⁶ They have far more in common with the sites of resistance in the UK before the 1960s children’s movements that Humphrey’s recorded in *Hooligans and Rebels* and which P.C Sexton had noted of pre-1960s US history.⁶⁸⁷ What these sites of resistance do have in common with the activism against the cane in the decade beforehand was the propensity for the media to report on them, and just as before, the press interpreted children’s activism within the broader context of political fault lines, such as class and race.

In the month that the ECHR ruled on corporal punishment, Toxteth in Liverpool, which had six months earlier been the site of significant civil disturbance, once again hit the headlines as a ‘mini-Mafia’ was supposed to be terrorising a school. The Toxteth riots in 1981 had followed the earlier riots in Brixton and Coventry, and the recession years had brought particularly high levels of deprivation, unemployment and high crime rates in working class and, especially black communities.⁶⁸⁸ The flames that killed thirteen black children and youths in the New Cross house fire in January 1981 had foregrounded first mass-protest and later rioting in London, and an altercation during a stop and search in Liverpool foreshadowed the summer riots later that year. When children then began to resist in Toxteth schools, it was immediately reported as something of a contagious outburst, inherently linked to the ‘rioting’ six months previously. When children from St. Saviour’s Church of England Primary School in Toxteth ‘rioted’, the press reported:

It is like the mini-Mafia. The youngsters have hardly left their cradles, but they are threatening to take over the school. Things have got worse over the past fortnight and if something is not done soon, the place will be reduced to a heap of rubble.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁶⁸⁹ *The Times*, 24th February 1982, p.14.

The press reporting of the ‘mini-Mafia riots’ constructed a narrative which suggested that whilst the school riots were ‘copycat’ events tied to the riots six months earlier, they also proffered the notion that the crux of the disturbances lay in the ‘omnipotence’ of one six-year-old girl who ‘terrorized an entire school’.⁶⁹⁰ As Robert Adams noted in his study of the events, there is little evidence in the press narratives that question the possibility that these incendiary incidents may have its origins in the pupil's responses to their treatment in school or the material conditions and experiences of their schooling.⁶⁹¹

When *The Times* explored the ‘mini-mafia riots’, a teacher was quoted as saying that the head had caned a group of seven children and ‘within an hour fourteen windows had been smashed and his car covered with swill.’⁶⁹² STOPP insisted that the ‘rioting’ had been triggered by the mass caning, and highlighted that the protest was ‘authentic in its own right.’⁶⁹³ The branch secretary of Liverpool NUT stated that ‘the children in these areas have seen their brothers and sisters rioting in the streets and they are just copying them in school.’⁶⁹⁴ *The Mirror* ran an expose of ‘Little Miss Mobster’,⁶⁹⁵ and *The Star* described the girl as ‘big, black and really nasty.’⁶⁹⁶ Thatcher herself spoke in the Commons on her ‘concern’ about the events at St Saviour’s in Liverpool, and two days later the ECHR made its fateful ruling on parental human rights. As Howard Davis and Mark Bourhill’s exploration of the mini-Mafia case revealed, the press during the 1980s was fairly rigid in using a ‘predefined template in the framing of such stories’.⁶⁹⁷ They conclude that what is absent from the debate – ‘children’s

⁶⁹⁰ Adams, R, *Protests by Pupils*, p.77.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹² *The Times*, 24th February 1982, p.14.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁵ *Daily Mirror*, 24th February 1982, p.4.

⁶⁹⁶ *Daily Star*, 24th February 1982, p.7.

⁶⁹⁷ Davis, H & Bourhill, M, ‘Children as Criminals’ in Scraton, P (ed), *Childhood in Crisis?* 1st ed. (UCL Press, 1997), p.35.

versions, children's rights issues, marginalisation' – is as important as what is being called for – 'calls for more discipline, deviant families or groups, subversion of traditional values and institutions'.⁶⁹⁸ The events of February 1982 demonstrated the way that media furores could be used to greatly over-exaggerate crimes; in the case of St Saviours, an enquiry found the allegations to be false. Yet, they were wielded as amplifications of a broader moral panic which intersected with class, race and dominant narratives about rising crime and social insubordination.⁶⁹⁹ These tensions around violence and discipline were playing out as Europe prepared to adjudicate a case between the UK Government and two women about corporal punishment and their human rights as parents.

European Court of Human Rights

1982 was a pivotal year in the corporal punishment debate in Britain. Britain remained the only European country to retain and practice corporal punishment in its schools, and it was the intervention and ruling of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that would force the Conservative government toward the path of abolition: a path, as it would transpire, that the government would unwillingly tread. This was not the first occasion that an ECHR's ruling had intervened and curtailed the punitive practices in British society. The ECHR had bought an end to the stubbornly held use of judicial birching in the Isle of Man in 1978. Yet, whereas the Isle of Man's birch was deemed an 'inhumane and degrading treatment or punishment' to the individual receiving it in the ECHR's ruling, the court's intervention in the case of punishment in Britain's schools focused not on the rights of the child punished, but of the rights of that child's parents.⁷⁰⁰ In effect, the ECHR ruling questioned and challenged the long-held principle that teachers utilising corporal punishment in schools were acting *in loco parentis*. If

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁷⁰⁰ Parker-Jenkins, M, *A Question of Balance: Schools, Discipline and Children's Rights*, Occasional Paper, 2008 <https://leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/000000912.htm> [Date last accessed: 01/02/19].

there was an absence of parental consent, then it was problematic to assert that any teacher applying corporal punishment was acting in the place of that parent. Although the focus on parental rights rather than those of the child coalesces with the broader shift from the participatory education rights movements of the early 1970s back into the social and welfare arena - where adults sought protection rights on children's behalf - the context in which the cases were brought to the ECHR played a significant role in determining whose rights were upheld in the ruling.

Conceived of in the aftermath of the Second World War, the European Convention on Human Rights and its enforcement agencies, the Court and the Commission, allowed ordinary citizens to petition against their own country and government and acted as final arbiter in any given human rights dispute.⁷⁰¹ The cases upon which the ECHR's intervention rested upon began in 1976 when two Scottish mothers, Mrs Grace Campbell and Mrs Jane Cosans applied to the ECHR in Strasbourg. Both parties charged that the UK was in breach of the European Rights Convention because corporal punishment was contrary to article 3: 'No-one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.'⁷⁰² They also alleged that the UK government had failed to respect parental objections to corporal punishment, which was in breach of article 2 of protocol 1 of the Convention:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the rights of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.⁷⁰³

Gordon Campbell, a six-year-old pupil, attended a school that employed corporal punishment, and his mother, Grace, had been unable to obtain a guarantee from the school that corporal

⁷⁰¹ Parker-Jenkins, M, *A Question of Balance*.

⁷⁰² Cited in Goodhart, M, *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016), p.260.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid*.

punishment would not be used against him. Gordon had never actually been physically punished at school, but the intransigence of the school to commit to never resort to the practice was enough for Mrs Campbell to take the case to the council in 1974. Jeffrey Cosans was threatened with corporal punishment for taking a shortcut through a cemetery on his way home from school. He refused the punishment and was similarly suspended from school until he would accept the beating. Both Mr & Mrs Cosans, like Grace Campbell, asked the Fife council for an assurance that corporal punishment would not be employed against their son, which was denied.⁷⁰⁴

What would go on to shape the case was that in neither instance had Gordon or Jeffrey been physically punished: Grace Campbell merely wished for an undertaking that the practice would not be employed in the future, and in Jeffrey's case, he had been punished by suspension for not agreeing to be corporally punished. It was because no physical act had taken place that the European Commission rejected the notion that their treatment had been in breach of Article 3. Had either Gordon or Jeffrey been given the tawse, then the Commission would likely have been persuaded that the use of corporal punishment was an 'inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.' As such, the case proceeded on the basis that the schools and LEA had refused to 'respect the parents' philosophical convictions, guaranteed by article 2 of protocol 1.' These particular circumstances would mean then that corporal punishment would be challenged not via the rights of children, but by the rights of their parents to shape their children's rights.⁷⁰⁵

On 25th February 1982 the ECHR ruled that the UK was in breach of the Convention for not respecting parental objections to corporal punishment in the case of *Cosans Vs the UK*. The European Court of Human Rights found the UK guilty of breaching Convention by not respecting *parental* rejections to corporal punishment; it was also guilty of denying Jeffrey

⁷⁰⁴ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.115.

⁷⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Cosans his right to education following his suspension for refusing to be tawsed. The reception of this ruling signified a significant shift in the Department of Education, who agreed to advise all of its LEAs that ‘the use of corporal punishment may, in certain circumstances, amount to treatment contrary to Article 2 of protocol 1.’⁷⁰⁶ The publicity of the Campbell & Cosans case helped to encourage parents to take Thatcher’s government to Strasbourg, such as the case of Mrs X v. the UK, which was deemed admissible by the Human Rights Commission that same year. STOPP detailed that in a post-ECHR ruling context they were able to assist ‘more than 20 other successful applications’, with more being made independently from STOPP by 1985.⁷⁰⁷ Yet, despite its warning to LEAs, the cane would continue to be employed in schools across the country. Determined to keep the cane, Thatcher’s government would spend more than £4 million in legal costs and compensation during the intransigent years that it would struggle to keep hold of the cane. The ECHR ruling was a landmark event in the corporal punishment debate, and its influence would shape the shifting arguments that would be held on the left of political discourse. The ECHR’s greatest achievement was in converting organisations such as teaching unions, who had remained stubbornly as the most inflexible facet of the left with regards to abolition, and with a clear party line on the subject, it would be Labour’s amendment to Thatcher’s compromise of corporal punishment that secured abolition in 1986.

Converting the political Left

Labour’s Dennis Canavan had brought a Private Members Bill forward in 1976 to abolish corporal punishment in schools, and it had been defeated 181 to 120. Indeed, more Labour MPs voted for abolition than other parties, but the vote was by no means divided by

⁷⁰⁶ Gordon, R & Ward, T, *Judicial Review and the Human Rights Act*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2000), p.8.

⁷⁰⁷ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.117.

party lines.⁷⁰⁸ Indeed, Labour had not implemented a whip on the vote. As this thesis has documented, the unions were overwhelmingly retentionist throughout the twentieth century. As the Campbell and Cosans' case grew traction in press, and as The National Union of Schools Students (NUSS) continued to pile pressure onto the Labour government's Education Secretary, Shirley Williams, a year after Canavan's defeat, Labour began consulting with the teaching unions upon the subject of corporal punishment's place in schools.⁷⁰⁹ STOPP would also play a significant role in this process of consultation.

During the 1982 Conference of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), teachers affiliated with STOPP played a part in persuading two local branches of the NUT to come out against the use of corporal punishment in the wake of the ECHR ruling, and then in securing both a resolution for abolition and in holding a 'fringe' press event at the beginning of the conference. It was here that Peter Newell details that STOPP:

Cut through the use of respectable and clinical terms like 'administering corporal punishment'... and used words such as 'beating', 'thrashing' or 'lashes of the cane' to get across the degree of pain and humiliation involved.'⁷¹⁰

The discussion at the NUT Conference was punctuated by a report that STOPP had published in conjunction with the British Psychological Society in 1980, which had come out strongly against the use of corporal punishment on the grounds of the severe and lasting psychological effects of corporal punishment.⁷¹¹ The working party that wrote the report, convened by Bob Green, a professor of psychology and STOPP committee member, had included the influential psychologist and childhood advice writer Penelope Leach. The report had gained support from many of the influential sponsors of STOPP, including Baroness Wootton of Abinger, whose

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.118.

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹¹ British Psychological Society, *Report of Working Party on Corporal Punishment in Schools*, (BSP, 1980).

bill to abolish the cane had been voted down in 1973, and Lady Plowden, whose influential report in 1967 had recommended abolition.⁷¹² STOPP also made use of the statistics that teachers had leaked to them, published in *Quarter of a Million Beatings* (1981), which as the title suggests, revealed that on average a quarter of a million ‘official’ canings were being employed in England alone each year.⁷¹³ It aimed to rebuff the much-held argument that corporal punishment was decreasing in use, and its follow-up suggested that nationally Britain was employing *One Every Nineteen Seconds* (1983).⁷¹⁴ STOPP’s strength lay in the amount of research it had conducted, and in the voices who were prepared to speak publicly and collectively for the NUT to adopt an abolitionist stance. These included doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers. It was not long before other institutions joined them.

As the NUT adopted a commitment to the abolition of corporal punishment in the wake of the ECHR ruling, the pressure that STOPP had been placing upon schools outside of LEA control similarly began to have an affect. STOPP recognised that persuading established churches to make a move toward abolition was an important step toward circumventing Thatcher’s stance and establishing commitments from authorities at a local and national level. As the NUT relented on the topic, the Church of England followed suit and the General Synod Board of Education issued a statement that all Anglican schools should ‘phase out and ultimately abolish the practice.’⁷¹⁵ A year later, the Catholic Educational Council took the same course of action.⁷¹⁶ Gradually, the institutions who had upheld and employed corporal punishment were shifting, as media discourses shifted and as research and analysis became the underpinning driver for reform. Shifting the Conservative stance on corporal punishment, particularly at a time when it was introducing votes on capital punishment, wasn’t seen as a

⁷¹² Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.118.

⁷¹³ STOPP, *Quarter of a Million Beatings: An Analysis of Official Statistics Exposing the Myths that Corporal Punishment Is Rarely Used*, 1st ed. (STOPP, 1981).

⁷¹⁴ STOPP, *One Every Nineteen Seconds*, 1st ed. (STOPP, 1983).

⁷¹⁵ *The Living Church*, (London, 1982), p. 29.

⁷¹⁶ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.118.

viable option by organisations like STOPP. The shift that had occurred in Labour Party policy that had accompanied Thatcher's first election victory, however, meant that any act or amendment in favour of abolition that was put forward in the House of Commons was far more likely to succeed.

The Labour Party had adopted a pro-abolition stance in 1979, and the Liberal party had then followed suit. A year later in 1980, Neil Kinnock, then Shadow Education Secretary, stated that a Labour government would commit to introducing legislation that would ban corporal punishment in schools, and in the meantime, its Labour controlled LEAs would continue to cease to employ it.⁷¹⁷ Just as the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) had been the first Education Authority to outright ban corporal punishment in primary schools in 1974, on 1st February of 1981, it became the fourth to ban the use of corporal punishment in all its schools. When the media covered the decision of the Labour authority, children's voices were selected from several schools and were presented as part of the debate. For example, four sixteen-year-old boys from the Holloway School in North London were given their say in *The Evening Standard* on 30th January. Holloway had already banned corporal punishment 18 months earlier on an experimental basis, and it would never permit the use of the cane again. Roy, one of the pupils, interviewed, gave an example of group punishment that was laid out for readers on the eve of Inner London abolition first:

When I was 13 all my class of 27 was caned by a master. We had a gym lesson with a class of boys younger than us. We played a game called Danish longball and the other class beat us. After that some of our class went on the rampage and a boy hit one of the younger team with a shoe. The deputy head heard about it. When the culprit did not own up and we refused to grass he caned us all. We did not cry – you can't do that in front of your friends. Even if it hurts you hold the tears back and pretend nothing has happened.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁸ *Evening Standard*, 30th January 1981, p.11.

Andy stated that '[c]anining makes boys come to school in fear – even a subconscious fear', and Milt added that he thought '[v]iolence breeds violence, you have no respect for the teacher after being caned. There is now a better relationship between teachers and boys. Some of the pupils who were constantly caned became school heroes.'⁷¹⁹



Figure 6.1: *Evening Standard*, 30th January 1981, p.11

In newspapers such as *The Evening Standard*, there was a celebratory tone, with a gleeful picture of one of the pupils in North London snapping one of the school's canes (Figure 6.1). Moreover, children were given space to document the extreme punishments that had existed in their schools, such as mass-canings, and the emotional impact of such discipline. Labours commitment to abolishing corporal punishment was far from simple. Michael Foot's much-critiqued Labour Party manifesto of 1983 promised that if in government, Labour would:

Abolish corporal punishment; and help local authorities and schools to develop other methods, already successfully practised in many schools, for dealing with bad behaviour.⁷²⁰

Foot's Labour lost to the most decisive victory for a government since that of Labour in 1945, and such a political shift made fulfilling its commitment to securing abolition through LEAs

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷²⁰ Dale, I, *Labour Party General Election Manifestos, 1900-1997*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2007), p.264.

far less likely. In 1984, STOPP concluded that although a few Educational Authorities had banned corporal punishment, '94 per cent of boy's secondary schools retained corporal punishment and 81 per cent of all secondary schools still permitted corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure.'⁷²¹ Increasing pressure, however, was being placed upon the Conservative government to acknowledge the ECHR ruling in their forthcoming Education Bill, and Thatcher's compromise was an unpopular one.

When in January of 1985 the Education (Corporal Punishment) Bill was presented to the House of Commons, retention was firmly in the mind of Thatcher, who proffered that, in the spirit of the ECHR ruling, parents would be given the right to opt their children out of corporal punishment. The government created a two-tiered system, where corporal punishment could be employed on one student, and a non-physical method of discipline employed on another for the same misdemeanour. A media furore emanated from this 'apartheid' approach, with teachers, educational organisations and unions such as the recently converted NUT speaking out in the press against Thatcher's 'fudge' around the ECHR ruling.⁷²² Internal memos show that several key players in the Department of Education and Science itself remained unconvinced by a system where two types of pupil would be disciplined in different ways, indicating a preferred policy where schools, not parents, retained the right to choose.⁷²³ As Marie Parker-Jenkin's states, the two-tiered scheme was 'noteworthy for the fact that it united previously opposing factions on the issue of corporal punishment to declare it as ludicrous, unworkable, and educationally indefensible.'⁷²⁴

With mixed-party support, the House of Lords voted to turn Thatcher's compromise into an abolitionist amendment by a close vote of 108 to 104.⁷²⁵ Defeated in Parliament and

⁷²¹ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.137.

⁷²² *Ibid.*

⁷²³ PREM 19/1485.

⁷²⁴ Parker-Jenkins, M, *A Question of Balance* [Date last accessed: 01/02/19].

⁷²⁵ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.138.

widely criticised in the press, Thatcher withdrew the Bill shortly after. The government's defeat in the Lords indicated how close any subsequent votes in the Commons might be. However, it also signified that Thatcher's government was fighting against a much more vocal and much more present body of teachers, experts and institutions which had gained prominence in the corporal punishment increasingly public debate. A previously hostile press was increasingly turning to organisations like STOPP and the scientific community that affiliated with them to present to audiences the research that underpinned their abolitionist arguments. This shift in the media's receptiveness to abolitionist opinions was part of a broader, more complex cultural shift that was particularly prominent on the left of popular culture during the 1980s, which had its roots in earlier cultural depictions and explorations of corporal punishment.

Culture

During the 1980s, the burgeoning debate on the politics of safeguarding children continued to permeate into the cultural landscape, and as the more light-hearted and less emotionally-challenging approach to cultural representations of childhood punishment were critiqued and challenged, there emerged a longing for a more enjoyable, less challenging landscape of those earlier manifestations. In 1982, in the wake of the ECHR's landmark judgement on corporal punishment, STOPP made a public call to Whale Toys to cease manufacturing the game *Thrash*, as they believed that 'impressionable youngsters could be mentally harmed by the game.'⁷²⁶ Whale Toys bit back saying that it was 'ludicrous to suggest that they were encouraging child beating' as *Thrash* 'was designed by two children for the TV show *Tiswas*.'⁷²⁷ The game, produced in 1981, was designed to be played by two, with the aim of the teacher converting the 'rebel' pupil into a 'swot', and the pupil to 'send the strict teacher

⁷²⁶ *Daily Mail* 22nd December 1982, p.3.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*

crazy.⁷²⁸ These public challenges to specific, light-hearted cultural incarnations of corporal punishment permeated an increasingly hostile class of media commentators, who expressed nostalgia for a more innocent and less challenged era.

When Billy Bunter had been re-edited, revamped and re-released by author Kay King, corporal punishment had by no means been edited out of the books. Indeed many of the new covers for the 1980s editions featured Mr Quelch and his notorious cane. What had changed was that the graphic ‘blood-curdling vowels striking gleeful terror into generations of young readers’ which often went on for a full page had now been edited down to ‘just eight lines.’⁷²⁹ It was not simply attitudes to corporal punishment that were being challenged in King’s revised editions: *The Daily Mail* believed that the revised Indian character now only said ‘boring’ things, whereas back in 1954 he had been a humorous caricature who was ‘permanently at odds with the English language’.⁷³⁰ As culture shifted on the subject of corporal punishment and how it was discussed, and as the light-hearted trope became diluted, a sense of loss emerged.

A year before this mourning for 1954’s well-beaten Billy Bunter, Paramount Pictures had produced perhaps one of the last major movies where corporal punishment had largely been used as a vehicle for humour, farce and frivolity. Based upon what is now widely recognised as a seminal US memoir and exposé that uncovered the use of corporal punishment as extreme abuse in the home, Christina Crawford’s 1978 book *Mommie Dearest* had caused immediate controversy within the pages of magazines and newspapers, both in the US and UK.⁷³¹ As Christina detailed in her 2017 revised edition of her book, well-known celebrities who knew Christina’s mother, actress Joan Crawford, denounced the claims of extreme

⁷²⁸ *Ibid*

⁷²⁹ *Daily Mail* 1st December 1982, p.13.

⁷³⁰ *Ibid*.

⁷³¹ Crawford, C, *Mommie Dearest*, 2nd ed. (Grafton, 1989).

beatings and abuse as ‘embellished’ and ‘exaggerated’.⁷³² Christina’s brother, however, maintained its accuracy, as did an increasing number of close friends of Joan, who corroborated other instances of violent punishment.⁷³³ Moreover, Christina detailed the punishments that she received from others apart from her mother too, where employed nurses would beat her with belts, coat hangers, and with her ears often twisted by Crawford.⁷³⁴ Most famously Christina detailed what she called Joan Crawford’s ‘night raids’, where Christina was severely beaten with a wire coat hanger, and days later, her head was repeatedly beaten with a floor detergent tin can.⁷³⁵

When the book was made into a film in 1981, the scenes which interpreted the severe abuse that Christina detailed subsumed a firm place in the hallowed halls of camp culture, much to the horror of Christina herself. Drag acts would compete to ‘outdo each other for fiercest impersonation of Faye Dunaway in Crawford mode’, and the ‘no wire hangers’ line became a central tenant of these acts. As Alex Davidson acknowledges in his defence of the film, all but Christina enjoyed the campy of the ‘gay pantomime’ which stood in for ‘her harrowing history of child abuse.’⁷³⁶ The film was a box office hit, in both the United State and in the United Kingdom, but for Dunaway, the humour in her performance that was found on screen had been unintentional, and despite its success, it did little to aid Christina’s demands that the abuse she had detailed was not exaggerated or embellished.

⁷³² Crawford, C, *The Mommie Dearest Collection: Two Memoirs of Survival*, 1st ed. (Open Road Media, 2017), p.17.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁴ Crawford, C, *Mommie Dearest*, p.87.

⁷³⁵ Crawford, C, *Mommie Dearest*, p.114.

⁷³⁶ Davidson, A, *In Defence of Mommie Dearest*, 2017 <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/mommie-dearest-joan-crawford-faye-dunaway> [Date last accessed: 01/02/19].



Figure 6.2: Still from *Mommie Dearest*, 1981

What turned a scene which depicts brutal corporal punishment into a ‘gay pantomime’ lay partly in the way that the scene was shot and, in the way that it was edited. Filmed largely from a child’s eye perspective, Dunaway, as Davidson states ‘looms over the camera like a nightmarish ogre’, her face whitened with night cream (Figure 6.2).⁷³⁷ Her violent, seemingly uncontrollable anger over something as seemingly trivial as a wire coat hanger gives the high drama a quality of the absurd, and it retains the power for audience’s belief to be suspended. To a child, as Davidson suggests, the scene may well be frightening, but to an adult, it speaks far more to the absurd and the comical, particularly when it was decided to speed up some of the footage of abuse in post-production. What has been hidden until recently is that that Dunnaway had by accident beaten child actress Mara Hobel with a wire coat hanger during the shooting of the scene. Reminiscent of the very private debacle that had arisen when corporal punishment had been employed during shooting the 1969 film *Kes*, actress Rutanya Alda, who had been present on set during the punishment scene in *Mommie Dearest*, revealed:

It was a very emotional day because Faye had missed and really clobbered little Mara. And Mara got all upset and went crying off the set and Frank got really upset because he didn’t know what to do because child welfare was going to get called (audience laughs). Fay realised she had gone a little too far and they broke for a couple of hours.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁷ Davidson, A, *In Defence of Mommie Dearest*, [Date last accessed: 01/02/19].

⁷³⁸ *Mother’s Day with Mommie Dearest: Interview with Rutanya Alda*, 11th May 2013.

Ken Loach had, in 1969, given the child actors he had deceitfully caned some additional money to buy their silence. In 1981, Alda details that ‘...they got all kinds of toys for Mara. She was bought off.’⁷³⁹ Silence could be bought in the same way in the 1980s, but there was considerably more at stake for studios, with the potential for the questioning of child safeguarding violations. The abuse suffered by Christina Crawford in the 1950s was witnessed by many adults, yet the power dynamics between the child and adults was of such disparity that they were only exposed when Christina did so herself in adulthood. Mara Hobel’s unintentional beating during the dramatic reconstruction of Christina’s experiences, and the subsequent ‘coverup’ speak to a continuity in practice where children continued to prove easily silenced despite shifts in approaches to child safety and children’s rights.

Rutanya Alda, who had incidentally once stayed overnight at Christina Crawford’s home confessed that: ‘when they were gone I went to her bedroom and looked in her closet... and there was nothing but wire hangers!’⁷⁴⁰ In many ways the symbolism of wire hanger speaks to Christina’s agency, then and now. Her Mother’s abhorrence for wire hangers grew from living above a dry cleaner; they evoked her own brutal, poverty-stricken childhood. Christina’s ambivalence to this symbolism whilst immersed in a life of plenty affronted her mother, and therefore she repeatedly and brutally beat Christina with it. The continued presence of those wire hangers in her closet speaks to a reassertion of agency and a continued defiance. It is, however, the lashing, gorgon-like Joan that was embraced in gay culture and not the act of punishment itself. Wire hangers were never employed in drag acts, only flung in the air at the crescendo of ‘no wire hangers EVER!’.

What is absent from both the book and film’s release, is a discussion about Christina’s experiences beyond either questioning their validity or making a pantomime of them. The

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

publishing of life stories that document childhood abuse and trauma has burgeoned in recent history, and these experiences have contributed to the activism against child abuse and have been visible in wider public debates. But in the 1980s while Christina's history shone a light into the dark history of a Hollywood superstar, Hollywood took nearly forty million dollars at the box office by stylising it into a farce. It was not until the twentieth-anniversary edition of the book that it began to be recognised as, and discussed as, a book that documents the extremities of corporal punishment and physical and emotional abuse.⁷⁴¹

On 11th February 1985 the subject of corporal punishment was brought to the fore when The Smiths' second and only number one album *Meat is Murder* was released. The album's discussion of flesh and bodies and the corporeality of society spoke from autobiographical narratives and specific political beliefs. Moreover, the call to protect flesh extended beyond the human sphere. The politics of *Meat is Murder* explored how society was conditioned into often contradictory actions, and it used corporal punishment and the slaughter of animals to show how the body politic treated vulnerable beings differently. The album suggests that everyday life was filled with barbaric rituals because individuals were largely able to disassociate themselves from the realities of violent mores. The walls of the classroom and abattoir were effective barriers to society having to see or hear the violence of everyday life, and *Meat is Murder* sought to imagine and feel the emotionality of corporal suffering. The album itself is a 'catalogue of violence, from fairground to family home and slaughterhouse', and the twisting melody that accompanies the word 'down' in the lyrics from *Headmaster Ritual*: 'he does the military two-step *down* the nape of my neck', vocally coaxes the audience to re-live that familiar, discomfoting ripple of terror that seizes one's neck muscles at times of fear or dread. *Headmaster Ritual* was such a damning indictment of the education system that

⁷⁴¹ Crawford, C, *The Mommie Dearest Collection*, p.17.

the Labour-controlled Manchester Education Committee tried to have the album banned from playing within their jurisdiction of Greater Manchester.⁷⁴²

Morrissey publicly defended his right to attack the Manchester Education Committee on *Granada Reports* on 21st February 1985, and then stated in March that St Mary's Secondary Modern in Stretford 'emotionally sodomised' him: 'I remember it all in great detail... the horror of it cannot be over-emphasised. Every single day was a human nightmare.'⁷⁴³ In pre-abolition Britain, and with the same headmaster heading the school that Morrissey attended, this very public semi-autobiographical testament to how children had been treated in the school forced the headmaster, Mr Morgan, on to the local airwaves, where he assured listeners that [Morrissey] 'was such a good boy that he was never hit.'⁷⁴⁴ As discussed earlier, the closure of punishment books for this period means that we cannot verify that Morrissey's name is in the school records for the more formalised form of caning or the tawse. However, *Headmaster Ritual* does not detail this more formalised form of admonishment, but the often more commonplace and more invisible sites of bodily correction: the school playing field and showers. These books may be closed to researchers for legal reasons, but previously published examples from the era show only the punishments meted out by the designated signatory to the book, using a vane or tawse. Punishment books certainly had never detailed teachers thwacking knees, kneeling groins or elbowing children in the face, as is detailed in the song, but we do find this very corporal and extreme kinds of experiences in state schools and other institutions documented in life histories.

Just as other songs in Morrissey's canon had taken inspiration from films, particularly of the post-war 'kitchen sink' variety, there are echoes of *Kes* (1969) in Morrissey's line about

⁷⁴² *Meat is Murder*, (Rough Trade, 1985).

⁷⁴³ Jones, Allan, 'Trial by Jury' in *Melody Maker*, March 1984.

⁷⁴⁴ Quoted in Goddard, S, *Mozipedia: The Encyclopaedia of Morrissey and The Smiths*, 1st ed. (Ebury Press, 2009), p.162.

being grabbed, kicked and devoured in the shower.⁷⁴⁵ *Headmaster Ritual* is, therefore, more of a collective testament to the private, undocumented barbarities that existed in society, including where they had been explored elsewhere in culture. *The Guardian*'s Arthur Denslow called Morrissey 'the agony aunt for an entire new depressed generation', but Morrissey said that the 'often highly disturbing' letters that he received demonstrated that his music had written 'peoples diaries and put them down on vinyl.'⁷⁴⁶ A sense of authenticity is evoked here, and it is anchored in the burgeoning cultural acknowledgement of childhood feelings and agency, and it employs them as a political thorn in the side of contemporary politics.

In February 1986, Trevor Nunn's historical biopic film *Lady Jane* premiered in London to some critical acclaim.⁷⁴⁷ It was not the first time that the tragic story of Lady Jane Grey had been brought to the screen. In 1936, the British film *Nine Days a Queen* had enjoyed a double release owing to its parallels with the abdication crisis that shook the foundations of the British establishment in that same year. Partly a remake of this earlier film, Nunn's *Lady Jane* differed in that it presented Jane as a victim of cruel domestic violence. In 1936, Jane's parents had been offered to cinemagoers as kindly yet weak in the face of significant political and religious turmoil. Fifty years later, *The Washington Post* commented that Jane's mother had been represented as the 'Mommy Dearest of the 1550s'.⁷⁴⁸ Historical dramas, particularly those depicting the British Monarchy, had remained a popular staple of the film industry across the postwar period, yet typically had presented a more traditionally conservative approach to the history of the women of the Tudor Era.⁷⁴⁹ *Lady Jane*, directed by Trevor Nunn, was decidedly more left-leaning than was typical: Jane Grey is re-written as a reluctant yet capable young monarch, championing a proto-welfare state which is then crushed days later by a ruthless,

⁷⁴⁵ Denslow, A, 'The Agony Aunt' in *The Observer*, (London, 24th February 1985), p.25.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁷ *Lady Jane*, (Dir. Trevor Nunn, 1986).

⁷⁴⁸ *Washington Post*, 7th February 1986, p.19.

⁷⁴⁹ Levin, C, 'Lady Jane Grey in Film' in Doran, S & Freeman, T, *Tudors and Stuarts on Film: Historical Perspectives*, 1st ed., (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 82.

bloody female despot. Nunn himself was candid about wanting to bring ‘1960s socialism’ into the 1550s, and the conduit by which he could do so was by aligning socialism with Protestantism and its schism with the traditionally conservative values with Catholicism.⁷⁵⁰ Thatcher was Bloody Mary, returning England to traditional ways, and Jane represented the continuing reformist threat that needed to be crushed.

Corporal punishment played a central role in the film. Jane, who is presented as the young, ‘bluestocking’ cousin of Edward VI, is shown to be brutally beaten by her mother when she refuses to marry Guilford Dudley, the son of the boy-king Edward’s protector, the Duke of Northumberland. Nunn orchestrated the scene where Jane is birched to echo the 1883 painting by French artist, Paul Delaroché (see Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4). The X-chair that Jane is punished on echoes the executioner’s block or indeed, the cross, and Jane’s mother, Frances, plays the role of executioner. Behind the site of punishment, servants stand helpless to intervene. *Lady Jane* does not shy away from depicting a preception of often-brutal punitive mores in the 16th Century, and bodily punishment is shown to be used as a method by which children accept or give in to the agency of their parents. Between strokes, Jane repeats that she ‘just [doesn’t] see why’, to which her mother responds ‘then I must make you see’, before employing further punishment.⁷⁵¹ Finally, Jane relents and agrees to marry, but this only happens after the King, her cousin, explains to her while playing with puppets that it is his wish that she marries. *Lady Jane*’s birching scene is brutal, but it is also shown to be ineffectual, as Jane is only persuaded when reasoning is employed. Jane’s marriage was a necessary manoeuvre on the part of her and her husband’s parents to place her on the throne as the Protestant heir to Edward, in the stead of the Catholic Princess Mary, the heir named by his

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵¹ *Lady Jane*, (Dir. Trevor Nunn, 1986).

father. Jane's brutal childhood underpins the policies that she would pursue during her nine-day reign.



Figure 6.3: (left): Scene from *Lady Jane* (1986)

Figure 6.4: (right): *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* by Paul Delaroche.

Proto-socialist Jane and her equally radical husband are shown to give away the Royal Wardrobe 'to warm the wretched and to clothe the comfortless' and to free all political prisoners. They demand that a parliament be called to repeal the branding (corporal punishment by burning symbols into the flesh) of the 'unfortunates forced into beggary' and order that the monastic lands be made public property for the 'use and cultivation of the common people in perpetuity'.⁷⁵² Another of Jane's demands was that schools be endowed, to 'teach the children of the poor not by beating and cajolement, but by love and by nurture.'⁷⁵³ 1553 'socialism' lost out to Bloody-Mary's Thatcherism, and Jane punishment-free state schools were only being realised in the year that *Lady Jane* hit the cinema screens. Historical accuracy in popular culture is not the subject of this study, but the injection of contemporary socialist politics into the film's narrative speaks to the way that the anti-corporal punishment argument was becoming recognised as a tenant of contemporary left-wing politics. As we have already seen, Labour had only adopted a party-wide abolitionist stance in 1980, and although much of the anti-corporal punishment debate had emanated from those on the left of politics, for much of the

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*

twentieth-century the debate had been held at grassroots level, with the teaching unions and political left favouring and upholding retention in schools. Culturally, corporal punishment had historically shown kids rioting and tearing the ‘establishment’ down with violence, as seen in *Spare the Rod and If...*, which were particularly centralised around the dynamics of masculine resistance. It aimed to make clear the long-held abolitionist argument that violence breeds violence. In the months before the cane fell, audiences were presented with the idea that violence could be challenged without returning violence, and that protecting children was the business of the state.

From 1981’s *Mommie Dearest* to 1986’s *Lady Jane*, corporal punishment began to shift from the long-held tropes of humour and buffoonery to an often more stark and challenging landscape, and this shift was observable in children’s television as well as in the adult arena. The clash over the *Tizwas Thrash* game and the ‘dumbing down’ of Billy Bunter’s canings arose as the ECHR ruled in favour of parental choice on the matter of corporal punishment in school. Children’s programmes such as *Grange Hill* had shown regular clips around the ear and canings of certain pupils when it started in 1978, and characters such as Tucker and Benny were caned for breaking into private property during school time in the first series.⁷⁵⁴ With the palpable furore over the pending ECHR ruling, and as *Grange Hill* entered Thatcher’s Britain, the show adopted a different approach to depicting contemporary corporal punishment. When the character Cathy was faced with suspension in 1981, it is her mother that asks for corporal punishment to be employed, even when the headmistress, Mrs McClusky, expresses surprise at the suggestion. Corporal punishment was now being represented as a negotiation between teacher, parent and pupil, all of whom agree on the course of corporal punishment over suspension.⁷⁵⁵ In three years, corporal punishment had shifted from being a normal part of a

⁷⁵⁴ *Grange Hill*, (BBC, 5th April 1978).

⁷⁵⁵ *Grange Hill*, (BBC, 20th February 1981).

teachers remit in schools to one where a very clear negotiation was being made between parent and teacher. Mrs McClusky was not acting *in loco parentis*, as corporal punishment had been seen to be administered in the show back in 1978: Cathy and her mother are shown to be the agents of the punishment, suggesting corporal punishment as an alternative and giving consent themselves.⁷⁵⁶ After the ECHR ruling followed the next year, corporal punishment suddenly fell from use at Grange Hill without comment, even though it continued in many of the schools that its audience attended. Thatcher's compromise to avoid an outright ban was eerily similar to that found in Grange Hill: corporal punishment would stay, but would only apply to children whose parents consented to its implementation.⁷⁵⁷ As we have seen, Thatcher's compromise was resoundingly criticised and was shortly after that withdrawn. The political climate within which corporal punishment fell was as important to the outcome as the events which interrupted Thatcher's last grasp of the cane.

Abolition

On 25th February 1986, STOPP delivered an 'arrest warrant' to No. 10 Downing Street. The accused was Margaret Thatcher, and the crime cited was 'breaking European law by failing to implement the court's judgement.'⁷⁵⁸ With the House of Lords due to debate the government's Education Bill within a month it was a provocative manoeuvre on STOPP's part, particularly as they had been at the forefront of the debate which had scuppered Thatcher's ECHR compromise back in 1985. The closeness of the Lord's vote to support an abolitionist stance had suggested that the political landscape was fairly evenly drawn on the subject, even if there was an audibly growing progressive cultural presence in the debate. The Lords' debate took place on 17th April 1986, and as part of their deliberations on the Education Bill, an

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵⁷ For an in-depth analysis of the role of *Grange Hill* in creating anxieties about childhood behaviour, see Gower, A, *A "glamorisation of hooliganism" or a "useful social service"? The Politics and Anxieties of Childhood in Grange Hill, 1978 – 1995*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Sussex (2015)

⁷⁵⁸ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p.139.

amendment that proposed the abolition of corporal punishment was once again moved with all-party support, succeeding in a vote by a majority of only two.⁷⁵⁹ What is clear, however, is that by Thatcher's calculations, she believed that she had the numbers to secure a majority in the House of Commons against the amendment, without the need of a party whip.⁷⁶⁰ Thus Thatcher believed that she could also fulfil her commitment to a free vote on the matter. Michael Foot's successor, former shadow Education Secretary Neil Kinnock, implemented a three-line whip on the Parliamentary Labour Party, which had not been anticipated by Thatcher. Moreover, STOPP had one last surprise for Margaret Thatcher that she hadn't quite calculated.

1986 was a particularly febrile year for Thatcher. Philip Jenkins cites it as the year that 'the physical and sexual abuse of children' took hold in dominant tabloid discourses around child safety, despite it being at the forefront of feminist thought and praxis for decades.⁷⁶¹ The Cleveland child abuse scandal that began to break that year which dominated tabloid columns for years to come would focus, however, far more upon the conduct of the social workers who exposed widespread abuse, and whose voices had been previously ignored.⁷⁶² As Thatcher prepared to put 'family values' at the forefront of her Education Bill, with increased responsibility not given to the state but to parents, her government and the media at large were largely silent on the extent to which a family-values approach would play a role 'in dissimulating the extent of male violence and sexual abuse of women and children within the family.'⁷⁶³ The debate in the House of Commons that would precede the MPs vote was also held at a particularly precarious time for Thatcher owing to a very recently averted constitutional crisis that involved a leak from Buckingham Palace which suggested that the Queen was strongly against both Thatcher's domestic and foreign policy. Thatcher's continued

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁰ PREM 19/1485.

⁷⁶¹ Jenkins, P, *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Great Britain*, 1st ed. (Aldine Transaction, 1992) p.62.

⁷⁶² Campbell, B. *Unofficial Secrets: Child Abuse – The Cleveland Case*, 1st ed. (Virago, 1998) pp.103-111.

⁷⁶³ Jagger, G & Wright, C (eds.) *Changing Family Values*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1999), p.9.

refusal to join all the other Commonwealth countries in imposing sanctions against South African Apartheid and the brutality broadcast in news bulletins during the Miner's strike led papers to publish leaked information that the Queen was 'dismayed at uncaring Thatcher'.

Further revelations from the Queen's press secretary suggested that the Queen believed that Thatcher's government had 'torn away at the social fabric' of the country, and the country as a whole was 'divided'.⁷⁶⁴ Much hay was made of the crisis, particularly as record numbers of African countries abandoned the Commonwealth Games in protest against Thatcher's intransigence over Apartheid. The Royal Wedding of Prince Andrew to Sarah Ferguson was a welcome distraction for Thatcher in July of 1986 which did much to ease the press speculation of a constitutionally damaging rift between No. 10 and Buckingham Palace.⁷⁶⁵ The vote for abolition fell on the night before that Royal Wedding.

The *Daily Mail* wrote with confidence that the free vote that the Conservative party had been given on the abolition of corporal punishment would ensure that the final decision would be 'left to heads and parents.' It confirmed that the Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker, would be voting amid 'most' Tories to retain the cane.⁷⁶⁶ On 21st July, the night before the debate in the Commons, *The London Standard* published a picture of the effects of a severe caning on the buttocks of a thirteen-year-old pupil who had been given the cane at a Grammar School for getting low marks in an exam. Six strokes of the cane had been employed, and the visible bloodied-bruising in full-colour print was ominously reminiscent of the horrific pictures that had evidenced the Court Lees scandal back in 1967, as explored in chapter four. STOPP had

⁷⁶⁴ Emmerson, O, *Queen Dismayed at Uncaring Thatcher*
<https://headmasterrituals.wordpress.com/2013/06/26/bigmouth-strikes-again-queen-dismayed-at-uncaring-thatcher/> [Date last accessed: 22/01/18].

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁶ *Daily Mail*, 11th June 1986, p.16.

played a significant role in the publication of the contentious picture, and it was frequently a point of discussion throughout the debate in the Commons on the evening of 22nd July 1986.

James Pawsey led the motion for the government to dismiss the clause to abolish corporal punishment for the Conservative Party. He gave a brief history of the ECHR ruling and argued that the use of corporal punishment should be decided by LEAs in conjunction with schools. He added that while it was constitutionally sound that the House of Lords had once before returned an abolitionist amendment:

The house might, therefore, agree that the wrecking amendments to two Bills to destroy their purpose in a matter which affects almost every family in the land are to be deeply regretted.⁷⁶⁷

Pawsey's belief that the Lords were overreaching by returning an abolitionist amendment for a second time was a contentious one for members of both the opposition and his own MPs, who were quick to intervene, particularly the ever-vocal Eurosceptic MPs who sat amongst the government benches. For them, they argued, the ECHR ruling should have no moral bearing on the will of the UK Parliament.⁷⁶⁸ As the debate progressed, Pawsey's defence of corporal punishment as being primarily a deterrent, infrequently used, was hotly contested by Labour MPs, who brought with them not parliamentary research on the extent of corporal punishment in schools, but the statistics compiled and analysed by the pressure group STOPP. Moreover, much to the dismay of the retentionists on the Government benches, so too did Conservative MPs.

Conservative MP Robert Key expressed relief that his 'county education authority in Wiltshire [had] already seen the light' and articulated regret that only 34 of 125 LEAs had abolished the use of corporal punishment.⁷⁶⁹ As he gave statistics to disprove his own

⁷⁶⁷ Pawsey, J, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁶⁸ Marlow, T & Hogg, D, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

government's claim that corporal punishment was infrequently used, such as citing 12,369 instances of corporal punishment recorded in Cleveland secondary schools from September 1980 to May 1983, his use of a pressure group's statistics was called in to question, with interventions complaining that 'My hon. Friend is only reading from the STOPP brief'.⁷⁷⁰ Key rebuffed that:

The STOPP organisation has the finest statistics available to prove the point that I am trying to make, so of course I shall quote it. I shall quote it even more if I am encouraged in this way.⁷⁷¹

As tensions rose in the House, STOPP's influence on the debate continued to create tension, particularly when it came to members citing the aforementioned *London Standard* photograph, punished the previous evening. Labour's David Winnick was the first to draw attention to the photo. James Pawsey stated that:

The era of thrashing, beating and whacking is over. The emotive talk of cruelty to children perpetrated by adults is an exaggeration. The cane is a simple aid to discipline in the same way as the blackboard is an aid to learning.⁷⁷²

David Winnick, armed with a copy of *The London Standard*, asked Pawsey to give way, and interjected thusly:

The hon. Gentleman talks of the cane as a powerful deterrent, but has he seen the photograph in *The London Standard* showing the marks on a boy punished with a cane? That is a disgraceful state of affairs. Is that the kind of society that the hon. Gentleman wants to encourage? He should look at that photograph and tell the House whether he condones what happened to that boy.⁷⁷³

Though still confident of their voting numbers, those, such as Pawsey, arguing to vote down the amendment did not have the thickness of the research-based arguments that had been

⁷⁷⁰ Greenway, H, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷¹ Key, R, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷² Pawsey, J, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷³ Winnick, D, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

accumulated by teachers, psychologists, and activists under the STOPP umbrella. Despite the use of this material by abolitionist MPs which batted down claims of exaggeration, those advocating for retention could dismiss evidence on the basis of it being ‘emotive’. Emotion, and its supposed opposite, reason, was a much-contested dichotomy in the Chamber that evening.

Giles Radice, Shadow Secretary of State for Education also cited the photograph in his speech and made full use of STOPP’s research throughout. Corporal punishment was, in the Labour party’s view, ‘barbaric, inhumane and open to abuse’.⁷⁷⁴ Tory MP Harry Greenway objected to Radice’s use of ‘emotive words such as “beating”, “hitting” and “violence”’ which he stated ‘is not helpful. Corporal punishment should not be seen in those terms. It should only be used for the most serious school offences.’⁷⁷⁵ He added that *London Standard* photograph, ‘if properly reported, is an example of extremely bad practice.’⁷⁷⁶ For many on the abolitionist side, however, the emotional well-being of children, particularly in relation to inflicting pain, was a valid and often central part of the corporal punishment debate. Labour’s Andrew Bennett asked retentionists to be frank about corporal punishment’s function:

Conservative Members have to face up to certain problems connected with corporal punishment. Is it to be administered because it is a disgrace to the pupil who receives it? If that is the reason for administering corporal punishment, there are alternatives to it that signify that the pupil is in disgrace. Or is corporal punishment to be administered not because it disgraces the pupil but because it inflicts pain? Major problems are involved if the intention is to inflict pain.

Entirely why the infliction of pain was necessary in the process of disciplining children in schools was an area of the debate that the retentionists continued to evade throughout the evening, particularly when alternative methods to corporal punishment were demonstrated by

⁷⁷⁴ Radice, G, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷⁵ Greenway, H, Pawsey, J, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷⁶ Greenway, H, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

abolitionists to have the same effects that retentionists stated were desirable outcomes of physical chastisement.

Other MPs, such as Labour's Jack Ashley were keen to rebuff the claims that abolitionists were asking for 'softness and sentimentality' toward the subject of discipline in schools. Emphasising that corporal punishment was intrinsically linked with inflicting pain on children, which he believed simply created more violence in turn, he called for a 'reasonable' method of dealing with children's discipline in schools to rid 'one element of violence in our violent society.'⁷⁷⁷ Moreover, the emotional implications of inflicting pain on children emerged as a common thread throughout abolitionist interventions. Labour's Stuart Bell was one of the MPs who cited the emotional as well as physical effects of corporal punishment on children throughout society and emphasised that: 'we know that caning leaves deep mental and physical impressions of those who are subjected to it.'⁷⁷⁸

This tension between emotion being used as a legitimate category of analysis and being used to criticise and invalidate claims was in many ways indicative of how the corporal punishment debate had played out across the twentieth century. What had changed was the extent to which MPs were seeing emotion, psychological well-being and its relation to the physical as a legitimate and central part of children's safeguarding. In previous debates in the Commons, such as in 1953, 'well-worn arguments' were easily dismissed as having been 'drawn freely from emotion'.⁷⁷⁹ By 1986, the extent to which the emotional and physical well-being of children were being recognised as inextricably linked had shifted enormously. With many Tory MPs also espousing the need to protect children from both physical and emotional harm, the house could not have been more divided on the subject than it was on the evening of

⁷⁷⁷ Ashley, J, Pawsey, J, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷⁸ Bell, S, *Hansard*, 22nd July 1986.

⁷⁷⁹ *The Times*, 14th February 1953, p.11.

abolition. In the end, the division was swung not by the debate but by the effects of the same event that helped smooth over Thatcher's constitutional crisis.

As Pawsey asked the house to vote down the amendment, and as the house divided into their respective voting lobbies it soon became apparent to the government tellers that all was not well. The vote could not have been closer: 230 MPs voted to keep the cane, but 231 had voted for its abolition. In a hairs-breadth vote of 1, corporal punishment in England and Wales was voted down in the House of Commons. As the pictures of First Lady Nancy Reagan and Margaret Thatcher appeared in the newspapers the next morning, the reason for the shock vote emerged. Thatcher herself had been unable to vote for the retention of corporal punishment in state schools as she had been entertaining the US Presidential party. Moreover, thirteen Tory MPs had been sat in the huge swells of pre-wedding traffic that had brought central London to a standstill as the vote took place. Had the vote on the Lord's abolitionist amendment been held on another date, Thatcher may well have comfortably kept hold of the cane. Although the abolition of corporal punishment on 22nd July 1986 may seem somewhat of a matter of circumstance, the corporal punishment debate had actually shifted more than Thatcher's government had anticipated. STOPP, through the Conservative MP Robert Key, had garnered far more support for abolition amongst the government benches than the government had anticipated. Key had even distributed copies of *The London Standard* to 'wavering' MPs.⁷⁸⁰ Eclipsed by the wedding the following day, considering the column inches that had been dedicated to the corporal punishment debate across the decade, the vote was sparsely reported on by the tabloid or broadcast media. However, corporal punishment in schools didn't go quietly. It fell out of use just as awkwardly as the birch and the pillory before it.

⁷⁸⁰ Newall, P, *Children are People Too*, p. 123.

Conclusion

On 30th October 1986, the *BBC Broadcast Childwatch*, a programme that sought to educate viewers how to recognise signs of child abuse. The telephone line that was opened at the end of the show to assist any children who were suffering abuse would go on to be launched as *Childline*. The service was a 24/7 helpline for children to report the abuse they were suffering and for interventions to be made. *Childline* was a significant step in ensuring that abused children were able to be heard, particularly as it came just before the Cleveland sexual abuse scandal broke early in 1987. If 1986 was the year that the abuse of children became widely discussed in the media, then 1987 was the year that safeguarding practices began to be publicly critiqued, as the media furore around Cleveland sex abuse case demonstrated. Throughout Thatcher's time in government, she evaded the prospect of adopting the ECHR's definition of the human rights of the child, and her successor adopted them into law in 1991. Thatcher's defeat on the matter of corporal punishment was an arbitration in a vision that saw more familial responsibility of children, their well-being, and their behaviour. Thatcher was defeated on the subject because of the pressure of activism – from children and adults – which had forced the corporal punishment debate firmly into the academic, cultural, journalistic, and institutional debate. The fact that STOPP permeated these arenas throughout Thatcher's decade reveals the fault lines between which children's rights were being negotiated in late twentieth century Britain. Although children were not unionised against corporal punishment as they had been a decade earlier, they had continued to protest at a local level against the excesses of corporal punishment in their schools, and increasingly the print media were allowing them space to have their say on the matter.

The activism that shaped the corporal punishment debate was an often-risky affair, with the threat to livelihoods for activist teachers and physical retribution for children. The potency of that activism lay in the currency of the evidence gleaned by teachers as to the extent of

contemporary punitive mores and in the thick, damning detail of abuse that children often faced in schools. Moreover, shifts in psychological understandings of the body, mind and pain upheld the necessity for the debate to be framed legitimately around both the physical and emotional wellbeing of the child. The adoption of a child-centred approach to the physical and emotional effects of corporal punishment first by the Labour Party and then, with the Party's influence, the teaching unions, marked a significant shift in the corporal punishment debate, and STOPPs role in converting the political left speaks to the way that activism was permeating institutional thought. Underpinning this political shift was a reciprocal relationship between children, parents, teachers and politicians. It was decades of activism, often shaped by children, and continued by ordinary women and men, who worked alongside politicians and brought the corporal punishment debate to the House of Commons.

The fault lines of the shifting corporal punishment debate are evident in the arc between corporal punishment being seen as a humorous cultural trope and being seen as a social ill, detrimental to the physical and emotional wellbeing of the recipient. 1981's *Mommie Dearest* was one of the last examples of corporal punishment being treated in the more frothy, pantomime like approach. By 1986, corporal punishment was being presented in a far more critical light, and this shift was visibly painful for those who yearned to be allowed to revel in the 'pleasures of severity', as had been so commonplace before and throughout post-war British culture. The heterogeneity between the past and present approaches to corporal punishment speaks to the division in the House on the night that corporal punishment fell, and which existed throughout society.

The abolition of corporal punishment in state schools finally came into practice on 15th August 1987. Pressure groups across the twentieth century had fought for the abolition of the cane in schools, and it was an accumulation of their struggle – on the streets, in research and throughout culture – that the corporal punishment debate in state schools ended. The debate

permeated above Thatcher's government's head and the ECHR upheld the rights of Thatcher's ordinary citizens over the UK government. In many ways, the shape that abolition fell in chimes well with Thatcherism's approach to children's rights. As circumstance had it, the ECHR's ruling could only be applied to parental rights and not that of the child. In an era where parents, not the state, were given increasing responsibility for children's welfare, as exemplified by the Children's Act of 1988, corporal punishment fell in the name of parental rights, not those of the child.

CONCLUSION

The struggle to abolish corporal punishment in state schools had spanned most of the twentieth century. Although abolition in those schools across the UK had been somewhat precariously won in 1986 – with the ban being enforced a year later – corporal punishment in private institutions were exempt from the prohibition. It took another intervention from the ECHR to limit the severity of corporal punishment that could be meted out across UK institutions: the court banned what it defined as ‘inhumane and degrading punishment’ in 1993.⁷⁸¹ It was not until the landslide Labour victory four years later that the school corporal punishment death knell was rung. The abolition of corporal punishment in all English and Welsh schools came into force in 1999. The last bastion where corporal punishment existed in private schools – Northern Ireland – fell in 2003.⁷⁸² However, the century-long battle’s end far from meant that public opinion was resolved upon abolition. In the wake of the 2011 riots, for example, *The Times Education Supplement* polled on the question of the reintroduction of corporal punishment into schools, and 49% agreed that it should.⁷⁸³ Michael Gove, Education Secretary, stated that the poll showed that a ‘crusade’ was needed to ‘improve discipline in schools’ upon the theme that children should know ‘who’s boss’.⁷⁸⁴ Just as it fell jarringly from the courts and prisons, the reintroduction of corporal punishment has never been far from public discourse. The fact that – at the time of writing – corporal punishment is still permissible in the privacy of the home in England and Wales is evidence that the corporal punishment debate is far from over.

⁷⁸¹ Ingelse, C, *United Nations Committee Against Torture: An Assessment*, 1st ed. (Springler, 2001), p.63.

⁷⁸² Durrant, J & Smith, A, *Global Pathways to Abolishing Physical Punishment: Realizing Children’s Rights*, 1st ed, (Routledge, 2010), p.273.

⁷⁸³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-14927898> [Date last accessed: 19/05/2019]

⁷⁸⁴ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/parents-back-corporal-punishment-in-schools-2355544.html> [Date last accessed: 19/05/2019]

When Scotland announced that it proposed an outright ban on corporal punishment in October of 2017, as detailed in the introduction to this thesis, a poll in *The Scotsman* found that only 30% of Scottish adults supported the planned legislation.⁷⁸⁵ When Wales followed suit in March of 2019 and proposed an outright ban of corporal punishment in the private home, two-thirds of the respondents to a governmental consultation were against the move.⁷⁸⁶ One could be forgiven for thinking that public opinion has become central to this latest phase of the corporal punishment debate, for it would be uncommon to find an article written about these legislative proposals that do not feature some poll that purports to provide an answer as to what the nation thinks. However, as this thesis has demonstrated, the complex reasons that people have formulated their support for, or opposition to, corporal punishment – which, as this thesis has demonstrated are chiefly underpinned by experience - can radically destabilise and weaken what superficially appears to be a clear-cut poll outcome. Moreover, the ongoing debate shows that it is still adults who are the go-to constituents of society when the question of the abolition of corporal punishment re-emerges into public discourse. Children remain marginalised and unheard on upon this subject; a subject that most keenly concerns them. Yet, children are making themselves heard in the political arena again, if not upon the subject of corporal punishment. School strikes, like those employed by the Schools Action Union from the late 1960s through to the mid-1970s, have once again returned to the political landscape of Britain and many other countries in the guise of the Climate Strikes and the School strike for climate.⁷⁸⁷ Children continue to demonstrate that their accumulative power through organisation and civil

⁷⁸⁵ <https://www.scotsman.com/news-2-15012/poll-only-30-of-scots-back-smacking-ban-1-4814839> [Date last accessed: 19/05/2019]

⁷⁸⁶ <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/smacking-not-crime-love-responses-16681213> [Date last accessed: 05/08/19]

⁷⁸⁷ For a brief history on the climate strikes see: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/14/youth-climate-strikes-to-take-place-in-almost-100-countries-greta-thunberg> [Date last accessed 16/04/2019]

disobedience makes them agents of social and political change. They also continue to face physical threats for doing so.⁷⁸⁸

One of my key findings is that people's opinions on corporal punishment can and do change over time, and that experiences often underpin this change. My first research question was to ask what the balance was between the public and private use of, and opinion toward, corporal punishment across my period. I found that although a battle waged across the twentieth century, which gradually but successfully eroded corporal punishment from public life, the practice continued relatively unchanged in the private sphere. The two Mass-Observation surveys – one from 1942 and the survey conducted for this research in 2014 – reveal that although attitudes have significantly shifted with regards to both children and adults being physically punished in the public sphere, there was a striking similarity between the numbers of people who believed in and used corporal punishment on children in the private home in 1942 and 2014. It also found that in both survey's respondents believed that the past had been a more physically punitive place and that the present was comparatively tame. It reveals that despite corporal punishment existing at a similar level in the private sphere as it had 72 years ago, the past can easily be constructed as a regressive, more brutal place, with the present as a place of progression and relative affability.

My second research question asked how understandings of the emotional and rational affected people's attitudes toward state control of the body. My research demonstrates that emotion became a central component of the corporal punishment debate, and that emotion could increasingly be asserted across the twentieth century as a legitimate basis for opinion formation on the subject. Moreover, my research found that experience was often cited as underpinning the legitimacy of opinions formed from an emotional basis. Chiefly the fault lines

⁷⁸⁸ See <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/aug/15/arron-banks-jokes-about-greta-thunberg-and-freak-yachting-accidents> [Date last accessed: 16/08/19]

between experience, precept and practice were more likely to be calibrated by the foremost culture of the day. By and large, people who experienced corporal punishment in the home and schools in Britain would go on to use corporal punishment on their children, and, in some instances, on other people's children too. Emotion was contested as being antithetical to 'reasoned' debate in relation to corporal punishment throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, yet, as this research has demonstrated, ordinary people often refused to dichotomise between concepts of 'reason' and 'emotion' when articulating their feelings for and against corporally punishing children, and experience was often cited as a legitimate basis for rejecting the practice. However, experience could also be used to underpin the reasons why individuals supported its continued practice.

Thirdly, I asked how shifting definitions of child abuse impacted upon the corporal punishment debate as concerns surrounding safeguarding burgeoned across the century. I found that corporal punishment was often found parallel to other abuses of children and that unwanted behaviours that emerged from children as a result of abuse were often the foundation for corporal punishment in the classroom. Allied to a growing focus on children's rights, the media's exposure of child abuse was assumed by many respondents to the 2014 Mass-Observation survey to be a determinant of change in the corporal punishment debate. It argues that ordinary people, such as those surveyed by Mass-Observation in 1942, had identified to varying degrees their boundaries between correction and abuse, long before the more widespread exposure to the concept of child abuse from the late 1970s onwards. However, I found that without a culture of expressing and composing narratives of experiences of abuse, it was not until child abuse was recognised and exposed in public discourses that histories of child abuse began to be composed. High profile cases, such as the abuse scandal at Court Lees and the Moors Murder's case helped to focus public attention on the existence of child abuse throughout society. However, the prioritisation of these narratives helped to shape the idea that

children were most at risk by people who were relative strangers to them, and in doing so masked the reality that children remained significantly more likely to be at risk in their own home, and at the hands of someone they knew. For the vast majority of the twentieth century, corporal punishment was portrayed in popular culture as a humorous episode for light entertainment. Even as late as the 1980s, autobiographical books such as *Mommie Dearest* that exposed significant levels of child abuse could be reworked on the cinema screen as a farcical escapade. Yet, as this thesis has demonstrated, at the end of the decade and as child abuse became an ever-present subject, there was a decisive shift away from the more jovial and comical portrayals of corporal punishment.

My research demonstrates that the abolition of corporal punishment evolved over time and, although it ended with an intervention by the government, the evolution of the struggle should by no means be characterised as being implemented purely from the top-down by the state. Instead, the abolition of corporal punishment was a movement that worked between the efforts of ordinary men, women and children and politicians. Between classrooms, playgrounds, the streets, and Parliament, the struggle to abolish corporal punishment was as much an effort from below as it was from above, and the people who fought against its use often did so because of their personal experiences. I have argued that change happened when ordinary people's feelings were taken seriously, and those emotions were recognised as a legitimate basis for opinion formation. Interventions made by the state did not necessarily quell the passionately held desire to reinstate the practice, even as it fell. The corporal punishment debate was fought through and was itself part of, an emotional revolution that occurred during the twentieth century, the watershed moment of which was the second world war. The debate was far from linear, however, and I have shown that attitudes toward corporal punishment hardened in the immediate post-war, when the home and family became the central pillar of post-war reconstruction. The thesis argues that the 'permissive 1960s' was perhaps less

permissive in legislative terms for children than it was for adults and that it was the decade after – the 1970s - when the children’s liberation movement challenged how children should be treated.

One of my key contributions has been to demonstrate how focusing on both a qualitative and quantitative approach to discursive responses can better help us to understand just how complicated the relationship between experience and opinion is. Mass-Observation material has long been used to challenge the more concrete categorisations that are necessarily given when individuals are asked to present a yes or no answer typical of a more quantitative approach. While it is undoubtedly the case that quantitative studies necessitate that people choose a fixed position, combining this seemingly solidified and invariable result with a more qualitative approach allows, the complexity of subjective reasoning to be used to unpick and expose the contradictions and anomalies that lie behind the restrictive boundaries of polling. Moreover, by quantifying frequencies and similarities between trends expressed in discursive texts, we can begin to map out and clarify how experience relates to social change. The original Mass-Observation organisation believed that qualitative and the quantitative methods were necessarily reconcilable approaches, and this thesis has sought to highlight the benefits of being able to pin down some the trends between respondents that may otherwise seem opaquer amidst all of the complexity and messiness that is necessarily generated by the open-ended question approach.

Another key contribution made by this thesis has been to show how and why there are significant gaps or silences in the official records concerning child welfare. Sound has proven a particularly fruitful avenue by which these silences can begin to be recovered, whether through songs, autobiographical accounts or by recognising how sound contributed to the emotional manipulation and mobilisation of the nation. Lost soundscapes of childhood can be reimagined through reconstructing autobiographical testimonies, such as the purposefully

audible punishments that rung through Eton's quadrangle, and these reconstructions can better help us to understand how such punishments became a normalised frequency of everyday life to the children exposed to them. This normalisation underpinned many of the silences of the archives: children often did not document such behaviours until they saw them as anything other than ordinary. Oral and life histories are valuable avenues to recovering these silences. My research has demonstrated that the emotions of the past can retain the power for people to almost feel that they are reliving those emotions felt in the past; emotions can be evoked from the past into the present as part of the process of recollecting. The feelings of the past are constructed not just as a remnant of experience, but as a lived component of the present; shaped by the past. Recognising this complex layering of emotional legacy is a productive way of examining how experience shapes and changes opinion over time.

All of this has important implications for thinking about how children's feelings should be recognised and listened to concerning political change. This thesis has demonstrated that children have rarely been listened to about the corporal punishment debate, even when they demanded that they should be. Yet, despite this determination to eschew children's feelings from public discourse, it is possible to trace their activism in the movements that led to abolition. Children placed emotion at the centre of their political struggle, and it remained at the heart of the arguments that eventually led to abolition. The tension between emotion being used as a legitimate category of analysis and being used to criticise and invalidate claims was, in many ways, indicative of how the corporal punishment debate played out across the twentieth century. What changed was the extent to which MPs saw emotion, psychological well-being, and its relation to the physical as a legitimate and central part of children's safeguarding. And yet children are still at considerable risk from physical harm. The NSPCC state that children remain the most likely group to be killed by another person and that person is overwhelmingly likely to be the child's parent or guardian. On average, one child a week is

killed due to physical abuse or neglect, and on average, there are 68 deaths per year by physical assault.⁷⁸⁹ If further progress is to be made on protecting children, then children themselves are going to be listened to, and their opinions heard.

This thesis also adds caution to the notion that corporal punishment is mostly a practice of the past, and to the suggestion that it is gone for good from Britain's classrooms and courts. It has demonstrated that corporal punishment is still a frequently used method of chastisement in the private home and that there is reportedly significant opposition to its abolition. When interviewed in 2011 for the *BBC* documentary series *Timeshift*, Tom Scott, a lead campaigner for the anti-corporal punishment pressure group STOPP seemed adamant that corporal punishment could never return to Britain's schools:

It would be quite impossible for corporal punishment and school beatings to come back, partly because of the European Convention on Human Rights, which has now been enshrined in British, or at least English, Welsh and Scottish law⁷⁹⁰

Only five years later, Britain narrowly decided to leave the European Union, raising the potential for such legislation to be reversed once again. If corporal punishment remains a contemporary practice in private homes, and the framework by which children's rights were attained (the ECHR) is removed, the likelihood of successful future attempts to return corporal punishment into the public sphere is increased. Indeed, there is a precedent for governments to attempt to revoke progressive laws that seek to protect the body: Thatcher's government tried several times to re-introduce corporal punishment during her time in office. The corporal punishment debate is far from over. If we are to learn anything from how the corporal punishment debate played out across the twentieth century, it should be that children have a

⁷⁸⁹ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1652/statistics-briefing-child-deaths-abuse-neglect.pdf> [Date last accessed: 22/05/2019]

⁷⁹⁰ *Timeshift: Crime and Punishment – The Story of Corporal Punishment*, (BBC, 2011).

voice and that they need to be heard on the subject. It remains to be seen if Britain is willing to listen to them.

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