

**Education and Culture Committee
Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill**

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The Antisocialisation of Children and Young People: Undermining Professionals and Colonising Everyday Life¹

Introduction

1. Within critical sociology attempts to understand and explain changes in social policy often focus upon the socio-economic changes that have taken place. What is in essence a left wing critique of modern capitalism, this approach often emphasises the issue of power and inequality, focusing on structural questions like poverty to explain the 'real' problems in society. This paper in contrast focuses less on these socio-economic issues than upon the nature of institutions today and the expanding nature of state and professional intervention and colonisation of everyday life – a form of colonisation that is arguably impacting upon every adult child relationship – and undermining the socialisation of the young.
2. This is a process that has been identified, particularly in the United States, since at least the 1950s, but which has become more systematic and qualitatively problematic in the last two decades in the UK – not least of all, because of the collapse of political life. In this regard this paper, unlike those that focus on the 'neo-liberal' nature of society, suggests that many of the problems discussed below have developed less because of the enforcement of any right wing agenda, but rather, because today there is no agenda.

The Problematisation of Behaviour

3. In the 1990s as the social and political imagination shrank 'big' outlooks, whether national or international declined, while smaller things, like 'community' (Bauman, 2001) and the 'individual' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) emerged as the focus for government and state attention. Ironically, as Hobsbawm notes however, this focus on community did not reflect a new vibrancy in community life but actually emerged at a time 'when communities in a sociological sense became hard to find in real life' (Hobsbawm 1994: 428). Likewise, the new focus in social policy on the individual reflected something quite different from the individual of previous times. The moral and political subject of the past is today far more likely to be understood and engaged with through a fragmented psycho-social lens, one that is increasingly preoccupied with how we behave and react, rather than what we believe and how we consciously act (Waiton 2008).
4. As the understanding of social problems moved away from structural questions an increased gaze was set upon the behaviour of individuals within politics,

¹ This submission on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill relates to a paper written attempting to explore the potentially destructive impact of intervening in professional and family life. The link to this article is here, and the introduction to the paper supplied below:
<https://repository.abertay.ac.uk/jspui/bitstream/10373/718/2/WaitonYouth%26PolicyPublisher2010.pdf>

schools, communities and families. Within the realm of politics, the Labour MP Frank Field, for example, argues that we have entered a period where the 'politics of *behaviour*' is central (Field, 2003). The government has helped to make the problem of antisocial *behaviour* into a national issue and in schools the *behaviour* of pupils has become of great concern for education authorities and teacher's unions alike. Meanwhile behaviour in the home and the issue of parenting has become problematised and understood as a relatively new 'skills' based issue necessitating expert intervention (Furedi, 2001).

5. Consequently, the 'management of behaviour' has become a growth industry, something that is at times imposed, but is perhaps more often demanded or seen as a necessary form of support in our more individuated world.
6. If the telecommunications advert is correct and we really are the product of 'every one to one we've ever had', it increasingly appears that these one to ones should be carried out with the assistance of a third party, or at least by following a form of awareness training that helps us to understand the correct way to act and react to one another in our daily lives.
7. It is this emerging and professionalised framework through which everyday interactions occur which is the focus of this paper. Interactions that were often informal, or were informed by the specific nature of a professional relationship with a young person – like that of a teacher and pupil – have been transformed in recent years. Through the problematisation of relationships, a form of colonisation of the 'lifeworld' has emerged, a process that is arguably undermining the spontaneous and autonomous relationships between people – and especially between adults and children. This is a process that despite its intentions should be understood as a form of antisocialisation.

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