

# "The Evils with Which We are Called to Grapple": Élite Reformers, Eugenicists, Environmental Psychologists, and the Construction of Toronto's Working-Class Boy Problem, 1860-1930

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## Article abstract

Since the 19th century Toronto's working-class bad boys have been subjected to intense scrutiny and control. The deviant and criminal conduct that brought working-class juvenile offenders to police and court attention did not change significantly over the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, how their conduct was understood and governed was in a constant state of change and adjustment. This paper explores how Toronto's working-class bad boys were represented and governed by élites, reformers, juvenile justice officials, medical experts, and university trained psychologists from 1860 to 1930. More specifically, it demonstrates how the 19th-century male juvenile offender, judged the product of injurious circumstances, was reinvented by eugenicists as the mentally deficient subject of the late 1910s and again (re)defined as an environmental psychiatric subject after 1925. These representations often overlapped, were discontinued, conflicted, and were in constant tension. Despite theoretical and practical differences, élites, eugenicists, and environmental psychologists were all particularly troubled by working-class male delinquency.

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# “The Evils with Which We are Called to Grapple”: Élite Reformers, Eugenicists, Environmental Psychologists, and the Construction of Toronto’s Working-Class Boy Problem, 1860-1930\*

Bryan Hogeveen

## *Introduction*

JOE WAS FIFTEEN when a large police officer confronted him at the Dryden Canadian Pacific Railroad station. The officer inquired about Joe’s plans. “Do you have any place to go?” the officer challenged the suspicious looking youth. On the defensive, Joe informed him that he had no friends in the area and his parents had passed away six years ago. He confided to the officer that he was in the area searching for work. The officer was not convinced. From experience he knew some boys would “jump” trains while their parents waited anxiously at home and fretted about their safety. Concerned that Joe might be trying to steal his way onto a train, the officer took him into custody.<sup>1</sup>

Soon Joe was before a magistrate, who heard evidence that he was no stranger to deviance. Joe was also not an orphan. In fact, when their son failed to return home for dinner, Mr. and Mrs. R. became quite concerned. This was not the first time Joe had stayed away from home for nights on end. A police official from Joe’s home town testified: “he runs away from home and stays two or three days at a

\*The quotation in the title is from, Alexander Topp, “Supplementary or Compulsory Education,” *Journal of Education for Ontario*, 21 (1868), 53-54.

<sup>1</sup>Archives of Ontario (Hereafter AO), Victoria Industrial School Records (Hereafter VIS), Record Group (Hereafter RG) 8-51-8, Case Files.

Bryan Hogeveen, ““The Evils with Which We are Called to Grapple”: Élite Reformers, Eugenicists, Environmental Psychologists, and the Construction of Toronto’s Working-Class Boy Problem, 1860-1930,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 55 (Spring 2005), 37-68.

time.” Joe, it seems, was forever getting in trouble. The same police officer informed the court he had previously arrested Joe on two charges of theft, one involving a bag containing provisions from the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) depot. Moreover, and to his parents’ dismay, Joe preferred not to attend school. When the magistrate asked why he was truant for over a year, Joe answered, “I don’t like the principal.” Although no evidence or witness could confirm Joe had committed any crime, he was nevertheless sent to the Victoria Industrial School.<sup>2</sup>

Joe’s apparent unwillingness to acquiesce to “respectable” standards of conduct for working-class boys serves as an exemplar of Ontario’s “boy problem” that occupied the efforts of early 20th-century reformers. He demonstrated qualities reformers considered outside the realm of appropriate conduct for respectable youth. He was criminally active, refused to attend school, did not work, and defied his parents. These were the signifiers of deviance that mid 19th-century reformers, almost all of whom enjoyed considerable privilege, abhorred. The deviant and criminal conduct that brought young males to police and court attention did not change significantly over the late 19th and early 20th century. Nevertheless, how their conduct was understood and governed changed.

Prior to the emergence of social welfare penalty in the 19th century, juvenile deviance was rarely differentiated from adult crime in legal arenas.<sup>3</sup> This state of affairs was the product of a retributive legal rationality that regarded wayward youth as part of a general population of offenders and, in turn, subjected them to similar punishments and penalties as adults. Youthful deviance, in other words, was adjudicated through a general system of prohibitions and punishments.<sup>4</sup> Until the 1880s, judges and magistrates considered boys like Joe to be responsible actors and sentenced them to local gaols where they were confined alongside the insane, prostitutes, drunkards, and habitual criminals.

With the growth of cities like Toronto, the development of welfare penalty, and changing images of childhood, the retributive understanding of juvenile devi-

<sup>2</sup>AO, VIS, RG 8-51-8, Case Files.

<sup>3</sup>Owen Carrigan, *Juvenile Delinquency in Canada: A History* (Toronto 1998), Neil Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the 20th Century Consensus* (Toronto 1978), Jeffrey Leon, “The Development of Canadian Juvenile Justice: A Background for Reform,” *Osgoode Law Journal*, 15 (January 1977), 71-106, Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto 2001), Bryan Hogeveen, “‘Can’t You be a Man?’ Rebuilding Wayward Masculinities and Regulating Juvenile Deviance in Ontario 1860-1930,” PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 2003.

<sup>4</sup>Carrigan, *Juvenile Delinquency in Canada*, 4-22, Bryan Hogeveen, “‘Winning Deviant Youth Over by Friendly Helpfulness’: Transformations in the Legal Governance of Deviant Children, 1857-1908,” in Russell Smandych, ed., *Youth Justice: History, Legislation, and Reform* (Toronto 2001); Barry Feld, *Bad Kids: Race and the Transformation of the Juvenile Court* (New York 1999), 19-22.

ance began to wane.<sup>5</sup> During the latter half of the 19th and early 20th century three major social welfare inspired programs (élite reform, eugenics, and environmental psychology) addressed the boy problem and produced, in practice, new and innovative modes of governance. Each had its own understanding of the problem and a unique repertoire of strategies for its amelioration. The deviant adolescent male of the 19th century was considered by Toronto's Anglo élite, composed of figures such as Toronto School Board Trustee W.B. McMurrich and former Toronto mayor W.H. Howland, to be a product of corrupting role models and depraved social circumstances. Unlike American positivists who underlined the importance of scientific rationality and professionalism in their work, Canadian reformers were most often interested volunteers from Toronto's élite classes.<sup>6</sup> However, like American positivists, Toronto's reformers attributed delinquent character to a lack of schooling, disregard for religious influences, idleness, gangs, felonious peers, and parental neglect. Élite reformers would have been disturbed that Joe ditched school, disobeyed his parents, disrespected authority, and smoked cigarettes. Perhaps most troublesome of all, they abhorred his current pattern of delinquency that, if intervention was not forthcoming, promised to spiral into habitual criminality. Despite this dismal outlook, reformers were convinced that boys' lives were salvageable; through proper training and supervision, Joe could be reformed to lead the productive and law abiding life of a respectable working-class boy.

By the late 1910s medical doctors and psychiatrists emerged on the juvenile justice scene to offer a controversial and alternative theory about the genesis of Toronto's deviant youth. The boy problem was (re)invented by pioneering psychiatric officials such as C.K. Clarke and Helen MacMurchy who adhered to eugenics discourse and considered juvenile deviance to be a product of inferior breeding and defective genes. While class-related concerns were at the heart of white Anglo eugenicist discourse, its philosophy and practice was inherently racialized. Based on eugenicists' dire assessment, the only practical solution to Joe's deviant conduct was permanent incarceration, sterilization, and, for recent immigrants to Canada, deportation. Finally, in the mid 1920s, with the assistance of W.E. Blatz's environmental psychological approach to social problems, juvenile offenders were (re)constituted as deterministic subjects who were the product of social, psychological, and economic forces situated in their social milieu. Blatz and his colleagues encouraged a thorough investigation of each offender's background and individual character.

During the past 40 years a burgeoning historical literature concerned with locating and untangling the experiences and regulation of children in Western society has emerged. In Canada, as elsewhere, this historical field unfolded in response to the relative absence of studies dedicated to constructing the life experiences of chil-

<sup>5</sup>Dorothy Chunn, *From Punishment to Doing Good: Family Courts and Socialized Justice in Ontario, 1880-1940* (Toronto 1992).

<sup>6</sup>For a discussion of American positivism see, Feld, *Bad Kids*, 57-60.

dren who were invariably excluded from conventional history writing. Stimulated by Phillippe Ariès work, *Centuries of Childhood*, historians have now addressed many eclectic realms of childhood experience. From education to smoking, from witch hunts to gang involvement, multiple and diverse subjects of juvenile development and experience have now become topics of historians' fascination.<sup>7</sup> Scholars writing in Ariès' wake have tended to explain the relationship between children and the increasingly aggressive state in terms of benevolence, humanitarianism, a burgeoning concern for children, and a gradual progression from "barbaric" practices of child rearing characteristic of pre-industrial societies to the "advanced" policies of the modern welfare state. The teleological orientation of this work exposes a tendency to draw simple polarisation between the past and present while at the same time taking pains to demonstrate the "evolution" of childhood.

Epistemological developments in critical social science have made it difficult to retain progressivist interpretations of benevolent child welfare policy. Anthony Platt, David Rothman, Steven Schlossman, and Michael Katz, as well as Canadian authors such as Joan Sangster, Tamara Myers, and John Bullen have prioritized concepts of class in their historical study of childhood.<sup>8</sup> These authors have asked why institutions for the regulation of children emerged when they did and what class interests did they serve? Drawing on newspaper reports, élite and expert writings about working-class children, institutional case files, and Royal Commission submissions, this paper adds to this scholarly tradition by highlighting not only why working-class youth were constructed as a malignant part of late 19th-century urban life, but how they were constituted by justice officials, prison reformers, probation officers, superintendents, magistrates, and experts trained in the mental sci-

<sup>7</sup>As evidence of the eclectic substantive areas of discussion in the expanding historical literature on childhood see recent works by Robert Walinski-Kiehl, "The Devil's Children: Child Witch Trials in Early Modern Germany," *Continuity and Change*, 11 (August 1996), 171-189, William Coster, "'To Bring them Up in the Fear of God': Guardianship in the Diocese of York, 1500-1668," *Continuity and Change*, 10 (May 1995), 9-32, and Mathew Hilton, "'Tabs', 'Fags' and the Boy Labour Problem in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain," *Journal of Social History*, 28 (Spring 1995), 587-610.

<sup>8</sup>Anthony Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago 1969); David Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in the Progressive Era* (Boston 1980); Steven Schlossman, *Love and the American Delinquent: The Theory and Practice of "Progressive" Juvenile Justice, 1825-1920* (Chicago 1977); Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women* (Toronto 2001); Tamara Myers, "Qui T'Debauchée?: Family Adolescent Sexuality and the Juvenile Delinquent's Court in Early 20th Century Montreal," in Lori Chambers and Edgar Montigny, eds., *Family Matters* (Toronto 1998); John Bullen, "J.J. Kelso and the 'New' Child Savers: The Genesis of the Children's Aid Movement In Ontario," in Russell Smandych, Gordon Dodds, and Alvin Esau, eds., *Dimensions of Childhood: Essays on the History of Children and Youth in Canada* (Winnipeg 1991).

ences. If the representations of reformers, eugenicists, and psychologists often overlapped, were discontinued, conflicted, and were in constant tension, various understandings nevertheless coexisted in the minds and actions of the officials concerned with regulating the boy problem. Each program that converged on bad boys, however, presented itself as the answer to the boy problem. Representations of the boy problem that were fundamental to the transformations in the regulation of bad boys from the late 19th century to the 1930s were those that attracted support from privileged social actors and found a place within an organized program of social welfare. In examining this historical process as it unfolded in Toronto, it is necessary to set the analytic stage with a brief account of the class structure and shifting conditions of life that characterized 19th-century "Hogtown."

*The Dangerous and Respectable Working-Classes*

For a good part of the 19th century political and popular discourses were taken up with the supposed threat to social order posed by the dangerous classes.<sup>9</sup> Their deviance was thought to hold significance beyond loss of personal property and individual effects. John Pratt suggests that it was as if middle and upper class ways of life were assailed by the licentiousness of the recalcitrant roughness of sections of the proletariat.<sup>10</sup> The editor of the *Journal of Education for Ontario* registered his dismay when he stated: "the mere instinct of self defense should prompt us to root out, if possible, an evil of such magnitude; and which if neglected, cannot fail to attain to still more dangerous proportions."<sup>11</sup> Hence, élites' increasing agitation for some measures to be taken to govern the excesses of the dangerous poor. Evidently, then, strategies of governance inaugurated by the élite to regulate bad boys of the working class during the late 19th century were an attempt to uphold and solidify class hierarchies. Wayward youth of the labouring classes were subjected to intrusive modes of punishment, not only because they flouted the law, but because élites considered them dangerous as a result of their marginalized societal position, familial relations, and the threat that they presumably posed to the existing class structure.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Louis Chavalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the 19th Century* (London 1973); Bryan Palmer, *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the History of Transgression* (New York 2000), chapter 11.

<sup>10</sup>John Pratt, "Dangerousness and Modern Society," in Mark Brown and John Pratt eds., *Dangerous Offenders* (London 2000), 35-48.

<sup>11</sup>"Industrial Schools, Toronto," *Journal of Education for Ontario*, 21/6 (1868), 93.

<sup>12</sup>Bryan Palmer, *Working-class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour* (Toronto 1983); Joan Sangster, "Creating Social and Moral Citizens: Defining and Treating Delinquent Boys and Girls in English Canada, 1920-1965," Robert Adamoski, Dorthy Chunn and Robert Menzies, eds., *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* (Peterborough 2002), 337-58.

It would thus be misleading to assume an undifferentiated working class. Not all individuals of this class were regarded with the same degree of suspicion by *élites* and middle-class governors. Rather, the 19th and early 20th century working class was undeniably segmented. To simplify, there were two broad groupings. First, respectable working-class males were industrious, took their role as bread-winners seriously, ensured their children attended school, and followed a sober, law-abiding course of life. Second, dangerous working-class males were the reverse of this proletarian propriety. Unlike the respectable working class, the dangerous classes lived in abject poverty as a result of their disconnection from the labour market. They dodged domestic obligations, were habitually criminal, fond of alcohol, and flouted what *élites* considered decent and honest conduct. However, the impact of this “shameful” lifestyle on children was perhaps reformers’ greatest concern.

Billie J.’s familial situation is a typical case. While he was still young his mother left the family as a result of Mr. J.’s drinking. From all accounts, the father was persistently unemployed and of suspicious character. Not only did he owe money, drink, and was considered “bad morally,” he was also prone to violence. Often when drunk Mr. J. would “ill treat his children” and whoever else was around.<sup>13</sup> Given his dubious character, lack of domestic commitment, penchant for criminal conduct, and failure as a family provider, Mr. J. was the archetypal dangerous working-class male. Most worrisome to *élites* was that Mr. J. lacked a stake in conformity which freed him to commit crime, create chaos, and otherwise threaten the social order. Perhaps more problematic still, Mr. J. was perpetuating the dangerous class through teaching his children by example that violence, laziness, drinking, and questionable moral conduct were acceptable. Boys who socialized in these deleterious familial conditions, many reformers assumed, would invariably slide into habitual criminality and threaten safety and the *élite* way of life.

Various reform programs directed at rescuing and reclaiming the sons of the dangerous classes emerged during the late 19th century. Reformers were convinced that if they could intervene into these children’s lives before they spiraled downward into criminal careers, they could produce respectable working-class boys. However, *élite* efforts in this direction were not simply benevolence on behalf of what was perceived to be a population in need of the proverbial helping hand. This group and the Canadian state chose to act, not only because they felt imperiled, but because of a new welfarist relationship between citizens and the state. The latter agreed to act on behalf of the population by punishing those working-class people who refused to conduct themselves according to “society’s” laws and normative expectations.<sup>14</sup> Toward this end, institutions and programs were established — i.e. Juvenile Courts, Probation, Big Brothers, Industrial Schools, Psy-

<sup>13</sup>AO, VIS, RG 8-51-8, Case Files.

<sup>14</sup>Pratt, “Dangerousness and Modern Society.”

chiatric Clinics — to identify, manage, and reform dangerous working-class youth.

Boys of the dangerous working classes were not the only ones to find themselves incarcerated or subjected to state intrusion. Many respectable working-class families also drew upon state sponsored forms of social control to allay frustration they experienced at their sons' hands. As a result of their structural location and their limited financial resources, few options were available to assist them with their unruly boys. Whereas parents of upper-middle class children could pay for private psychiatric treatment and thus avoid the stigma and adverse effects associated with criminal justice intervention, working-class parents with equally troubling offspring could usually not afford such luxury. Even respectable working-class parents were often left with few options but to draw upon state sponsored interventions for assistance. While strategies for the regulation of juvenile offenders emerged as a result of a burgeoning concern about a dangerous offender class, these modes of governance also became tools for respectable working-class parents who could no longer control their sons, but, as a result of financial adversity, could not meet the expense of less intrusive and stigmatizing modes of control.

*"No Respect for Adults":*

*The Problem of "Bad Boys" from a Depraved Social Milieu*

During the 19th century citizens of Ontario encountered demographic, social, and economic transformations that threatened social cohesion and eroded retributive governance. A consistent theme in literature concerned with the growth of social welfare is how the development of cities — a result of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration from Western Europe during the 19th century — contributed to the constant wearing away of what Joey Noble calls "petty commodity capitalism."<sup>15</sup> To many reformers, the city symbolically embodied the worst features of modern industrial life and was certainly no place for innocent children.<sup>16</sup> Its slums were the source of dangerousness that corrupted, tarnished, and otherwise debased the young. By contrast, the country was "healthful and therefore good for the boys both morally and physically."<sup>17</sup>

Lured by the promise of abundant jobs and preferable social conditions, immigrants from Ireland and Western Europe began populating Canadian cities.<sup>18</sup> How-

<sup>15</sup>Joey Noble, "'Class-ifying' the Poor: Toronto Charities, 1850-1880," *Studies in Political Economy*, 2 (Spring 1979), 109-128.

<sup>16</sup>Platt, *The Child Savers*.

<sup>17</sup>Industrial Schools Association of Toronto, *Annual Report*, 1894, 14 [hereafter ISAT].

<sup>18</sup>Between 1891 and 1901 the only Ontario urban centre that did not grow significantly was Kingston. Department of Agriculture, *Census of Canada*, 1871-1921. For a discussion of Irish immigration to Canada during the mid-19th century see, Kenneth Duncan, "Irish Famine Immigration and the Social Structure of Canada West," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 1 (February 1965), 19-40.



ever, the growth of cities and developments in social welfare were not uniform across Ontario. Toronto, for example, grew from a population of 56,092 in 1881 to 208,040 in 1901. Other cities, such as Montréal and Hamilton, were experiencing similar growth, but not to the same extent as Toronto.<sup>19</sup> By 1910 the growth of light industry and the burgeoning manufacturing sector had made Toronto Canada's premier economic city.

As Canadian urbanization transformed the landscape of class relations between 1860 and 1930, the population of the urban poor expanded significantly.<sup>20</sup> While the growth of the economy may have meant jobs for the respectable working classes, it also insured that the most socially and economically disadvantaged attracted intense scrutiny from an increasingly insecure gentry. Their lack of a regular connection to the labour market helped to constitute the poor as a dangerous class, which reinforced their isolation and justified intrusive forms of governance.<sup>21</sup> Historians have drawn critical attention to how, during the 1890s, dangerous and fringe populations (single women, prostitutes, and homosexual men) were at the centre of an urban reform project designed to create healthier, cleaner, and safer streets.<sup>22</sup> Toronto's elite reformers and social commentators were convinced that the debauchery of dangerous working-class parents would certainly be transferred to their children. They were eager to find intervention strategies that would minimize the likelihood of this "hereditary" debasement.

The apparent upsurge in numbers of delinquent, truant, and vagrant children roaming the streets was frequently noted in Royal Commission reports and newspapers.<sup>23</sup> Alexander Topp, a Presbyterian minister at Toronto's Knox Church, argued in 1868 that "one of the most important subjects affecting the social and moral well being of our country [was] the condition of the neglected, unfortunate young

<sup>19</sup>Department of Agriculture, *Census of Canada, 1871-1921*. See also, J.M.S. Careless, *Toronto to 1918: An Illustrated History* (Toronto 1984).

<sup>20</sup>Noble, "Class-ifying the Poor"; Alison Prentice, *The School Promoters: Education and Social Class in Mid-19th Century Upper Canada* (Toronto 1977), 13-22.

<sup>21</sup>Jonathan Simon, *Poor Discipline: Parole and the Social Control of the Underclass, 1890-1990* (Chicago 1993).

<sup>22</sup>Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto 1995), 45; Steven Maynard, "Through A Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890-1930," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 5 (July 1994), 212-36; Sutherland, *Children in English-Canadian Society*. See also, Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto 1991); and Terrence Morrison, "The Child and Urban Social Reform in Late 19th Century Ontario," PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1971.

<sup>23</sup>See W. H. Howland's testimony before the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital. Canada, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital* (1889), 162.

<sup>24</sup>Topp, "Supplementary or Compulsory Education," 53.

boys.”<sup>24</sup> Through their conduct and derelict family relations these boys of the dangerous class threatened the existing class order and were a drain on the resources of the emerging country. Topp’s fears were not entirely groundless, as a significant percentage of all reported offences between 1882 and 1892 were committed by juvenile offenders.<sup>25</sup> During this ten-year span, 31.6 per cent of all criminal convictions in the province were for youth (boys and girls) under the age of 21.<sup>26</sup> The majority of such offences, however, were non-violent, property related, and often violations of moral codes. Significantly, a high proportion of offenders were boys — well over 90 per cent of juveniles convicted of indictable offences.<sup>27</sup> The dramatic rise in youth crime that was evident in the late 19th century can be attributed to a combination of factors including an emerging police morality department, growing attention to policing morals offences among Toronto’s working class, and greater middle-class insecurities. The increase in both visibility and incidence of deviance among boys provided elite reformers with evidence that (non) labouring youth were out-of-control and in immediate need of regulation. Solutions designed to manage this dangerousness resulted in a heightened campaign of governance that meant increasing numbers of working-class boys were subject to sometimes arbitrary and degrading punishment.<sup>28</sup>

Prison statistics did little to attenuate middle and upper-class fears. Many magistrates were unwilling to commit children suspected of wayward behaviours to the juvenile reformatory prison at Pentanguishene in favour of sentencing and detaining them in local gaols; between 1860 and 1864 nearly 600 children were committed to the Toronto lock up.<sup>29</sup> Prison reformers objected, arguing that jailing young males with seasoned and hardened offenders created more problems than it solved. While detained awaiting trial they were indiscriminately mixed with an array of offenders representing varying experiences in criminal or otherwise deviant enterprises. According to prison inspector Andrew Dickson, incarceration provided boys with the opportunity to speak with the “most profane language without a check, form associations, lay plans for future crime, get more confirmed in idle habits, gambling, smoking, and, in many cases drinking.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, conventional approaches to punishment only exacerbated the boy problem, particu-

<sup>25</sup>Morrison, “The Child and Urban Social Reform.”

<sup>26</sup>Canada, Minister of Agriculture, *Report on Criminal Statistics*, 1893, Appendix A, no. 17, xx-xxi, 60, see also, Morrison, “The Child and Urban Social Reform.”

<sup>27</sup>The majority of crimes youth committed were property related. In 1900, 87 per cent of juvenile convictions were for these offences. Ontario, Minister of Agriculture, *Report on Criminal Statistics*, 1900, Appendix IV, no. 8, xxxvi.

<sup>28</sup>Platt, *The Child Savers*.

<sup>29</sup>James Hagarty, “Vagrant children in our Streets,” *Journal of Education for Upper Canada* (1866), 4.

<sup>30</sup>*Journals of Legislative Assembly for Upper Canada*, 1852, Appendix III.

larly because the number of dangerous working-class boys in jail rose over the mid 19th century.

Prison reform groups, such as the Prisoner's Aid Association (PAA), considered the environment of local jails to be the breeding grounds for future criminals.<sup>31</sup> The group argued in 1884 that prisons created an environment where "a terribly dangerous class to society [was] under our paternal system being actually developed." Cramming boys into cells alongside the lumpenproletariat did little to fortify the élite classes' societal position. In the long term, since these boys would eventually be released, this practice aggravated the problem and put the élite at greater risk. "Seize an individual on his first descent into crime," a newspaper article proclaimed in 1887, and "clap him into gaol among veteran scoundrels, cover him with vermin, bathe him in slush, hold him until completion of his term, and then turn him helpless upon the world, and all the chances are that he will become a professional criminal."<sup>32</sup> If only young criminals could be dealt with intelligently, the PAA stated in 1884, how "many restorations to the right path might be achieved among those who have but little more than stepped aside?" Like other reform minded groups, the PAA viewed the mid 19th century system for managing wayward boys to be "criminally defective" and the "most prolific propagator of crime."<sup>33</sup>

*"The breeding places of disorderlies":  
Élite Reformers' Representations of the Boy Problem*

In the 1860s founders of institutions and programs for boys' control, like the PAA, began to tackle the problem of (predominantly) dangerous working-class male youth disrespecting adults, not attending school, associating with deviant peers, and, in their idleness, offending privileged standards of morality. Deviant boys set themselves apart from their middle-class counterparts through their actions, family context, location in the city, and by the companions they kept. Even their bodies were deemed deviant. Doctor P. Spohn, a physician at the Penetanguishene Reformatory, testified before the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario in 1891 how wayward boys were "different in physique." He added, "boys of the criminal classes were not so well developed as a rule"; they were "often quite scrofulous."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Prisoner's Aid Association of Canada (Hereafter PAA), *Tenth Annual Report*, 1884. The Prisoner's Aid Association was the forerunner of the modern John Howard Society.

<sup>32</sup> Brown Commission, (second report) *Journal of the Legislative Assembly for Upper Canada*, 1849, Appendix bbbbbb, PAA, Annual Report, 1884, Anonymous "Reformation not Revenge"; *Globe*, 17 September 1887.

<sup>33</sup> Anon, "Industrial Schools," *Globe*, 28 May 1883; "Industrial Schools," *Globe*, 28 May 1883; PAA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 12; PAA, *Annual Report*, 1884, 13-14.

<sup>34</sup> Ontario, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario, 1891* (Toronto 1891), 471.

Élite reformers during the late 19th century were convinced truancy was the precursor to juvenile deviance. A. Ainger, a teacher in the city of Toronto, argued that truancy was a "first step in the downward career of those who, at length constituted the criminal class."<sup>35</sup> To combat bad boys' predilection for shirking their educational duties the Free School System was created.<sup>36</sup> The problem, however, was that those boys most in need of education and preventative intervention were the least likely to hear the lessons imparted by school teachers. One magistrate who was frustrated by the increasing numbers of truant boys appearing before him lamented to a mid 19th century Grand Jury that, "the classes most in want of instruction, and the most dangerous to society, are always those on whose ear the invitation to come and be taught falls unheeded."<sup>37</sup> In this respect, élites considered a lack of commitment to education destructive with significance that went beyond the mere act of truancy. Truancy was a precursor to criminality and, as a result, was threatening to the well being of "society," defined as a property-right of the middle and upper classes.

While many of Toronto's élite were proud of their accomplishment of establishing Common Schools for youth, they were gravely concerned about the number of boys who refused to attend, and, as a result were deprived of the lessons of respectability.<sup>38</sup> According to Alexander Topp, these boys were, "growing up in ignorance, familiar with vice in its most degrading forms, trained to crime, and gradually, year by year, filling [the] gaols and reformatories."<sup>39</sup> To ameliorate the "ignorant" conditions of Toronto's dangerous working-class boys, Magistrate Hagarty was convinced that education should be forced upon those who refused to attend. He argued that there was no more important topic than "the possibility of extending the healthy influence of education to the class of children by whom our streets are infested and our jails burdened."<sup>40</sup>

Industrial schools, such as the Victoria Industrial School located in Mimico, Ontario (a short distance west of Toronto), were promoted by élites as the panacea to Toronto's truant boy problem. The class and religious backgrounds of industrial school promoters betray the underlying rationale for these institutions. For example, W.H. Howland, the group's most vocal supporter, was the eldest son of a wealthy Toronto banker (Sir William Pearch Howland). Other Industrial School

<sup>35</sup>Alexander Ainger, "Those Bad Boys," *Canadian Educational Monthly*, (December 1890), 378.

<sup>36</sup>Prentice, *The School Promoters*; Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836-1871* (London 1988).

<sup>37</sup>Hagarty, "Vagrant children in our streets."

<sup>38</sup>On the development of Free Schools see Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (Toronto 1997); Prentice, *The School Promoters*; Curtis, *Building the Educational State*.

<sup>39</sup>Topp, "Supplementary or Compulsory Education."

<sup>40</sup>Hagarty, "Vagrant Children in our Streets."

backers came from similarly privileged backgrounds — William Proudfoot was professor of law and vice-chancellor at the University of Toronto and Goldwin Smith was publisher of the Toronto-based *Week*.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, institutions like the Victoria Industrial School were at the heart of élite efforts to control dangerous youth and, in the process, solidify privileged class position.

Many working-class boys preferred the freedom of the streets to the restraints of the schoolroom. In addition to providing opportunities for illicit conduct, street life was a site to demonstrate, learn, and assert their masculinity. Ainger argued that all bad boys wanted to demonstrate manly competency among their friends. In his words, “the boy desires to show his prowess; on the streets he can do it in a way natural and spontaneous.”<sup>42</sup> Classrooms, however, provided few such opportunities. In school, boys gained credit from teachers or fellow pupils only as they grasped curriculum material.<sup>43</sup> Establishing their masculinity in school was difficult for the truant since excelling required qualities many did not possess. According to Ainger, truants dwelled on jokes, companionship, excitement, and not the steadiness, self-repression, and plodding industry required of successful students. Of course, Ainger continued, the truant failed in school and continued to fail. The restrained and obedient masculinity demanded by middle-class teachers differed in form and function from traits held in high regard by street companions.

Masculinity is stratified along a number of structural lines including class.<sup>44</sup> Although some sensibilities regarding appropriate manliness were shared, they were, for the most part, class bound. Working-class boys who eschewed the classroom in favour of the street flouted middle and upper-class masculine norms of educational attainment. Instead of learning numbers and skills to apply to a future occupation, many truants established their streetwise masculinity in association with like-situated boys. Male youth often took tests of toughness and prowess in deviant conduct on the street more seriously than math examinations.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup>J. Morgan, *The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: a Hand-book of Canadian biography* (Toronto 1898); Bennett, “Reforming Bad Boys.”

<sup>42</sup>Ainger, “Those Bad Boys,” 379.

<sup>43</sup>Ainger, “Those Bad Boys,” 379.

<sup>44</sup>Steven Maynard, “Queer Musings on Masculinity and History,” *Labour/LeTravail*, 42 (Fall 1988), 190-1.

<sup>45</sup>See also, Andrew Davies, “Youth Gangs, Masculinity and Violence in Late Victorian Manchester and Salford,” *Journal of Social History*, 32 (Winter 1998), 349-369. Consulting case files, working-class memoirs published during the 1930s and 40s, along with oral history interviews conducted in Salford in the 1970s, Davies documents how gang violence was rooted in signifiers of masculinity that were central to late 19th-century working-class modes of life. For another discussion of the unique character of working-class masculinity, James Canaan, “One Thing Leads to Another: Drinking, Fighting and Working-Class Masculinity,” in Máirtín Mac an Ghail, ed., *Understanding Masculinities: Social Relations and Cultural Arenas* (Philadelphia 1996), 114-25.

The injurious influence of negligent parents was considered by commentators on truancy to be the fundamental reason boys did not attend school. Kelso, for example, was certain home circumstances held the secret as to why so many young children went astray. In 1895, Reverend S. Card, protestant Chaplain of the Ontario Reformatory for Boys at Penetanguishene, reported the results of a study he conducted on the character and disposition of deviant boys. After visiting inmates' homes, having conversations about their parents, and communicating with their neighbours he concluded: "not one of those boys had come from a home where parents were Christians and the family discipline was what it ought to be." They lacked what Card thought was essential to the formation of manly habits of industry and obedience central to respectable working-class existence.

Many other individuals who worked among juvenile offenders were convinced that poor parents were frequently negligent in their duty of raising law abiding citizens because of their refusal to ensure sons' attendance at school.<sup>46</sup> In the minds of many elite reformers, hapless children were the consequence of derelict working-class parents.<sup>47</sup> According to a letter sent from University of Toronto Professor Wilson to the editors of the *Journal of Education*, parents of vagrant children could not be counted on to send their children to school.<sup>48</sup> Wilson was certain that compulsory education legislation was not sufficient to, in his words, "meet the case of the hungry, ragged children of the poor and often vicious parents ... [who could] be turned to account, to hawk, to beg, and perchance to steal." J.J. Kelso was also dismayed by the fact that boys would be thrust into the world of work as newsboys and to beg on the street in an effort to earn money for the negligent working-class family. When building trades were suspended during the winter months a great number of men were suddenly unemployed. To keep the family fed, Kelso claimed, "and the parents in drink, many children, girls as well as boys, were sent on the street to sell newspapers and peddle laces and pencils and other trifles — a form of begging in disguise."<sup>49</sup>

Begging on the streets or selling newspapers became a fundamental part of some boys' lives. Kelso suggested that sending boys to the street to earn money for the family at the expense of their attendance at school was an example of the evil in-

<sup>46</sup>Ontario, Sessional Papers, *Annual Report of the Work done under the Children's Protection Act, 1895*, 35; Ontario, Sessional Papers, *Annual Report of the Work done under the Children's Protection Act, 1897*, 40; Ontario, Sessional Papers, *Annual Report of the Work done under the Children's Protection Act, 1897*, 41.

<sup>47</sup>Susan Houston, "The 'Waifs and Strays' of a Late Victorian City: Juvenile Delinquents in Toronto," in Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto 1982), 129-142.

<sup>48</sup>"Juvenile Punishment and Education," *Journal of Education For Upper Canada*, 21 (1868), 52.

<sup>49</sup>John Joseph Kelso, *Early History of the Humane and Child-Saving Movement* (Toronto 1911).

fluence of wicked parents. From his considerable experience with deviant boys, an Assize Court Judge argued that, "parental authority is the greatest evil to which these poor children are exposed." He thought many boys were "dispatched upon their daily errand of crime to bring home to worthless parents, to be dissipated in drunkenness what they may lay their little pilfering hands upon." The judge was convinced that many male youth of the dangerous classes attempted to extract charity from the wealthier citizens of Toronto through tales of orphanage or some imaginary calamity that suddenly befell them. For boys involved in such deviance, at least one commentator believed, "instruction in fictions of misery is all that they receive at home." Immorality among these children, Kelso reasoned, was exceedingly common.<sup>50</sup>

However, Kelso and Wilson failed to recognize working-class families' social and economic reality. Many were recent immigrants who had difficulty providing for their families and therefore were forced to depend on their sons as additional breadwinners. In answer to his question, "who goes to school?" Michael Katz found that indeed lower socio-economic status was the greatest predictor of who would not be found in the school yard. Katz found the one exception to this rule was working-class parents with very young children.<sup>51</sup> Poor families found prioritizing their sons' voluntary attendance at school difficult when juxtaposed with their earning potential. But to suggest that the main reason boys eschewed school was because their parents required their labour power is to deny the spirit of youth for adventure and deviance. That bad boys did not like their teacher (or the teacher did not like them), or were frustrated by the work, or that distance to the school was too great, or that they considered it a waste of time since education was not a prerequisite for employment, are certainly other plausible reasons for non attendance.<sup>52</sup> These reasons were lost on elite reformers.

Along with truancy, Toronto's opinion leaders loathed disrespect and disregard for authority in deviant youth. Deviant boys, one editor commented, had "no respect for adults as such. They feign[ed] none." When a group of boys were playing ball near your windows, the editor lamented, and "you, not wishing to spoil their sport, say to them: 'Boys watch those windows,' one of the boys was sure to retort, 'how long do you want me to look at them?'" Or, as the editorial continued, if a boy on his way to school was rebuked by an adult for abusing his younger brother, he would almost certainly turn and say: "'Aw, what's chewin' you? — mind your own business!'" G.W. Allan while speaking at the First Annual Conference on Child Saving bemoaned the fact that one of the most distinguishing features of er-

<sup>50</sup>"Preventative Measures Against Crime," *Journal of Education For Upper Canada*, 21 (1868), 51.

<sup>51</sup>Michael Katz, *Improving Poor People: The Welfare State, The 'Underclass' and Urban Schools as History* (Princeton 1995); Henry Bamman, "Patterns of School Attendance in Toronto, 1844-78," *History of Education Quarterly*, 12 (Autumn 1972), 381-400.

<sup>52</sup>Curtis, *Building the Educational State*, 192-8.

rant youth was their almost complete lack of respect. He, along with Kelso, was certain that: "when you find a boy who is utterly devoid of any respect for those who are in authority over him, or who are older than himself, you may be sure it will not be very long before he is into trouble."<sup>53</sup>

Smoking was another problem turn-of-the-century child savers like Kelso and institutional officials like Chester Ferrier, the longest serving superintendent of the Victoria Industrial School, linked to boys' deviant character. A careful study of the boys under his charge led Ferrier to believe that tobacco use was overrepresented among delinquent boys. According to the Superintendent, 60 per cent of the inmates of the Victoria Industrial School were smokers.<sup>54</sup> Ferrier objected to the use of tobacco by boys since he was convinced it had detrimental effects for what he called their "moral power." Tobacco use was, in his words, "destroying, and making criminals of more of this class of boys than the saloons. It weakens the moral power of the boy, so that the cigarette fiend readily yields to temptation."<sup>55</sup>

Like truancy, the deception associated with smoking worried justice officials most. According to the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Present Juvenile Reformatory Schools of Ontario, "younger and older, they [would] commit acts of deceit or theft for the sake of a smoke – even a butt,"<sup>56</sup> Ferrier thought the level of dishonesty allied with tobacco use would inevitably lead deviant youth down a path of habitual criminality. He argued that the various stages smokers passed through in concealing and furthering a smoking habit contributed to their deviance:

Deception [was] resorted to in the incipient stages of this habit. He must hide from his parents, for a time at least, this harmful indulgence. He takes his first smoke in secret. For this purpose he finds companions who are already addicted to the habit and have taken their first downward step. He thus becomes deceitful and untruthful.<sup>57</sup>

Ferrier continued to moralize about the evils of tobacco long after boys were paroled from the Victoria Industrial School. For example, Tom M. was a former inmate whom Ferrier worried would be brought back to the institution as a result of his smoking habit. Tom was fifteen when admitted to the School for vagrancy. Staff described him as a robust boy who was illiterate. Ferrier received word that after being released from the institution Tom was wasting his hard earned money on tobacco. Concerned that smoking would lead to Tom's return to the institution, the superintendent wrote a letter to him warning of its dangers:

<sup>53</sup>"Boys and the Police," *Toronto Daily Star*, 20 August 1900; Ontario, *Annual Report of the Work done under the Children's Protection Act, 1895*, 24.

<sup>54</sup>Archives of Ontario, Industrial School Association of Toronto, Case Books, RG 8-51-7.

<sup>55</sup>ISAT, *Annual Report*, 1900, 11.

<sup>56</sup>Archives of Ontario, Committee Appointed to Investigate the Present Juvenile Reformatory Schools of Ontario, RG 29-66 ms coll. 3602.

<sup>57</sup>ISAT, *Annual Report*, 1901, 13.



There is one habit which you have very badly and which will be against you so long as you indulge in it, and that is the use of tobacco. In a statement that Mr. U furnished some months ago as to the money he had spent for you, there was an item of \$4.50 for tobacco. That seems such an extraordinary thing that I could scarcely credit it.

But the cost of smoking was not the only pitfall Ferrier saw for paroled boys. The use of tobacco also brought boys into contact with other smokers who were invariably undesirable characters from the dangerous classes. Ferrier told Tom he was, “very much afraid that if [he] came to Toronto and still continue[d] [to smoke he would] very soon get into trouble.”<sup>58</sup>

To break boys of their deviant habit Kelso offered them substitutes for cigarettes and rewards for quitting. While traveling to Toronto a delinquent boy who was destined for a foster home incessantly begged Kelso for a cigarette. Not wanting to contribute to the boy’s delinquency, Kelso stopped at a local store and purchased a supply of chewing gum as an alternative. After six months Kelso bragged the boy had not returned to smoking. When placed in a foster home, Kelso reported, another of his charges promised he would not go back to smoking or chewing tobacco. For discontinuing his smoking habit this boy was rewarded with a watch.<sup>59</sup>

Kelso and Ferrier lamented, not the harmful chemical effects of nicotine on the body, but the injurious impact smoking had for the character of youth. Since scientific inquiry into the ills of tobacco on the body was still several decades away, Kelso and Ferrier were concerned with other injurious elements of consumption. Smoking was a bad habit or vice that was a precursor to immoral character: habitual tobacco consumption brought boys into contact with deviant others; to support their habit they whittled away their income; and deception was required to conceal their conduct from parents.<sup>60</sup>

Although the smoking habit was lamentable, newsboys created even greater anxiety among the elite classes. Their visibility on city streets contributed to their centrality in schemes of regulation. According to C. S. Clarke in his exposé *Of Toronto the Good*, “you can scarcely walk a block without your attention being drawn to one or more of the class called street boys.” Kelso, in testimony before Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario in 1891, stated “the profession of selling newspapers is in my opinion pernicious right through.” Older newsboys held considerable influence over younger more impressionable ones. When selling papers was not sufficient, Kelso explained, these boys would persuade younger boys to: “break a window or unfasten doors, and would steal silk handkerchiefs and any fancy article of clothing that could always be dis-

<sup>58</sup>AO, Victoria Industrial School, RG 8-51-8, Case Files, 1912.

<sup>59</sup>Ontario, *Annual Report of the Work done under the Children’s Protection Act*, 1904.

<sup>60</sup>Mariana Valverde, *Diseases of the Will: Alcohol and the Dilemmas of Freedom* (Cambridge 1998).

posed of.” In this way, newsboys were dangerous and visibly posed a number of problems Kelso and others found particularly unacceptable.<sup>61</sup>

Increasing rates of criminality among working-class boys during the late 19th century were not only the result of dramatic increases in youth crime and truancy, but rather incidences of deviance were amplified by greater vigilance brought about by Toronto’s police morality department. Increased police attention to juvenile crime helped to create the perception of a “boy problem.” The Toronto Police were active during the late 19th century in hunting out the newsboys and dangerous bad boys who refused to attend school. In early November of 1896 the police incarcerated 30 newsboys because, in the words of a *Saturday Night* writer named “Mack,” they “had abused the means of education which the authorities, in their wisdom, ha[d] provided for them.” Questioning the wisdom of such coercive police tactics, Mack asked: “who will venture to say that the boys have been reformed by the punishment they have received?” The journalist agreed with Howland and Kelso that incarcerating newsboys in local gaols would have little reformatory value.<sup>62</sup> To these boys, being held in jail would have been quite a lark. The boys, Mack reasoned, “had grown up wild and [would] readily adjust themselves to such a hard and fast system.” Like Howland and J.J. Kelso, writers like Mack worried about this unique class that required special attention, had keen observation, and possessed an extensive knowledge of the social world, but lacked formal education. These dangerous working-class boys posed a threat to the established social order that needed to be checked. “Society should uplift” newsboys, “Mack” reasoned, if for no other reason than “in self defense.”<sup>63</sup> Evidently, threats to the gentry and established class hierarchy were met with stiff opposition. In response, élites assembled and disseminated strategies of control that subjected dangerous youth to such “uplifting” (read capricious and demeaning) penalties as confinement in adult prisons, deportation, and sterilization.

Perhaps Kelso and Howland were less concerned with boys selling newspapers and smoking, and more preoccupied with the potential problem city streets presented for children and the risk street children posed to the respectable mode of life. They understood selling newspapers to be an initial foray into a life that could eventually spiral into habitual criminality. As Howland testified before the Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital: “there are hundreds of things in street life that attract children.” Associations encountered on the streets were considered criminogenic for young boys. David Archibald, staff inspector of the

<sup>61</sup>On the problem of newsboys see Kelso’s discussion before the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario, 1891. Ontario, *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Prison and Reformatory System of Ontario, 1891* (Toronto 1891), 723-4. See also Christopher St. George Clarke, *Of Toronto The Good, A Social Study: The Queen City as it is* (Montréal 1898[1970]).

<sup>62</sup>“Newsboys,” *Saturday Night*, 21 November 1896.

<sup>63</sup>“Newsboys.”

Morality Department of the Toronto Police Force, argued boys' criminal propensities were developed through "the associations that they form in the streets ... They learn gambling, tossing coppers and they get into all sorts of vice."<sup>64</sup>

Not only did children learn the intricacies of deviant conduct from peer associations, but the street economy also permitted them access to the theatre. Rapidly expanding commercial amusements in early 20th-century cities were magnets for boys.<sup>65</sup> For ten cents they could view a drama — albeit from the cheapest seats. The type of drama boys chose to view worried Kelso and others concerned with regulating the excesses of dangerous youth. To their dismay, boys wanted to attend only the lowest theatre — which troublingly happened to be Irish, working-class, and lewd. But perhaps the greatest problem associated with this crass entertainment was the potential effect it had on young minds. J. Edward Starr, who in 1912 became the first Commissioner of Toronto's Juvenile Court, feared the number of movies that depicted, in his words, "leering villains, gun play and crime, not to say revenge and wanton love," giving impressionable young minds a false and unreal view of life.<sup>66</sup> Kelso was concerned that boys would not only imitate the villain's character, but would, once hooked on the excitement of such drama, use illegal means to gain admission. Low theatres, Kelso reasoned, had a "baneful influence on growing boys."<sup>67</sup> Boys who congregated around the theatre were known to use profane language and purposefully annoy pedestrians. Starr considered the city space adjoining theatre entrances "to be the breeding places of disorderlies."<sup>68</sup>

Friendships developed on city streets also allowed boys to find excitement and financial gain. In addition to newspaper boys, Toronto's moral crusaders were concerned about gangs of "young hoods" who roamed the streets with seemingly no purpose other than to cause general mayhem. According to former Mayor Howland in testimony before the Royal Commission on Labour and Capital: "They were systematically organized as a general thing, the head of the gang being a boy who was convicted once or twice before the Police Court. They were systematic gangs, organized for all kinds of mischief, and in a great many cases indulged in petty stealing."<sup>69</sup> Howland thought gang relationships were a significant contributor to Toronto's problem of social disorder and considered the influence of deviant friends to be among the primary causes of juvenile deviance.

<sup>64</sup>Canada, *Royal Commission on the Relations of Labour and Capital in Canada* (1889), 163; Report of Staff Inspector David Archibald to Chief Constable Grasett, 13 December 1886, *Toronto City Council Minutes*, 1887, app., item 1061, 1030, cited in Steven Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men and Working-class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935," *Canadian Historical Review*, 78 (June 1997), 191-235.

<sup>65</sup>Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*.

<sup>66</sup>John Edward Starr, "First Annual Report of the Juvenile Court," *Public Health Journal*, 4 (1913), 201-2.

<sup>67</sup>*Report of the Prison Commissioners*, 726.

<sup>68</sup>Starr, "First Annual Report of the Juvenile Court."

*“No Department So Satisfactory or Encouraging  
as the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders”*

During the 19th century, elite reformers, such as Howland and Kelso, and juvenile justice officials, like Ferrier and Card, understood bad boys to be creatures of circumstance. They were certain that the blank slate of deviant boys' characters had been inscribed with the iniquity of their parents in the corrupting environment of the dangerous working-class home. From their middle and upper-class perches Toronto's elite suggested these children received a warped sense of societal norms as a result of parental lessons in crime and criminality. One anonymous author writing in an education journal argued working-class boys “were trained and coerced into vice by dissipated and criminal parents, before they [could] form a clear sense of the difference between good and evil.”<sup>70</sup> Given elite reformers' belief that bad boys were the product of their circumstances and role models, their deviant character was redeemable. Harmful effects could be undone through positive (middle-class) role models and surroundings. The deleterious influence of injurious peers, neglectful parents, smoking, and lack of schooling set boys on a deviant behavioural course that, with proper intervention, could be changed.

W.H. Howland believed “allowing boys to go to the devil” was “a sheer waste” and the “result of bad government and bad management.” In contrast to early 19th-century justice officials, who based their theories of delinquency on the freedom of the will, Howland and other reformers were certain there was no “such thing as a boy being really criminal at heart.” “In waging war with crime,” the Commissioners of the Second Brown Commission observed, “there was no department so satisfactory or encouraging as the reformation of juvenile offenders.” Youthful deviants, they continued, were where “the battle should be fought with utmost warmth.” J. W. Langmuir, the long time Inspector of Prisons and Public Charities, considered juvenile offenders to be “embryo criminals.”<sup>71</sup> Until they reached a mature age all deviant actions were thought to be mere “surface depravity” that could be wiped from their souls through proper training.<sup>72</sup> Superintendent of the Victoria Industrial School, Ferrier explained that when boys “were removed from these [influences] and placed under firm discipline and training, from one to three years, they yield to the better nature within.” W.H. Howland similarly argued, “if they were taken at the right time they [could] be saved from crime.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup>*Relations of Labour and Capital*, 162.

<sup>70</sup>Ontario, Sessional Papers, *Report of the Inspector of Asylums, Prisons and Reformatories*, 1883, 81. “Our Juvenile Vagrants,” *Journal of Education For Upper Canada*, 21 (1868), 185.

<sup>71</sup>“Industrial Schools,” *Globe*, 28 May 1883; *Second Report of the Brown Commission*, 283; Ontario Sessional Papers, *Report of the Inspector of Asylums, Prisons and Reformatories*, (1883), 81.

<sup>72</sup>*Royal Commission on Labour and Capital*, 162.

<sup>73</sup>*Royal Commission on Labour and Capital*, 161.

Howland and Ferrier were convinced that each dangerous adolescent male could be transformed into a respectable boy who attended school, was fond of hard labour, and took his breadwinner role seriously. In contrast to adult offenders, who were considered lost to crime, elite reformers claimed that boys could be trained and reformed.<sup>74</sup> Besides, Donald McKinnon, the Second Superintendent of the Victoria Industrial School rationalized, "a bad man's son well trained will in most cases do better than a good man's son ill trained."<sup>75</sup> Juvenile justice authorities, such as Howland, McMurrich, and Kelso, considered that normalizing boys' character in accordance with the late 19th-century masculine ideal emphasizing the importance of Christian morality, self control, obedience, respect, and wholesome work in the country, was decidedly more in the public's interest than locking them up with adults in gaol.

Although deviant boys were viewed as infinitely malleable while young, the further into a life of crime they fell, the more difficult were attempts to reform their deviant conduct. The need for a strategy to attack boys' wayward character while they were still impressionable was increasingly obvious. Throughout the late 19th century elite reformers, such as Howland and Langmuir, argued that industrial schools held the greatest promise for reforming juvenile deviance.

*"We Have Been Nursing a Reptile":  
The Problem of the Genetically Inferior Bad Boy*<sup>76</sup>

By the late 1910s juvenile justice reformers' optimism had flagged. New players, notably medical doctors and psychiatrists, raised alternative theories about Toronto's boy problem and argued the necessity of psychiatric involvement in juvenile justice. Of the three major social welfare inspired programs that addressed the boy problem during the late 19th and early 20th centuries the eugenics strategy has received the least amount of attention in the juvenile justice literature.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps because eugenicists tried desperately but eventually failed to gain a permanent foothold in Toronto's juvenile justice system they have been overlooked. However, early proponents of eugenics, such as C.K. Clarke and Helen MacMurchy, conferred considerable attention on the problem of working-class juvenile delinquency in Toronto as a social evil intimately tied to biology. Although eugenics discourse and policy did not achieve the same level of success in the juvenile court as it did in other spheres, many of its strategies and diagnostic techniques continued to

<sup>74</sup>Although the number of adult offenders who could be rehabilitated was estimated to be no higher than 30 per cent, Howland was convinced that all but a very small percentage of juvenile offenders could be reformed.

<sup>75</sup>ISAT, *Annual Report*, 1897, 16; ISAT, *Annual Report*, 1890, 18.

<sup>76</sup>Charles Kirk Clarke, "Immigration," *Public Health Journal*, 10 (1919), 443.

<sup>77</sup>David Garland defines eugenics as the study and deployment of "agencies under social control for the purpose of improving the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally." David Garland, *Punishment and Welfare* (London 1985), 142.

influence investigative procedures.<sup>78</sup> Intelligence testing and body measurement, for example, continued to be used by Court appointed psychologists well after eugenics lost momentum during the 1950s.

Throughout the early 20th century a new set of relations between the governors and the governed unfolded. Not only were important elements of juvenile deviance reconceptualized along psychiatric lines, but professional experts in mental science also claimed an important role in the adjudication of juvenile delinquents – a state of affairs that would continue well into the 1970s. The first phase of organized psychiatric involvement in juvenile delinquency can be located in the period between 1914, when the Toronto psychiatric clinic was organized at the Toronto General Hospital in conjunction with the Social Service Department for the diagnosis of feeble-mindedness, and Clarke's death in 1924.<sup>79</sup> According to C.K. Clarke, "true, amateur social reformers have found this unknown world a rich soil in which to cultivate speculative theories; [which were] valueless, unless supported by facts which cannot be contraverted."<sup>80</sup> Clarke and others found the explanations offered by 19th-century reformers of no significant value. University trained experts in the burgeoning mental sciences increasingly cast their gaze toward the problem of the working-class bad boy and questioned whether smoking, truancy, the street, the family, and delinquent peers were essential to understanding the boy problem, or whether they were merely symptoms of much deeper deficiencies situated in delinquent boys' minds and biology.

There were two basic differences between the elite reformers of the late 19th century who defined boys' deviance in relation to learned behaviour and the eugenics professionals of the 1910s and 20s who were convinced inferior breeding was the foundation of deviant outcomes. First, accompanying the rise of psychiatric discourse and its subsequent involvement with juvenile justice practice was the proliferation of trained experts.<sup>81</sup> No longer were volunteers and well-meaning elites central to attempts at reforming the delinquent character of bad boys. Christianity, class position, and respectability were not the defining qualifications for work in the field. University trained experts largely replaced the interested philanthropist. The second distinction centres on what elite reformers and eugenicists understood

<sup>78</sup>Ian Dowbiggin, "'Keeping this Young Country Sane': C.K. Clarke, Immigration Restriction and Canadian Psychiatry, 1890-1925," *Canadian Historical Review*, 76 (November 1995), 598-627; Angus McLaren, "The Creation of a Haven for 'Human Thoroughbreds': The Sterilization of the Feeble-Minded and Mentally Ill in British Columbia," *Canadian Historical Review*, 67 (June 1986), 129-50.

<sup>79</sup>I expand on the emergence and influence of the Toronto Psychiatric Clinic in Hogeveen "'Can't You be a Man?'" Chapter 7.

<sup>80</sup>Charles Kirk Clarke, "Juvenile Delinquency and Mental Defect," *Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene*, 11 (1920), 228-32.

<sup>81</sup>Nikolas Rose, "Expertise and the Government of Conduct," *Studies in Law, Politics and Society*, 14 (April 1994), 359-97.

as the underlying cause of the "boy problem." Instead of deprived circumstances and corrupting role models, eugenicists were certain the mind and biology were the essential elements for understanding and solving the delinquency problem.

Psychiatric experts inspired by late 1910s eugenics knowledge argued that bad boys were not the product of role models and life circumstances that could be rebuilt, but were the result of mental deficiency that could not be cured. According to Clarence M. Hincks, an apprentice of Clarke's and medical inspector of schools, feeble-mindedness was:

a condition of brain defect which renders the affected individual incompetent to earn a living, and incapable of conducting personal affairs with ordinary prudence. The defect is present in childhood and usually demonstrates itself by marked backwardness in learning to walk, to talk and to obey simple commands ... Heredity is the chief disposing factor.<sup>82</sup>

Along with Hincks, Clarke founded the mental hygiene and eugenics movements of Ontario. Clarke's emphasis was on hereditary factors and the whole thrust of the early mental hygiene movement was directed toward containing the problems which arose from feeble-mindedness.<sup>83</sup> Dr. Helen MacMurchy, chief of the Division of Child Welfare, joined Clarke in his efforts to incapacitate those with defective minds. MacMurchy's understanding of the problem was cultivated in her experience as Inspector of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario. In this capacity she studied the problems that resulted from defective youth being at liberty and advocated their identification and permanent segregation in order to prevent what she thought would be inevitable racial decline.<sup>84</sup> As Inspector of the Feeble-Minded she grew increasingly concerned about the obvious connection between mental deficiency and juvenile crime. Together MacMurchy and Clarke laboured to exclude mental defectives from entering Canada, warned that feeble-minded children should be sterilized lest they produce offspring with similar deficiencies, and successfully linked feeble-mindedness with juvenile delinquency.<sup>85</sup>

Feeble-minded offenders were considered a greater nuisance than a threat to the public's physical safety. Some experts placed an upper limit on the criminal in-

<sup>82</sup>Cited in Jennifer Stephen, "'The 'Incorrigible,' the 'Bad,' and the 'Immoral': Toronto's 'Factory Girls' and the Work of the Toronto Psychiatric Clinic,'" in Louis Knafla and Susan Binnie, eds., *Law Society and the State: Essays in the Modern Legal History* (Toronto 1995), 405-42.

<sup>83</sup>Jocelyn Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz* (Toronto 1991).

<sup>84</sup>Teresa Richardson, *The Century of the Child: The Mental Hygiene Movement and Social Policy in the United States and Canada* (New York 1989).

<sup>85</sup>For Clarke and Hincks' views on immigration and prostitution see, Charles Kirk Clarke, "General Considerations," *Public Health Journal*, 12 (1916), 9-10; Clarke, 'Immigration'; C.M. Hincks, "The Psychiatric Clinic," *Public Health Journal*, 12 (1916), 8-9. See also, more generally, Sutherland, *Childhood in English-Canadian Society*; Raymond, *Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*.

genuity of the “truly” defective. Noted English psychiatrist Cyril Burt, for example, concluded that defective youth were only capable of certain crimes: “He seldom forges; for he can scarcely write and barely spell. He seldom embezzles; for the arithmetic of all but the simplest transactions in money lies wholly beyond his reach. Fraud too, where it rises above verbal misrepresentation requires planning and resource.”<sup>86</sup>

Deviance by defective delinquents was infrequently violent. According to Burt, their actions were more often the result of “blind and childish impulse rather than of intelligent deliberation.”<sup>87</sup> Mental defectives were not by nature predisposed to criminality nor were offences committed by feeble-minded boys the result of vicious proclivities. In Nova Scotia the feeble minded person was called an innocent.<sup>88</sup> In “normal” youth socialized values reigned in wayward deliberation. Mental deficiency, however, removed some of the usual checks on deviant thought and behaviour. For example, in her annual reports MacMurchy suggested that a feeble minded youth may set fire to a haystack just to revel in the roaring fire, while another would set flame to an employer’s offices for revenge.<sup>89</sup>

Although feeble minded and defective individuals were not considered capable of committing higher order offences, mental health experts linked affected mentality with delinquency. One commentator exclaimed, “every feeble-minded child [was] a potential criminal!”<sup>90</sup> Whether their behaviour was innocent seemed irrelevant to juvenile court officials such as British Columbia judge Helen Gregory MacGill who made the case that feeble-minded delinquents lacked the “mentality to do right” and had “no power over inhibition.” MacGill concluded they were the “real menace to society.”<sup>91</sup> That working-class boys were truant or exposed to evil home conditions was not the underlying cause of criminality according to Clarke and his colleagues. Rather, the boy problem was the product of defective genes and inferior breeding. To stem the spread of flawed genes and, as a result, immoral conduct, eugenicists promoted permanent solutions such as sterilization, incarceration, or deportation of recent immigrants to Canada.<sup>92</sup>

While class-related concerns were the pillars around which the activities of white Anglo eugenicists were constructed, they were not the only or primary reason

<sup>86</sup>Burt, “The Young Delinquent,” 309.

<sup>87</sup>Burt, “The Young Delinquent,” 311.

<sup>88</sup>George Kirchwey, “The Elimination from the Community of the Psychopathic Recidivist,” *Journal of Juvenile Research*, 11 (1929), 266.

<sup>89</sup>Ontario Sessional Papers, *Report Upon the Feeble Minded*, 1914.

<sup>90</sup>Henry Herbert Goddard, “Levels of Intelligence and the Prediction of Delinquency,” *Journal of Juvenile Research*, 13 (1929), 262.

<sup>91</sup>Helen Gregory MacGill, “The relation of the Juvenile Court to the Community,” *Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene*, 1 (1919), 234.

<sup>92</sup>Charles Kirk Clarke, “The Fourth Maudley Lecture,” *The Public Health Journal*, 14 (1923), 531-541.



for the emergence and relative success of eugenics discourse in the late 1910s.<sup>93</sup> Success here is measured, not in policy outcomes, but by the intrusion of eugenic ideas of degeneration and feeble-mindedness into the consciousness of leading legal officials, public school representatives, and, but certainly not limited to, medical professionals. Valverde has demonstrated how the early 20th-century Anglo élites and professionals who dominated social, economic, and political life for more than a century grew increasingly anxious that “the nation” was in danger of decline.<sup>94</sup> In the eyes of many in this group nation was a generic term that referred to those of Anglo descent, while racialized “others” were viewed with increasing suspicion. Eugenics discourse, even if it did not acquire the radical quality of Nazi rhetoric, was nevertheless a racially motivated program.<sup>95</sup>

By the 1910s a widely accepted racial hierarchy was firmly established in Canada.<sup>96</sup> This ordering was not structured solely through skin colour, but also by degrees of whiteness. The mostly British upper-middle class professionals who spear-headed eugenics campaigns constituted themselves and the nation in opposition to Irish and Italian immigrants’ modes of life. The eugenics program was influenced by and created a common-sense racial logic which associated whiteness with the “clean and the good, the pure and the pleasing.”<sup>97</sup> Whiteness meant purging the social body of anti-social and degenerative influences that were predominantly concentrated in the immigrant working class. More specifically, it was about exclusion of presumed biological inadequacy which eugenicists could map through IQ tests and physical inspection of the inferior “non-white” body. British middle-class professionals did not consider the rogues and prostitutes, who were thought to be overrepresented among the Italian and Irish, “white” in the same way as themselves. If this was not always their point of reference, it was because racial ordering was largely taken for granted among the professional middle class.<sup>98</sup>

As in other western nations, the fear of degeneration of the racial stock inspired concern about the deviant, the criminal, the prostitute, and the subnormal. It seemed to professional upper middle-class authorities, such as Clarke, that the only way to combat degeneration was to strive toward racial purity, a goal that was inex-

<sup>93</sup>Dan Stone, “Race in British Eugenics,” *European History Quarterly*, 31 (June 2001), 397-400.

<sup>94</sup>Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap and Water*, 27-30.

<sup>95</sup>Stone, “Race in British Eugenics,” 401.

<sup>96</sup>Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap and Water*, 29.

<sup>97</sup>Chuck Jackson “Waste and Whiteness: Zora Neale Hurston and the Politics of Eugenics,” *African America Review*, 34 (Winter 2000), 641. In recent years a burgeoning group of scholars have attempted to uncover the role of “whiteness” in constituting the nation. See for example, Richard Dyer, *White* (New York 1997); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (New York 1992); David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working-Class* (New York 1991).

<sup>98</sup>Stone, “Race in British Eugenics,” 397.

trically connected to the working class.<sup>99</sup> Clarke was convinced that his studies of the financially poor who attended the psychiatric clinic at Toronto's General Hospital demonstrated that immigrants suffered disproportionately from feeble-mindedness.<sup>100</sup> Carolyn Strange has argued that commercialized sex was at the centre of professional efforts to purify the nation, since it involved the co-mingling of races in the poverty stricken neighbourhoods (the "low dives") largely populated by immigrants and members of the dangerous working class.<sup>101</sup> The products of such insidious unions could not help but be "inferior." Propelled by such concerns, eugenicists directed their attention toward the problems of feeble-mindedness and foreigners.<sup>102</sup> Similar fears about racial degeneration were central to eugenicists' involvement with the juvenile court.

Linkages between immigration, deviance, and feeble-mindedness were firmly established by the late 1910s and justified intrusive means of eradicating the biologically and mentally inferior from the general population. The Juvenile Court was a logical place from which to concentrate eugenicists' attention. Youth deemed biologically inferior were a persistent problem for Toronto's first Juvenile Court Judge, John Edward Starr. During his first year as a judge Starr estimated that 25 per cent of youth who appeared before him suffered from mental defect.<sup>103</sup> In one month, Starr identified 30 offenders whom he stated were mentally inferior.<sup>104</sup> To make his point that feeble-minded juvenile deviants were not only overrepresented in the Juvenile Court, but a public nuisance, Starr recounted the following incidents in a letter written to Toronto City Council: in the city, "half a dozen boys, not yet ten years of age, are wearing their mothers into nervous wrecks; the same is true of several girls with a mania for roaming; a boy decapitated a cat by means of a hatchet and knife, the following week he chased a neighbor's child, axe in hand, threatening to cut off her head."<sup>105</sup>

Medical authorities employing modern methods of scientific analysis contributed to the belief held by early 20th-century psychiatric officials that the most widespread cause of deviance was the defective mind. Charles Goring's statistical survey of English criminals affirmed that "the one vital mental constitutional factor in the etiology of crime is defective intelligence."<sup>106</sup> William Healy in Chicago concluded that among the personal characteristics of the offender, "mental defi-

<sup>99</sup>Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 112.

<sup>100</sup>Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap and Water*, 31.

<sup>101</sup>Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 112-3.

<sup>102</sup>Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 113.

<sup>103</sup>Starr, "First Annual Report of the Juvenile Court," 199.

<sup>104</sup>Toronto City Council, *Minutes of the Proceedings*, (1912), Appendix A, 1638. See also Ontario Sessional Papers, *Report Upon the Feeble Minded*, 1913.

<sup>105</sup>Toronto City Council, *Minutes of the Proceedings*, (1912), Appendix A, 1638.

<sup>106</sup>Charles Goring, *The English Convict: A Statistical Study* (London 1913), 79.

ciency forms the largest single cause of delinquency.”<sup>107</sup> Most American and Canadian investigators concurred. A New York psychologist estimated that “probably 80 percent of the children in the juvenile courts in Manhattan and the Bronx were mentally defective.”<sup>108</sup> According to Helen MacMurchy, “it is the same in all Juvenile Courts.”<sup>109</sup> While MacMurchy and others estimated that 1 per cent of the public were biologically inferior, a quarter of all juveniles coming to the Court’s attention were feeble-minded.<sup>110</sup> Given this heavy concentration of defective youth, the Juvenile Court was a very attractive sight from which to weed out biologically inferior stock from the nation and, in the process, purify the race.

*Blatz, The Chicago School, and the Environmental Juvenile Offender*

Considerable academic attention has been given to the involvement of environmental psychologists and social workers and their model of case management and behaviour modification in juvenile justice.<sup>111</sup> Feminist historians, such as Tamara Myers and Joan Sangster, have investigated the regulation of female young offenders by early 20th-century juvenile courts.<sup>112</sup> This scholarship has illustrated how Court-appointed psychiatrists contributed to the gendering of social control and upheld traditional standards of conduct for the working-class adolescent female offender.<sup>113</sup> While the girl problem, as understood by environmental psychology officials, tended to centre on crimes of sexuality and be governed through incarceration, the problem of boys fixated on a defective environment that could be ameliorated through strict case management of the offender in the community.<sup>114</sup>

The brand of environmental psychology that emerged during the mid 1920s in Toronto’s Juvenile Court offered a solution to the boy problem that differed markedly from eugenics, but shared similarities with the discourse on the boy problem

<sup>107</sup>William Healy, *Delinquents and Criminals: Their Making and Unmaking* (New York 1926), 447. Some authors have suggested Healy was responsible for extending the broad field of psychiatry into the search for answers to juvenile crime. See for example, Kathleen Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child: American Families, Child Guidance and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority* (Cambridge 1999), ch. 1.

<sup>108</sup>Ceril Burt, *The Young Delinquent* (London 1925), 285.

<sup>109</sup>Ontario, Sessional Papers, *Report Upon the Feeble Minded in Ontario*, 1914, 17.

<sup>110</sup>Ontario. Sessional Papers. *Report Upon the Feeble-Minded*, 1909.

<sup>111</sup>Recent examples include, Victoria Getis, *The Juvenile Court and the Progressives* (Chicago 2000); Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child*.

<sup>112</sup>Myers, “The Voluntary Delinquent”; Joan Sangster, “Creating Social and Moral Citizens: Defining and Treating Delinquent Boys and Girls in English Canada, 1920-1965,” in Robert Adomski, Dorothy Chunn and Robert Menzies eds., *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* (Toronto 2002), 337-358; Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women*.

<sup>113</sup>Myers, “The Voluntary Delinquent”; Bryan Hogeveen, “‘Impossible Cases Can be Cured When all the Factors are Known’: Gender, Psychiatry and Toronto’s Juvenile Court, 1912-1930,” *Canadian Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 20 (January 2003), 43-74.

generated by elite reformers. However, there were significant differences between the environmental psychology approach and the elite reformers' understanding of the boy problem. These mental health officials were university trained. Individuals such as noted child psychologist William Ernst Blatz were not only experts in their respective fields, they employed systematic case management strategies that allowed them to track clients and to evaluate the proposals and programs they put in place to govern bad boys. Moreover, the strategies they employed to regulate the boy problem were based, not on a generalized approach to carceral training where each inmate received similar instruction, but on tailor made tactics aimed at behaviour modification that were situated in the community.

Environmental psychologists shared with elite reformers a concern not only with the remediable character deficiencies in delinquent youth, but also a devotion to comprehending the causes of juvenile deviance and reintegrating maladjusted boys into working-class society. The methods each devised toward this end, however, were quite dissimilar. The former's approach reflected the program's adherence to non-carceral and individualized treatment of delinquency. This faith among Toronto's psychology professionals, particularly Blatz, can be traced to the philosophical antecedents of the Psychology Department at the University of Toronto. Not only was the faculty devoted to practical research and the application of psychology to social problems, but it also based investigations on the social psychology of the Chicago School. The Toronto group derived ideas about human behaviour from the work of Adolf Meyer, who was convinced that mental illness, along with other forms of minor misconduct, was the outcome of a dynamic interplay between the individual and their environment. Meyer and, by extension, Toronto's psychologists, were certain that therapy would restore the offender to his/her community through a combination of behaviour modification and case management techniques.<sup>115</sup>

During the mid-1920s medico-social discourse and practice had a more immediate impact on the dominant understanding of the boy problem than eugenic informed programs. Blatz and George Anderson, who in 1920 became the first mental health official appointed full time to Toronto's Juvenile Court, made the distinction that juvenile delinquents were not feeble-minded, but rather were boys whose peculiar attitudes, habits, and conduct were occasioned by individual social experience. The psychological perspective, as a result of renewed attention to environmental causes of the boy problem, approached the governance of bad boys through wide ranging investigations of the offenders' total social experience and not a simple interrogation of deviants' intelligence or visible inspection of their biology.

<sup>114</sup>Hogeveen, "Impossible Cases Can be Cured."

<sup>115</sup>Hans Pol, "The World as Laboratory: Strategies of Field Research Developed by Mental Hygiene Psychologists in Toronto, 1920-1950," in Teresa Richardson and Donald Fisher,

Once again the problems associated with the deviant male offender were seen as derived from environment — albeit as a subject of psychological understanding, diagnosis, and intervention. Moreover, deviant boys were once again considered malleable whereas the “feeble-minded” delinquent was not. There was a “therapeutic nihilism” associated with the eugenics strategy that was not evident in later environmental psychology discourse.<sup>116</sup> Juvenile justice professionals and psychiatric experts now discussed the boy problem as resulting from a much deeper disease situated in a total milieu that required broad-ranging, scientific investigation, and adequate strategies for amelioration.

A more environmental brand of mental science did not resonate well with the type of mental health intervention into social life Clarke envisioned during his career. In one of his last public lectures Clarke complained to a London, England audience that:

Some of the younger group of enthusiasts who scoff at the influence of heredity, and who talk learnedly about environment as the cause of the majority of misfits, pooh-pooh the occurrence of dementia praecox at early age, and assert that nearly all of the children who show the symptoms of this disease clear up eventually. I wish that were the truth, but unfortunately [I] have seen too many cases during their developmental stage decline into complete dementia; so [I] am not carried away by optimistic theorising.<sup>117</sup>

Blatz was included among the “younger group of enthusiasts” who did not share Clarke’s dismal outlook.

The reconfiguration of psychiatric insights that buttressed the work of Toronto’s Juvenile Court was evident by 1926 when Blatz returned from his medical training at the University of Chicago. There he studied under Harvey A. Carr, a noted “environmental” psychiatrist. At the same time, a five year grant provided by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene was secured for a study of the mental hygiene problems in public school children in Toronto and supplied financial resources to support Blatz’s position.<sup>118</sup> Although Blatz is most well known for his work in child study, his travails for Toronto’s Juvenile Court are equally significant. Through his research on juvenile delinquency and nursery school children his evolving ideas of child development emerged. None of these, however, were inspired by theories of heredity.<sup>119</sup>

Although Blatz did not eschew the mind altogether in his search for the determination of behavioural outcomes, he saw it as only one domain of study in a holistic investigation of an offender’s milieu. Instead of concerning himself with the

eds., *The Development of the Social Sciences in the United States and Canada: The Role of Philanthropy* (Greenwich 1999).

<sup>116</sup>Garland, *Punishment and Welfare*, 151.

<sup>117</sup>Clarke, “Maudley Lecture,” 541. My Emphasis.

<sup>118</sup>Funding for Blatz’s study of pre-school children at the University of Toronto was also secured from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial fund.

innate unfolding of conduct, Blatz was more comfortable investigating the conditions of deviance that surrounded the individual in the community. During the mid 1920s, Jocelyn Raymond argues, psychiatric research was showing that genetics was a much more complicated endeavour than early 20th century eugenicists could accommodate.<sup>120</sup> Graduates in psychology from the University of Chicago during the first years of the 1920s supplanted mental testing in favour of more rigorous investigations of the child and his or her environment. It was this approach to the boy problem that Blatz brought to the study of children in Toronto generally, and his work in Toronto's Juvenile Court specifically.<sup>121</sup> Instead of conceiving of deviance as an inherited condition and incapacitation as the solution, Blatz and his colleagues at Toronto's Juvenile Court were certain bad boys were products of a deprived social milieu, youth who required individually determined community based supervision.

In connection with his role as psychological consultant to Toronto's Juvenile Court Blatz organized a series of court conferences. Every Friday afternoon starting in 1925 officials from Toronto's Juvenile Court met at the Detention Home to discuss certain troubling cases. Conferences were designed both to handle particularly difficult offenders that came to the attention of the Court and to train social workers and probation officers how to better handle the city's dangerous class. The few cases that Blatz selected for inclusion in the conferences usually involved "repeaters" (recidivists). Conferences allowed juvenile court officials and mental health professionals to devote greater attention to cases than would otherwise be possible in a busy court like Toronto's where officials were overwhelmed by the number of delinquents that appeared before them every week.<sup>122</sup>

Blatz's comments during the conferences yield considerable insight into his understanding of the boy problem and what he considered the most effective means for its control. The bad boy was no longer a subject to be punished, reformed, or segregated; for Blatz and his crew he was a case to be managed through psychological and social intervention. Charles' case was the first that Blatz brought to the attention of the conference. Charles was born in Ireland and was in constant contact with police for truancy, theft, and other minor forms of deviance. In an effort to understand Charles' deviance Blatz was certain the first place to look was not to an IQ test, but to his home. When he posed the question to the conference, "what has been done in the home?" the reply was not encouraging. Judge Hawley Mott replied, "as a matter of fact there has been very little done." The psychologist was certain, that

<sup>119</sup>See for example, Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*; Institute of Child Study, *Twenty Five Years of Child Study* (Toronto 1951).

<sup>120</sup>Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 36. It is not surprising that the slant of Blatz's research was directed toward environmental causes of deviance when we consider that sociologists at the University of Chicago, despite an initial Rockefeller grant, were gaining considerable notoriety for their studies of deviance from an environmental angle.

<sup>121</sup>Raymond, *The Nursery World of Dr. Blatz*, 37.

“the home [was] the first point of attack” and “nothing more could be done before a more detailed report on the home was at hand.” To understand the problems of boys like Charles, Blatz was convinced the answer lay in their family environment, but he held a different conception of “environment” than Howland. Blatz and his colleagues at Toronto’s Juvenile Court were less concerned with the street as a criminogenic force and more preoccupied by what drove bad boys to it.<sup>123</sup>

After a thorough investigation of the home situation, the conference debated what should be done to reform Charles’ deviance. Father Haley, who was connected with the Juvenile Court, argued that Charles was not responsible for his conduct since his father had been absent for most of his life and when he did take an active interest, which was not often, it was as a disciplinarian. Judge Mott added that “the attitude of the father in court was absolutely unpardonable” and he made the mistake of wanting to “force the boy to obey.” Having determined that the cause of Charles’ delinquency was his family life, Blatz’s Conference created a solution that attempted to ameliorate such adverse conditions. Despite Charles’ low IQ (70) Blatz was unconvinced carceral institutionalization was an appropriate response. Instead, he advised that Juvenile Court officials should find Charles a boarding home, devote a social worker to his case, and encourage him to play soccer. The point of Blatz’s investigation and subsequent recommendation was not to reform or incapacitate Charles, but in his words to “change his attitude.”<sup>124</sup>

Charles’ case demonstrates how the problem of dangerous working-class bad boys was rearticulated by environmental psychologists to be one of a defective personality. Unlike eugenics based practitioners, Blatz was convinced that bad boys were malleable, provided they were intercepted early in their delinquent career and a thorough investigation of their entire milieu conducted.<sup>125</sup> Environmental psychologists who attached themselves to Toronto’s Juvenile Court stressed the importance of case management and the possibility of behaviour modification.

The eugenics inspired conceptualization of juvenile deviants did not simply disappear with the emergence of the environmental psychology approach, however. Rather, continued tensions and mutual affinities persisted between the eugenics and environmental discourses.<sup>126</sup> These theoretical traditions often co-existed in the minds and actions of mental health professionals well into the 1940s.<sup>127</sup> During the 1930s Harvard Law professors Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck, for example, published their study of 500 delinquent women, which revived eugenics discourse. Similarly, E.A. Hooton, a staunch defender of Cesare Lombroso, published his

<sup>122</sup>University of Toronto Archives (Hereafter UTA), William Ernst Blatz Collection, Manuscript Collection 134, Juvenile Court Conferences.

<sup>123</sup>UTA, Juvenile Court Conferences.

<sup>124</sup>UTA, Juvenile Court Conferences.

<sup>125</sup>UTA, Juvenile Court Conferences.

<sup>126</sup>Kathleen McConnachie, “Science and Ideology: The Mental Hygiene and Eugenics Movements in the Inter-war years, 1919-1939,” PhD Thesis, University of Toronto, 1987.

transparently hereditarian study of the born criminal.<sup>128</sup> However, eugenics inspired understandings of the boy problem among Toronto's Juvenile Court officials lost momentum during the mid 1920s as the hopes, promises, and assumptions that had buttressed the movement were eroded. Eugenics had always been an expert inspired movement and, during the 1920s, some experts, such as Hincks, abandoned it.<sup>129</sup>

### Conclusion

Any analysis of the regulation of juvenile offenders needs to be highly conscious of the political and economic environment in which it emerges and is entrenched. Indeed it is important to fully appreciate the intersecting class relations which put working-class boys at the heart of élite, expert, and state control. To be certain, the subject of élite reformer, eugenic, and environmental psychological governance was not from Canada's white middle class. Rather, it was the most politically and economically powerless who were targeted by élites and experts. The resulting modes of governance, however, were not directed at the working class in general, but rather at the young dangerous segments whose deviance threatened the privileged segments of society most directly. In this way, the middle and upper classes waged war upon those who put themselves and the class hierarchy at risk. Thus, the programs aimed at controlling the deviant conduct and reforming the recalcitrant behaviour of deviant working-class boys should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of a larger movement aimed at controlling the politically weak and maintaining existing class relations.

For all of their differences, however, all three programs explored in this study emerged out of a desire to manage the excesses of the dangerous classes. Intervening into the lives of these bad boys before they spiraled into a life of crime through strategies that promised to produce respectable working-class youth not only solidified the social order, but also eroded the numbers and supposedly the impact of the lumpenproletariat. No other social or economic group has been, and continues to be, intruded upon by the long reach of the Canadian state and its agents like the working- classes.

The underlying rationale for this condition relates to the systemic marginalization and subordination experienced by the politically, socially, racially,

<sup>127</sup> See Ian Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in the United States and Canada* (Cornell 1997); Angus McLaren, ed., *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885-1945* (Toronto 1990).

<sup>128</sup> Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck, *Five Hundred Delinquent Women* (New York 1934), also in Ernest Albert Hooton, ed., *The American Criminal: An Anthropological Study* (Cambridge 1939). See also Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals* (Chicago 1997).

<sup>129</sup> Mark Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Jersey 1963), 116. Although the influence of eugenics discourse was eroded throughout the 1920s, it continued to inspire responses to bad boys and girls. Anti-Venereal disease legislation and ster-



and economically excluded. It is also connected to the systematic targeting of the working class by the policing arm of the state. Here I am not referring only to the dangerous segments of this class, but also those deemed respectable. Parents of this latter group drew upon the courts and correctional programs to manage the frustrations their sons caused, thus bringing greater numbers of the working class under state and élite control. Nevertheless, it was those deemed dangerous who were assessed most harshly and targeted most directly by late 19th and early 20th-century reformers. These individuals flouted norms of hegemonic masculine respectability by eschewing the discipline, deferred gratification, and habits of industry which were the assumed prerequisites for achieving economic security in capitalist society.<sup>130</sup> Their threatening conduct warranted intrusive intervention in the name of maintaining existing class inequality. From the late 19th century onward, inherent biases built into criminalization and management practices have continually reproduced systemic inequality and resulted in the working classes being grossly over-represented at all levels of the youth justice process.

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ilization policies, for example, were supported by several Juvenile Court personnel, such as Helen Gregory MacGill in Vancouver.