Troubled, Troublesome or Troubling?

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Troubled, Troublesome or Troubling

• Overview

- Haven’t we been here before?
- Problematic motifs
- A sea of troubles
- Narratives of dependency and responsibility
- Continuity, change and contradictions
- A new discourse?
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• Haven’t we been here before? (1)

- ‘the main causes of delinquency [are the] improper conduct of parents’, ‘the want of education’, the ‘want of suitable employment’, ‘violation of the Sabbath’ and ‘gambling in the public streets’

- (Committee for Investigating the Causes of the Alarming Increase in Juvenile Delinquency in the Metropolis, 1816)
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• Haven’t we been here before? (2)

- ‘Whatever you call them, we’ve known for years that a relatively small number of families are the source of a large proportion of the problems in society.
- When you look through all the problems these families have...the kids leaving sink schools without qualifications...the parent never getting a job and choosing to live on the dole... the teenagers rampaging around the neighbourhood before turning to crime... you see a clear thread running through
- (Cameron, 2011)
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• Problematic motifs

- Trouble transmitted through the generations
- ‘Other’ people’s problems
- Economic and social deviance interlinked
- Visibility
- Bad ‘choices’
- Out of control and threatening
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- A sea of troubles

- New Labour and social exclusion: ‘linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments and family breakdown’ (SEU, 1997)

- We need a local, joined up approach to address the multiple disadvantages that many young offenders have... Supporting parents to improve their parenting skills plays a significant part in improving life chances.... (MoJ, 2010)
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• Narratives of dependency and responsibility

- Despite the shared diagnosis, New Labour’s approach subjected troubled families ‘to a sort of compassionate cruelty... swamped with bureaucracy, smothered in welfare yet never able to escape’

- ‘We will not fix these problems without a revolution in responsibility... we need in our country a massive step change in accepting personal responsibility, parental responsibility and social and civic responsibility too’ (Cameron, 2011)

- So, money isn’t the answer, self-control is...?
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• Continuity, change and contradictions

- Parenting is still the problem (FIP --- TF)
- But ‘welfare’ is no longer the answer (a ‘lead person’ --- ‘dedicated worker...to walk in their shoes’)
- So, more Donzelot than Foucault
- Self-control and minimum (state) intervention
- Cutting costs to save money, a virtuous circle?
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• A new discourse?

- Filling the void?
- Working ‘with’ not doing ‘to’ or doing ‘for’
- Restorative practices
- Advocacy
- Building social capital? Bricks without straw...