

Juvenile de-pauperisation: The journey
from public childcare to English
citizenship 1884-1900

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I, Rachel Pimm-Smith, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, it is always clearly stated.

Abstract

The first powers to allow the custody of a child to be transferred to the English state without parental consent were initiated during the late-nineteenth century. The New Poor Laws were used for this purpose. Intervention was justified on the basis that children whose parents needed public support required protection because their families were moral contaminants due to their dependency. The state sought custody of juvenile paupers so they could 'de-pauperise' them through different systems of public childcare so that they could be trained to become economically productive citizens who contributed to the interests of the state as adults. This thesis explores whether these objectives were achieved over the long term. In the process of conducting this investigation the narrative of protection as the basis for public law interference in the private sphere is challenged because notions of protectionism are contextualised within a wider framework of imposed citizenship.

The history of child protection shows us that the state initiated interventionist power for the purpose of moral reform but presented it as an act of rescue. This project concludes that some reformation objectives were fulfilled while others were not; but its most important contributions are twofold. Firstly, this thesis situates original public law interference between parents and children within the broader socio-legal landscape of material survival during a period of severe austerity. By doing this, a second contribution is also made. Repositioning interventionist power within a framework of citizenship reform forces certain popular assumptions about the nature of child poverty during this period to be unseated. This raises important questions about the legitimacy of Victorian efforts to erode parental rights.

Glossary and abbreviations

Able-bodied: A healthy adult who did not suffer from physical or disability

Adult pauper: A person over the age of 16 who was chargeable to the Poor Law authorities and resided in the workhouse

Corn Laws: A set of laws that existed between 1815-1846 designed to favour domestic production of grain but led to substantial losses of domestic agriculture and increased urban migration when repealed

Cottage homes: Purpose-built homes in model villages that were managed by the Poor Law authorities to accommodate between 20-30 juvenile paupers as an artificial family

Deserted: Classification label applied to juvenile paupers whose parents had totally abandoned them or where one had abandoned and the other was in prison, abroad or a permanent inmate of the workhouse due to sickness or infirmity

District schools: Residential schools built to accommodate thousands of juvenile paupers outside the workhouse with the specific objective of turning them into productive adult citizens through the use of industrial training techniques

EEA: Elementary Education Acts

Fluctuating class: The term used to describe the children in Poor Law schools who were not classified as orphans or deserted

Indoor relief: Publicly funded welfare assistance that required the recipient to live inside the workhouse

Ins and outs: The term used to describe 'other' children or the fluctuating class

Industrial schools: Residential schools built to accommodate disorderly children who were admitted by court order and sought to correct delinquent behaviour

Industrial training: An educational curriculum that taught traditional crafts and military training in addition to the national curriculum of reading, writing and arithmetic

ISA: Industrial Schools Acts

Juvenile pauper: A person under the age of 16 who was chargeable to the Poor Law authorities

Less eligibility: The principle applied by Poor Law administrators that dictated life inside the workhouse be harder than the lowest independent labourer outside the workhouse

LGB: Local Government Board - the government body solely responsible for providing indoor and outdoor relief after 1870

National schools: Schools outside the Poor Law system that were open to non-pauper children and used the national curriculum not industrial training techniques

Orphan: Classification label applied to juvenile paupers whose parents had died,

or when one had died and the other was in prison, abroad or a permanent inmate of the workhouse due to sickness or infirmity

'Other': Classification label applied to juvenile paupers who were not classified as orphans or deserted

Outdoor relief: Publicly funded welfare assistance that allowed recipients to live outside the workhouse

Permanent class: The term used to describe children in Poor Law schools who were classified as orphans or deserted

Poor Law schools: All schools under the control of the Poor Law authorities including: district schools, workhouse schools, separate schools, cottage homes

PLA: Poor Law Acts

PLB: Poor Law Board - the government body solely responsible for providing indoor and outdoor relief before 1870

Separate schools: Residential schools run by the Poor Law authorities, which were separate from the workhouse but smaller than district schools and did not use industrial training methods

SMSD: The South Metropolitan School District

Workhouse system: A network of institutions built to house poor people who were unable to support themselves between 1834-1930

Introduction

This research uncovers the way in which the poor used some of the public childcare options available under the New Poor Law to ensure their survival. For example, in March of 1868 a young couple named James Buckman and Lucetta Lough wed in the parish of Camberwell.¹ The couple lived in a comfortable area of Peckham where James worked as a commercial clerk in the sea merchant industry that operated out of the port in East London. The couple had a son shortly thereafter but unfortunately James died in 1872 and left his young family to manage on their own.² Lucetta quickly remarried the following year to a man named James Edgar Matthews in the neighbouring parish of Lambeth with whom she bore a daughter named Florence.³ However, their relationship broke down over the next few years and by the 1881 census James Edgar was living with a new partner while Lucetta rented a room for herself and the children in Lambeth.⁴ She described herself to census enumerators as a widow despite her second husband still being alive, and called her daughter Florence Buckman instead of Florence Matthews. There is no evidence that Lucetta had any means to support herself because she was unemployed during the 1881 census and was living in St George's infirmary by the 1891 census.⁵

These unfortunate events prompted Lucetta to admit Florence to the care of the Camberwell Guardians in March 1883. She gave her name and address to the authorities at the point of admission.⁶ Due to Florence having a known mother

¹ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England, Reference Number: P73/GIS/031.

² England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915; vol 1d, page 460.

³ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England, Reference Number: P85/MRY1/544.

⁴ UK Census for England and Wales 1881: Class RG13; Piece: 584; Folio: 43; Page 29; GSU roll 1341133.

⁵ UK Census for England and Wales 1891: Class RG13; Piece: 584; Folio: 43; Page 29; GSU roll 1341133.

⁶ London, England, Poor Law and Board of Guardian Records 1430-1930, Board of Guardians; Register of Children Sent to South Metropolitan School District, 1884-1889; Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002 (hereafter PLBG, Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002) Page 4.

the Guardians classified her as ‘other’ due to her unaccompanied status rather than as an orphan or deserted child. The Guardians quickly arranged for her to be sent to the largest district school in England located on Brighton Road in Sutton, Surrey. Florence remained institutionalised at Brighton Road until she was 16 years old, at which time point the Guardians discharged her to a service position in East London. Lucetta remained in the infirmary for many years and was not discharged until Florence reached adulthood.

This thesis will show how Lucetta’s experience was not unusual during the latter part of the nineteenth century. I argue that innumerable parents, mostly mothers, turned to the Poor Law authorities to care for their children when they were unable. During periods of severe austerity, like the 1870s and 80s, the inability to care for one’s child often arose much faster than during periods when welfare provision was readily available. The provision of welfare in England underwent a dramatic overhaul during the nineteenth century, starting with the inception of the New Poor Law, and then again after 1870 when the country entered recession. In 1832, the government established a Royal Commission to conduct a review into the welfare system that had been in place since the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1st. This system - the Old Poor Law - was a body of legislation governing the relief of the poor based on the Poor Relief Act 1601 and had been extensively developed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷ The findings of the Commission, published in 1834,⁸ led to the passage of the Poor Law Act 1834 (PLA 1834 hereafter) that soon became known as the New Poor Law system.⁹

The New Poor Law had three defining features that differentiated it from earlier practices: the introduction of centralised administration, and the principles of

⁷ 1601 Eliz. 43 c.2.

⁸ Royal Commission, *Inquiry into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws 1834* (C (1st Series)).

⁹ Vict. 5 c.76

‘uniformity’ and ‘less eligibility’. These principles were used to control how welfare was distributed. Under the old system, individual parishes had discretion as to how they provided relief but the Commission concluded this level of flexibility encouraged ‘perpetual shifting’ as paupers continuously moved around the country in an effort to follow the most generous parishes.¹⁰ The Commissioners reasoned that centralisation would promote efficiency and the new law accordingly provided for the establishment of the Central Authority. The Central Authority was renamed the Poor Law Board (PLB) in 1847 and renamed yet again in 1870 as the Local Government Board (LGB). The LGB was a crucial feature of the welfare system because it was the public body responsible for the management and enforcement of all regulations on poor relief.¹¹

The concept of uniformity was deemed to be important because it ensured that different classes of paupers were treated the same irrespective of their geography.¹² Under the new system, there were now only two classes of paupers: ‘indoor’ and ‘outdoor’. Outdoor paupers were those people who received assistance in their homes, while indoor paupers were those people who were relieved inside the workhouse. The Poor Law Guardians were managed by the Central Authority and supervised both classes on their behalf. It is important to establish that the principle of uniformity did not aim to treat the two classes equally, but rather to ensure that all indoor paupers were subjected to same standards within workhouses around the country, and that the Guardians assessed all outdoor paupers individually based on their merit.¹³ To this end, the differences between the two classes of paupers could not be starker.

¹⁰ Royal Commission Pages 135-139.

¹¹ Royal Commission Pages 157-165.

¹² Royal Commission Pages 155-157.

¹³ Royal Commission Pages 146-147.

During the mid-nineteenth century workhouse populations were full of what most Victorian commentators called the ‘undeserving’ poor. They were called this because such people were perceived to deserve their misfortune. They were given this label because before 1870 most workhouse inmates were able-bodied men who were deemed capable of employment but had refused to do so. The Victorians disdained indolence and deemed these men as ‘loafers’ who should be forced to live in the workhouse and subjected to its harsh conditions.¹⁴ Most other sections of the poor population were perceived to be ‘undeserving’ because circumstances outside of their control had left them at a disadvantage. These groups were deemed worthy of public assistance and were usually helped through a mechanism known as ‘outdoor relief’ - which allowed them to stay in their homes - until a period of harsh austerity was initiated in the 1870s.

Admission to the workhouse, and life inside it, was governed by the principle of less eligibility.¹⁵ The idea behind this principle was that life inside the workhouse must be harder than the life of the lowest paid independent labourer outside the workhouse so that those who were capable of work would be deterred from seeking help from the state.¹⁶ The New Poor law was initially designed to shame male dependency and that is why lone mothers, widows, the elderly, the chronically ill and the permanently disabled were excused from expectations of employment. Their misfortunes were viewed with compassion and the Guardians assessed applications for outdoor relief orders on a case-by-case basis and generally supported the respectable poor unless there was a reason not to.

Relief orders were an essential feature of the New Poor Law until austerity kicked in. These orders could take the shape of ‘payment in Money, or with

¹⁴ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History* Vol 2 (Frank Cass and Co Ltd 1963) Page 477-450.

¹⁵ Royal Commission Page 127.

¹⁶ Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *English Poor Law History* (Longmans, Green and Co 1910) Page 2.

Food or Clothing in Kind, or partly in Kind and partly in Money'.¹⁷ However, as England entered recession during the early 1870s, lawmakers took a less favourable view of dependency in its broadest sense and requested that the majority of those previously deemed as worthy of help to be denied assistance in order to save on public expenditure.¹⁸ This included lone mothers, widows and their children.¹⁹

Notions of deservedness and deterrence defined policies toward the entire pauper population throughout the mid-nineteenth century. However, after 1870 these ideas became increasingly tailored to specific groups as expenditure was heavily tightened. For example, in the early years of the New Poor Law, children of male inmates were cared for in separate wards within workhouses and given minimal education because they were deemed moral failures like their fathers. However, this approach soon fell out of favour because lawmakers started to fear that close proximity to adult paupers might encourage juvenile paupers to mimic adult habits and cause life-long dependency.²⁰

Calls were made by prominent educational reformers to remove children from workhouses and house them in boarding schools. These schools were known as separate schools and specifically aimed to 'de-pauperise' through the use of

¹⁷ PLA 1834 s.LII.

¹⁸ There is some debate about how consistently reductions were implemented that will be discussed later in this chapter. See Elizabeth Hurren, "'World Without Welfare': Pauper Perspectives on Medical Care Under the Late-Victorian Poor Law 1879-1900' in *Obligation, entitlement and dispute under the English poor laws*, Jones, P., and King, S. (eds), (Cambridge Scholars 2015); Elizabeth Hurren, 'Migration, settlement and the New Poor Law in England and Wales 1870s – 1900' in *Migration, settlement and belonging in Europe, 1500-1930s: comparative perspectives*, King, S., and Winter, A. (eds), (Berghahn Books 2013); Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (Routledge 1981).

¹⁹ Henry Fleming Secretary. 'Report no. 20 outdoor relief circular from the Local Government Board to the poor law inspectors', *The Local Government Board: First Annual Report 1871-1872* (C (2nd series)) Pages 63-68.

²⁰ Henry Fawcett M.P., *Pauperism: Its Causes and Remedies* (Macmillan & Co 1871).

spatial controls in what became known as the ‘separate school system’.²¹ The concept of de-pauperisation was intended to prevent poor children from becoming adult paupers. But London’s Poor Law unions were so over burdened with high numbers of poor children that it was impossible to build enough separate schools within each parish to accommodate them.

Permission was given in 1844 to build a system of ‘district schools’ to deal with this problem. District schools were unique within the separate school framework because they were much bigger than regional separate schools and were purpose built for de-pauperisation training through a unique skills-based curriculum called ‘industrial training’. This training method sought to achieve far more than mere reductions in future dependency. Its central objective was more ambitious and sought to convert poor children into working-class citizens that served middle-class interests, such as economically productive labourers or military soldiers. Ultimately what reformers wanted was for poor children to be able to contribute to the state in the future, rather than depend upon it.

There is significant scholarship that focuses on the events that led to the PLA 1834, but there is comparatively little about the disaggregated policies that were targeted at subgroups of the pauper population after 1870. Modern historian Karel Williams has asserted ‘the primary task of Poor Law historiography should be to differentiate the various post-1870 strategies and not to simply identify the recurrent theme of splitting’.²² By ‘splitting’ Williams refers to the tendency of other scholars in this area to solely emphasise notions of deservedness under the new legislative regime rather than tease out the unique strategies of the law that were aimed at different sections of pauper population after 1870. This thesis attempts to take up some of that challenge by looking at the policies that were targeted at families whose children were under the care of

²¹ James Philip Kay Shuttleworth, *The Training of Pauper Children* (William Clowes and Sons 1839).

²² Williams, *From Pauperism* Page 95.

the state during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. By looking beyond simple notions of deserving and undeserving, we begin to see the mutual agency that was exercised by the families who required assistance, and the state that was responsible for providing it.

This thesis has five main arguments that will be advanced throughout the next six chapters. My first argument is that the New Poor Law was designed with the overt goal of de-pauperising children into industrious citizens to serve middle-class interests. While campaigners disagreed about the most appropriate training to achieve this, they all agreed that spatial controls that separated children from their parents were essential for success. My analysis shows that allies of James Kay Shuttleworth, who proposed the idea of separate schooling, argued that district schools were the best way to secure results for London's juvenile paupers. A few years later, a group of female activists argued that family-based childcare was a better means of producing industrious citizens because it would allow children to acquire desirable citizenship habits from their fosterers.²³

I use original empirical data drawn from Poor Law records to explore how these different systems of care were administered in practice throughout chapters 3 and 4. Extracts from this data was then used to test if either system of childcare was an efficient means of citizenship reformation throughout chapters 5 and 6. The data was drawn from records of children in care between 1884-1900 because that is when the impact of austerity measures, and the unresolved tension about how to de-pauperise children, was at its climax.²⁴

²³ Carleton Tufnell, 'Education of Pauper Children' Menella Bute Smedley (ed) *Boarding-Out and Pauper Schools Especially for Girls Being a Reprint of the Principal Reports on Pauper Education in the Blue Book for 1873-4* (Henry S King & Co 1875); Jane Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' in Menella Bute Smedley (ed), *Boarding-Out and Pauper Schools Especially for Girls Being a Reprint of the Principal Reports on Pauper Education in the Blue Book for 1873-4* (Henry S King & Co 1875).

²⁴ London, England, Poor Law and Board of Guardian Records 1430-1930, Board of Guardians; Register of Children Sent to South Metropolitan School District, 1884-1889;

My second argument is that children who were voluntarily admitted to public care by their parents were depicted as a threat to de-pauperisation efforts due to their enduring parental relationships. The two groups of reformers mentioned above initiated a debate about which system was the best means of reform that I refer to as the ‘ins and outs discourse’ throughout this thesis. This debate demonised on-going parental connections with children as morally toxic and established an unassailable assumption between reformers that poor parents were a danger to the citizenship conversion of their children. This developed into an argument that children with parental connections were also harmful to those children under the care of the state who did not have parents (and were perceived to be the ideal candidates for reform). As increasing numbers of children with enduring relationships entered care, this risk was perceived to be ever present and a critical threat to objectives of the state. The ins and outs discourse characterised the rights of parents with children in public childcare as disruptive to retraining efforts, and thus dangerous to the moral reformation agenda.

My third argument builds on the second and is an essential feature of my argumentation. I extend my analysis of the ins and outs discourse to show that it provided the crucial link to the erosion of parental rights during this period. As outdoor relief became harder to obtain, I contend one method that previously deserving families used to materially survive was to strategically use the public childcare system as a source of alternative support. The English state justified reductions in parental rights by arguing that poor parents were a disruptive presence in district schools and thus undermining reformation training. Parents who voluntarily admitted their children to the Poor Law

Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002 (hereafter PLBG, Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002); London, England, Poor Law and Board of Guardian Records 1430-1930, Board of Guardians; *Register of Children Boarded Out, 1889-1899*; PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02 (hereafter PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02).

authorities were depicted as enemies of their children, and the state, and this was how reductions in parental rights were defended.

My fourth argument is that many of the assumptions advanced by Victorian lawmakers about the nature of child poverty, such as parental disruption, were untrue. For example, by analysing the data drawn from district schools records it becomes clear that parents did not abuse their custody rights in large numbers contrary to what the Victorian sources make out. Although most children in district schools had on-going relationships with at least one parent, these parents rarely used their custody rights to discharge their children. The majority of parents left their children to complete their training. My work shows that the small minority that did collect their children acted quickly, and very rarely returned their children to the care of the authorities. Another example of misplaced assumptions about the nature of child poverty that I explore was reformers' belief that the rural working classes were somehow intrinsically different, and superior, to the urban poor. Advocates of foster care campaigned for its expansion on the basis that England's small villages were full of traditional craftsmen who would teach London's juvenile paupers to become industrious craftsmen through their parenting. Again, my research shows this was misplaced because most foster parents were experiencing the effects of severe poverty, and its consequent instability, as well. I argue foster parents also used the public childcare system as a means of alternative support during a period of austerity, and this was yet another example of Victorian misunderstandings about the nature of child poverty.

My last argument follows from the above. Once misconceptions about the reasons parents admitted their children to public childcare are challenged, and the connection between the ins and outs discourse and the erosion of parental rights is established, important questions about the legitimacy of state interference are raised. Severing custody rights by statute appears to have been both unnecessary and ineffective. This new insight into the history of child protection during the final decades of the nineteenth century raises questions

about whether those who promoted the intervention of the state were ignorantly well meaning, or deliberately pushing a nationalist agenda of citizenship reformation.

Chapter 1: Context of the research

1.1. Public childcare under the New Poor Law

The majority of the tens of thousands of children under the care of the state during the nineteenth century lived in workhouses because their parents were there too. But unaccompanied children were treated differently and usually sent to alternative systems depending on their circumstances (see figure 1.1). These alternatives included district schools, foster care arrangements, industrial schools and cottage homes. All of them sought to separate children from poor adults in different ways in order to increase the chances of successful de-pauperisation. This thesis only looks at district schools and foster care because they have received considerably less scholarly attention than more prevalent systems such as cottage homes and workhouses. District schools accommodated over ten thousand children at its height, whereas foster care only accommodated 2,000 children at its peak.²⁵ Ultimately, district school populations declined and cottage homes became the majority option for unaccompanied children by the close of the century. Foster care simply never became a mainstream option during this period due to the controversy surrounding its use.

Figure 1.1 Forms of public childcare available under the New Poor Law

Separate schools/ District schools	Cottage Homes	Boarding out/Foster Care	Industrial Schools	Workhouse/ Workhouse Schools
Child lived in an institutional	Child lived in an institutional home and	Child lived in a private home with	Child lived in an institutional	Child lived in the workhouse and was

²⁵ T.J. Macnamara, *A Report to the President of the Local Government Board on Children under the Poor Law* (Cd 3899 1908) Page 7.

school away from the workhouse.	attended national schools.	foster parents and attended national schools.	school away from the workhouse.	educated in schoolrooms on site.
Examined in this thesis.	Not examined in this thesis.	Examined in this thesis.	Not examined in this thesis.	Not examined in this thesis.
Open to all children including 'other' children.	Open to all children including 'other' children.	Open to parentless children only.	Open to children beyond control by court order.	Open to all children including 'other' children.

Throughout the nineteenth century tens of thousands of children were under the care of the Poor Law authorities at any given time.²⁶ The PLB (later the LGB) was the sole branch of government responsible for administering public assistance, including the management of workhouses and policy guidance on the use of outdoor relief orders.²⁷ It was also the only organisation allowed to administer public childcare during this period and was renamed the Local Government Board (LGB) after the Local Government Board Act 1871 was passed.¹ Throughout the 1830s and 40s most children in public care were accommodated in workhouses and educated in schoolrooms on the premises because juvenile paupers were not allowed to attend national schools. However, prominent educational reformers, James Kay Shuttleworth and Carleton Tufnell, expressed concerns that educating children in workhouses risked exposing them to the moral contamination of adult paupers.²⁸ The popularity of

²⁶ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 5.

²⁷ PLA 1834; Local Government Board Act 1871 Vict. 34 & 35 c.70.

²⁸ Shuttleworth, *The Training of Pauper Children* Page 13; Tufnell, 'Education of Pauper Children'.

workhouse schools declined as inspectors fed back to the PLB that they suffered from problems such as difficulty securing efficient teachers, producing lower standards of education, and exposing children to unavoidable contact with undesirable inmates.²⁹

Inspectors insisted these problems would encourage children in workhouse schools to become adult paupers. This prompted Shuttleworth to propose a system of separate schools to combat the problem.³⁰ Following his recommendations, lawmakers passed an amendment to the Poor Law in 1844 that allowed parishes within 15 miles of each other to pool their resources so that they could merge children from multiple parishes into large separate schools located away from the workhouse.³¹ Further amendments were made in 1848 that removed the radius restriction and gave the Guardians full authority to organise their own schools.³² These changes meant well-resourced unions could amass substantially more money than small rural parishes if they banded together, which led to the development of nine enormous boarding schools called 'district schools' on the outskirts of London. These institutions were hailed as the flagship of the separate school system for their ability to attract the best teachers, deliver high standards of moral and academic training, whilst imposing robust spatial controls between adults and children.³³ They were vast compared to national schools or workhouse schoolrooms. District schools were always located outside the metropolis so that the children were prevented from undesirable contact with workhouse populations, and their birth communities.

²⁹ William Chance, *Children under the Poor Law: Their Education, Training and After Care Together with a Criticism of the Report of Departmental Committee on Metropolitan Poor Law Schools* (Sonnenschein & Co 1897) Pages 51-60.

³⁰ Shuttleworth, *The Training of Pauper Children*.

³¹ Poor Law Act 1844 Vict. 7 & 8 c.101.

³² Vict. 11 & 12 c.82.

³³ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st^d series)) Page 206.

By 1856, 78 per cent of the chargeable children in London Poor Law unions were housed in district schools, which was estimated to be approximately 12,000 children.³⁴ Further legislation was then passed to allow for ‘industrial schools’ to be built for those children who could not be controlled by their parents in their homes or by the Guardians in district schools.³⁵ Industrial schools ensured unruly children were kept out of the district school system so that reformatory training was not compromised by poor standards of behaviour. However, children could only be admitted to an industrial school by the order of a court. As a result, they never accommodated as many children as other systems of public childcare.

By the late 1860s district schools were under harsh criticism by a group of child-welfare reformers. These critics were largely middle-class women who believed large institutions were damaging the physical and moral development of the children.³⁶ Florence Davenport Hill and Jane Nassau Senior campaigned heavily throughout the late 60s and early 70s for district schools to be abandoned in favour of foster care. These women argued foster care could offer all the benefits of family life to an unaccompanied child whereas district schools left them bereft of family experience.

Before 1870 the Guardians only had the authority to place orphan or deserted children with foster parents *within the borders* of their union. This radius restriction was lifted by statute in 1870.³⁷ Supporters of the district school system argued that foster care was unable to offer the same benefits as district schooling because only orphan and deserted children were eligible for foster

³⁴ Webb, *English Poor Law History* Page 112.

³⁵ Industrial School Act 1857 Vict. 20 & 21 c.48.

³⁶ Florence Davenport Hill, *Children of the State: The Training of Juvenile Paupers* (Macmillan 1868) (hereafter *Children of the State 2*); Jane Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’.

³⁷ General Order for the Boarding Out of Pauper Children 1870 together with letters of instruction from the Local Government Board by Arthur Peel (25th Nov 1870) (hereafter GO 1870 and the LGB Letter).

care and removing them from district schools risked the best candidates for reform being withdrawn from the system.³⁸ Pro-district school reformers argued this was unfair on parentless children but also left unaccompanied children with known parents without positive role models. However, Nassau Senior and Davenport Hill continued in their campaign, which ultimately contributed to district school populations falling dramatically from the numbers published in 1856, and an increase in foster care numbers. Considerable debate ensued about the best way to accommodate the substantial numbers of children in public childcare based on whether they had on-going parental relationships. Nassau Senior advocated for the expansion of foster care for orphans and deserted children, but felt those children with enduring parental ties should be dealt with by an alternative system of ‘cottage homes’.³⁹

Cottage homes had a colony-like nature and were meant to function like large artificial families. They were institutional households that were built in model villages composed solely of other cottage homes on the outskirts of cities. A defining feature of these homes was that they allowed juvenile paupers to attend national schools and thus merged them with the non-pauper population. Cottage homes housed between 20-30 children in one dwelling and their key selling points were their ability to accommodate any class of juvenile pauper and provide socialisation with non-pauper children. Cottage homes were based on the French Mettray system for dealing with juvenile delinquents. The Mettray system housed children with criminal records in artificial colonies to control their rehabilitation in the hopes of leading them to better adult lives.

During the 1860s, England had built a limited number of ‘village homes’ that resembled the French system, but they were outside the jurisdiction of the Poor

³⁸ Tufnell, ‘Education of Pauper Children’.

³⁹ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’; Report of F.J. Mouat and Captain J.D. Bowly, *On Home and Cottage Systems of training and educating Children of the Poor; Reports of Inspectors of Workhouse Schools on Education of Pauper Children in their Districts 1878* (C (2nd series)).

Law. District schools and foster care were increasingly embroiled in controversy through the 1870s as the ins and outs discourse developed. This led the LGB to commission a report in 1878 to investigate the potential of cottage homes as a method of public childcare and sent inspectors to visit the village homes.⁴⁰ The report was highly complimentary about the benefits of family life and the system's ability to give juvenile paupers a normal childhood where they could 'enjoy an occasional liberty, and run about the streets and lanes like other children'.⁴¹

The LGB responded to this feedback by approving mass construction of model villages throughout the 80s, which resulted in the majority of chargeable children being housed under this system by the close of the century.⁴² Workhouses continued to care for children whose parents were indoor paupers, but most of the arrangements for unaccompanied children were abandoned in favour of cottage homes. Although district schools were the most popular childcare system for juvenile paupers from London during the 1850s, most children chargeable to the New Poor Law across the country were looked after in workhouses or cottage homes by the 90s. This was mainly because workhouses and cottage homes were available nationwide and far less controversial. Also, unlike long-distance fostering, they were open to all classes of children.

1.2. Enduring tension between district schools and foster care

District schools and foster care were the most controversial methods of public childcare during the late-nineteenth century. Underpinning this controversy was unresolved debate about the best way to train juvenile paupers to become productive adults. The two most significant voices in this debate were Carleton

⁴⁰ *The Local Government Board Annual Report 1877-87* (C (2nd series))

⁴¹ Mouat and Bowly, *On Home and Cottage Systems* Page 22.

⁴² Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 5.

Tufnell and Jane Nassau Senior, who were both Poor Law school inspectors, and bitterly disagreed about how to train juvenile paupers to become productive adult citizens.⁴³

The Poor Law authorities used spatial controls in their administration of the poor in a variety of different ways. Workhouse officials separated men, women, children, the elderly and the infirm into separate wards upon admission to the workhouse so that tailored welfare policies could be targeted at specific sections of the population. Examples of this were manual labour programs for the able-bodied men, infirmary wards for the elderly, and citizenship conversion for children. Both the district school and foster care systems relocated children away from their birth communities so they would not be affected by the negative influences of their families and associates.

Tufnell was a close friend of Shuttleworth who was the pioneer of the separate school system. Tufnell supported Shuttleworth's view that Poor Law children could only be converted into non-pauper adults if they were removed from their origins so that they could be taught how to be better people than their parents through a curriculum called 'industrial training'.⁴⁴ This curriculum sought to emphasise the value of traditional craftsmanship over alternatives such as mechanised or factory labour. Fellow supporters of Tufnell's ideas included child-rescue activist Thomas Barnardo, who agreed that industrial occupations such as factory work and dock labour were disreputable. Barnardo advocated heavily for children in public and private childcare systems to be trained to

⁴³ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 82; Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools'; Carleton Tufnell, *Observations on the Report of Mrs. Senior to the Local Government Board as to the Effect on Girls of the System of Education at Pauper Schools 1875* (C (2nd series)).

⁴⁴ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Pages 206-207.

become artisan labourers or enter military service despite the declining popularity of such roles during the late-nineteenth century.⁴⁵

Preference for pre-industrial life reflected an aversion to developing trade union practices and its associated labour unrest within the working classes.⁴⁶ Tufnell told the PLB ‘the best occupation for boys of this class is the Imperial Navy or Merchant Service [...] I wish more model ships were erected in the large schools for training [because] when they are enlisted in army or sea service they are removed far away from their low connexions and very rarely fail to become creditable members of society’.⁴⁷ Other district school supporters stressed that district schools were incomparably better than small separate schools because they attracted master craftsmen to teach traditional crafts such as shoemaking, tailoring, carpentry, smithing, and bricklaying.⁴⁸ District schools also made it easier and more cost-effective to administer the spatial controls than workhouses or small separate schools.

Dr John Bridges was the chief medical inspector for the LGB. He was a great supporter of district schools but disagreed about which occupations should be promoted. Bridges feared that tailoring and shoemaking workshops might exacerbate the ill health of urban poor children and claimed ‘the needle-rooms, are not well calculated to restore the degenerate health of children bred in London [...] even if the rooms are spacious, airy, and well ventilated’.⁴⁹ Bridges insisted that carpentry, blacksmithing and employment on the land were the ideal occupations for boys because they provided ‘plenty of muscular exertion’ which was necessary to remove the taint of pauperism.

⁴⁵ East End Juvenile Mission, ‘Something Attempted Something Done’ *The Annual Report of Dr Barnardo’s Homes* (1888) Page 146.

⁴⁶ Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London 1870-1914* (Rutgers University Press 2006) Pages 244-249.

⁴⁷ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Pages 206-207.

⁴⁸ *The Poor Law Board: Twentieth Annual Report 1867-68* (C (1st series)) Pages 140-141.

⁴⁹ *The Local Government Board: Third Annual Report 1873-1874* (C (2nd series)) Page 229.

Although district school advocates sometimes disagreed about the best occupations for boys, they generally agreed positions that served communal and national interests were the most desirable forms of working-class labour. Training techniques for girls were less controversial or varied but also relied on spatial controls like most areas of Poor Law administration. Industrial training methods sought to de-pauperise girls by teaching them the arts of cooking, ironing, fire-lighting, bed-making, scrubbing, and stitching so they were well placed to become indoor servants in respectable middle-class households⁵⁰ Tufnell and his supporters insisted they be educated separately from boys. Poor Law inspector Mr Holgate explained that ‘girls live in a separate set of apartments in the infants’ block with kitchen, laundry, etc attached, under the charge of special officers; two being cooks, two house and parlour maids, and two general servants’.⁵¹ Girls were made to attend separate lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic, which fuelled the opinion of Nassau Senior that district schools prioritised boys’ training.⁵²

Jane Nassau Senior became England’s first female civil servant when she was appointed as an assistant inspector of workhouses in 1873. Her prior experience lay in philanthropic endeavours with impoverished children, which justified her appointment to the role despite harsh opposition from reformers like Tufnell. She set about her first major inspection immediately in order to explore the impact of industrial training techniques on girls in district schools. She drew heavily critical conclusions. Her report *Education of Girls in Pauper Schools* was published in 1874 and concluded that district schools were failing girls because they were unfit to become respectable servants or wives.⁵³ She supported her position with employers’ reports for 650 girls who had been sent

⁵⁰ Shuttleworth, *The Training of Pauper Children* Pages 13-14.

⁵¹ *The Local Government Board: Twenty-sixth Annual Report 1896-1897* (C (2nd series)) Page 322.

⁵² Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 52-147.

⁵³ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 73-74.

to service from district schools and were mostly found to be unsatisfactory as labourers.⁵⁴ She blamed institutional problems such as a ‘lack of mothering’ and the girls associating with undesirable unaccompanied children with known parents – ‘other’ children - for these failures. Her conclusions led her to advocate for the rapid expansion of the foster care system to correct these issues.

Long-term foster care remained relatively unpopular before Nassau Senior’s report was published, and only 122 children lived in foster homes outside union borders according to the LGB’s records from 1871.⁵⁵ Tufnell was heavily critical of her ideas because he believed it removed the best children from district schools and thus diminished the de-pauperisation potential of the entire system.⁵⁶ However, there was a general consensus between both sides that truly parentless children were the ideal candidates for de-pauperisation because they lacked undesirable connections to parents and thus were good influences on those children who maintained such connections. However, foster care was limited to the orphan and deserted classes and Tufnell felt this would leave the worst children without good role models. ‘Other’ children were viewed as inferior inmates compared to the parentless classes and were called derogatory names such as ‘casuals’ or ‘revolvers’ or ‘ins and outs’ to shame their presence in the system. Tufnell defended his rejection of foster care by arguing ‘casuals get moralised by the orphan class, and their chance of being converted into well-conducted workpeople is reduced to a minimum by the removal of orphans [...] whose example and good conduct [...] has a powerful influence on reforming all the ill-conditioned children’.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 62-64.

⁵⁵ *The Local Government Board: First Annual Report 1871-1872* (C (2nd series)) Pages XXXIV-V.

⁵⁶ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 208.

⁵⁷ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 82.

The superior status of parentless children is a recurrent and powerful theme throughout the Victorian sources on this topic. Tufnell's supporters described 'other' children as a contaminating influence on the moral atmosphere of Poor Law schools because their on-going relationships with parents allowed negative habits to filter into reformation spaces. Biological relationships were perceived to violate the very spatial controls the district school system set out to enforce because reformers claimed casual children were routinely discharged and readmitted by their parents.⁵⁸ They said such practices were endemic and severely de-stabilised school populations by continually reintroduced the types of bad habits that industrial training techniques sought to extinguish.⁵⁹

Ins and outs (as they came to be known) were referred to as the 'fluctuating class' regardless of whether a parent had tried to reclaim them. Assumptions about their unstable presence are challenged in chapter 3 of this thesis where I argue they have been misrepresented. The ins and outs discourse pervaded the policy literature on the future direction of public childcare during the late-nineteenth century. Nassau Senior explained to the LGB 'whatever discipline may exist in a school, children in the playground and dormitories are under little supervision and [even] the most active and conscientious yard-mistress could not be within hearing of all children [...] and that children learn what is evil from each other is not an imaginary danger'.⁶⁰ Tufnell agreed 'other' children were the lowest type of juvenile pauper, but he wholly rejected the suggestion that the district school system could not deal with the problem. He replied to Nassau Senior's conclusions by saying 'the complete separation from their relatives constitutes one of the chief merits of district schools, and is unapproachable by any other system'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 58-64.

⁵⁹ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 84.

⁶⁰ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 62-63.

⁶¹ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 84.

The debate between Tufnell and Nassau Senior eventually escalated to outright hostility that was laden with class-based and gender-based conflict. Nassau Senior was inspired by the activism of women like Louisa Twining who declared [...]

‘A great part of the evils which had grown up around the [Poor Law] system were owing to the fact it was carried out entirely by men –that the “female element” [...] has been entirely ignored, and that the fate and control of thousands of women and children who came under the Poor Law was in the hands of Guardians, who could hardly be supposed to know all that was needful on this subject [...] for how could men alone be fit judges of all that went on there?’⁶²

Twining felt strongly that middle-class women were better suited to Poor Law administration (especially where women and children were concerned) because she believed most members of the Boards of Guardians were from the working class backgrounds, and thus had questionable judgment. She claimed most urban Guardians had backgrounds as lowly tradesmen and most rural Guardians were uneducated farmers. Twining asserted ‘bad ones are passed on from one Board of Guardians to another, just as servants frequently go from one family to another, their true character concealed by their masters, who are glad to get rid of them’.⁶³

Both Davenport Hill and Nassau Senior maintained the importance of their gender throughout their contributions to the debate about public childcare. Davenport Hill asserted ‘masculine supervision of the pauper babies, instead of the womanly inspection and direction so essential to them, prepares us for disappointment’.⁶⁴ She openly questioned the competence of male inspectors like Tufnell, whilst Nassau Senior focussed on what her perspective as a

⁶² Louisa Twining, *Recollections of Workhouse Visiting and Management* (Kegan Paul & Co 1880) Pages 64-65.

⁶³ Twining, *Recollections* Page 169.

⁶⁴ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 10.

woman brought to the Poor Law inspectorate rather than directly criticising the capabilities of her peers. Nassau Senior emphasised her ability to assess standards of domestic training but wholly excluded any analysis of academic attainment in district schools from her report. She argued [...]

‘A girl is not necessarily a better woman because she knows the height of all the mountains in Europe, and can work out a fraction in her head;

but she is decidedly better fitted for the duties she will be called upon to

perform in life, if she knows how to wash and tend a child, cook simple

food well, and thoroughly clean a house.’⁶⁵

Supporters of the district school system replied to such criticisms by arguing that industrial training for girls was specifically targeted at teaching those skills. Nassau Senior responded to such arguments by simply saying that industrial training could not compete with the benefits of ‘mothering’.⁶⁶ Tufnell responded by thoroughly attacking the methodology of her 1873 report. He told the LGB [...]

‘She gets the names of [650] girls who had been sent to service [...]

then delegates her powers – a most unusual and I should imagine

unauthorised proceeding – to a number of unnamed ladies, who

inquire into their fate. The evidence was collected by anonymous

inquirers from anonymous witnesses, regarding the fate of anonymous

girls at anonymous schools; and when I asked Mrs Senior to supply

the names of these girls so that the truth of the evidence might be

⁶⁵ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 72.

⁶⁶ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 74.

tested [...] she positively refused all information.’⁶⁷

Tufnell’s response to Nassau Senior’s report was detailed and provided numerous individual cases where children from district schools had transitioned into the adult world with success. He used this information to discredit Nassau Senior’s findings. Tufnell concluded that the opinions of foster-care advocates like Nassau Senior and Davenport Hill largely stemmed from their ‘imagination’ and ‘prejudices’ that were formed by reading too many novels like *Oliver Twist*.⁶⁸ Shortly after *Observations* was published, Nassau Senior wrote a scathing rebuke of his report.⁶⁹ But her rebuttal proved unnecessary, as a preference for family-style childcare systems was already evident within the administration due to her efforts. Tufnell retired from public life before it was published.

The Tufnell-Nassau Senior debate has historic significance that warrants investigation by modern scholars because her recommendations to the LGB played a major role in public childcare moving away from institutional settings toward family-based systems. Nassau Senior’s report argued ins and outs were toxic influences on both genders and played a pivotal role in demonising relationships between parents and children who required assistance from the state. In 1874, she requested the LGB extend the Industrial Schools legislation to allow the Guardians to detain casual children when their parents came to collect them. Nassau Senior stated that ‘notwithstanding the difficulty of legislating on such a question such as this, I cannot help expressing the opinion that something ought to be done in this matter, and that some plans should be found under which the pauper children would find the protection they so much require’.⁷⁰ Child-welfare policies, and the laws that would subsequently erode parental rights, drew heavily on narratives of children requiring protection from

⁶⁷ Tufnell, *Observations* Page 1.

⁶⁸ Tufnell, *Observations* Page 5.

⁶⁹ Jane Nassau Senior, *Letter to the President of the Local Government Board relating to Observations of Mr. Tufnell on her Report on Pauper Schools 1875* (C (2nd series)).

⁷⁰ *The Local Government Board: Third Annual Report 1873-1874* (C (2nd series)) Page 336.

their parents. These policies were significantly influenced by the child-rescue movement, which often justified intervention on the basis that poor children were in some way defective.⁷¹ Shurlee Swain explains that child rescuers depicted poor children as ‘waifs, outcasts, homeless, helpless, friendless and hopeless, destitute, hungry, ragged, degraded, wretched, miserable and pitiable’ and that such depictions justified rescue efforts by the middle classes.⁷² Lydia Murdoch explains how child-rescue narratives served to demonise poor parents and how rescuers like Thomas Barnardo delivered an ‘obliteration of the [poor child’s] past and complete disassociation from their biological families’.⁷³

However, neither Tufnell nor Nassau Senior or their supporters conducted empirical research about juvenile paupers once they had become established adult citizens. This is unsurprising given how difficult the data would have been to collect at the time, coupled with the fact that by the time the children reached adulthood a different set of policy-makers were likely to be in place with different priorities. As a result, the aftercare information in the Victorian sources is limited to the works of various charitable organisations or statistics from LGB annual reports. These sources only capture details about where children were sent upon leaving district schools or basic reviews of their first year of employment (e.g. ‘good’ ‘fair’ ‘unsatisfactory’ etc.).⁷⁴ There are no aftercare studies that specifically question if de-pauperisation objectives were achieved and there are no comparative analyses of district schools and long-distance foster care as a means of securing them.

⁷¹ Shurlee Swain, and Margot Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire: child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester University Press 2010).

⁷² Shurlee Swain, ‘Sweet Childhood Lost: Idealized Images of Childhood in the British Child Rescue Literature’ (2009) 2.2 *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 198, 201.

⁷³ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 60-61.

⁷⁴ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Pages 305-306; Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 146.

That is the gap this thesis sets out to fill because the Tufnell-Nassau Senior debate played an important role in shaping the future of public childcare. Not only did the debate contribute to the demise of children's institutions and the rise of family-based systems of care across England, it also exposed that both groups of reformers blamed the presence of 'other' children for bad outcomes.⁷⁵ This significantly impacted the future of public childcare because fears about the damage caused by 'other' children on de-pauperisation efforts was a key feature in the government's decision to restrict parental custody rights in the hopes it would keep 'other' children under the control of the state.⁷⁶

The Victorian sources illustrate numerous misconceptions about the poor during this period most notably the complex reasons that children were admitted to the authorities. But they also expose the shared objective of all Victorian child-welfare reformers to use public childcare as a means of citizenship reformation. The secondary literature on this topic -- which will be discussed later in this chapter -- shares some of these misconceptions, although a more critical approach is emerging to which this thesis contributes. Modern historians often criticise the motivations of child-welfare reformers as deriving from class and gender divisions.⁷⁷ This has meant that much of the modern scholarship has not engaged with different methods of public childcare or sought to assess their relative efficacy. This thesis seeks to question the motivations of child-welfare reformers but more importantly to empirically test the assumptions that underpinned those motivations.

⁷⁵ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 58-64; Tufnell, 'Education of Pauper Children' Pages 148-160.

⁷⁶ *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 161.

⁷⁷ Alec and Elizabeth Ross, 'Case Studies Senior of Women in 19th Century Social Administration' (2007) 1 *Social Policy & Administration* 49.

1.3. Parental status and juvenile pauperism

The concept of juvenile pauperism was tightly associated with parental agency because parents had to die, desert their children or voluntarily admit them for a child to become a pauper. The Poor Law Act 1834 was intended to prevent the able-bodied poor from receiving any provision of public welfare unless they were willing to enter the workhouse because the system was designed to shame their lack of self-sufficiency.⁷⁸ Welfare policy during this period was not so much about poverty itself as it was about stigmatising the moral failure of dependency because even the most impoverished were not labelled as paupers by the system's administrators unless they sought assistance. In a limited number of ways the New Poor Law made things better for some poor families because it empowered the authorities to hold putative fathers of illegitimate children responsible for financial support and extinguished punishments for unmarried mothers.⁷⁹ However, in most other respects it exacerbated the consequences of being poor because it removed the authorities' power to grant allowances in lieu of wages and forced anyone deemed able-bodied to submit to the workhouse.

Children were only understood to be juvenile paupers by Poor Law officials if their parents received some form of assistance from the authorities, whether by virtue of workhouse accommodation or outdoor relief.⁸⁰ This is why unaccompanied children in district schools posed political hurdles because the children were reliant on the state but the parents were not. Public childcare under the New Poor Law was not set up for parents to voluntarily admit their children because it was intended to accommodate children who were relieved *with* their parents in the workhouse, or to accommodate children whose parents had died or deserted them. Conceptualising juvenile pauperism in this way

⁷⁸ PLA 1834.

⁷⁹ PLA 1834 s.LXIX. After 1844 mothers were expected to pursue putative fathers themselves Poor Law Act c.101 s.II.

⁸⁰ PLA 1834 s.LVI.

allowed for the stigma of dependency to be attached to parent because the parent could be deemed morally reprehensible for either entering the workhouse, deserting their child or for dying without providing their child with a sufficient legacy to remain independent from the state.

The law never defined the terms deserving or undeserving.⁸¹ Instead, the Guardians were allowed to differentiate the two forms of poverty themselves until formal recommendations were made after austerity commenced in 1870. In practice, before cutbacks were initiated certain groups of women including widows and the wives of absent soldiers and infirm men were deemed worthy recipients. The law viewed the financial responsibility of children under the age of 16 as the sole responsibility of parents (or grandparents if necessary) and stipulated ‘nothing herein contained shall discharge the Father and Grandfather, Mother and Grandmother, of any poor Child, from their Liability to relieve and maintain such poor Child’.⁸²

Relief via the workhouse was no different because it was also based on parental status where children were concerned. In this instance parents were considered the relief recipients, rather than their children, because those under the age of 16 could only receive support in their own right if they were parentless. This was how the public childcare system under the New Poor Law came to function as an alternative form of outdoor relief once welfare reductions were imposed. I argue parents who lived outside the workhouse voluntarily admitted their children to the authorities when they could not afford to keep them because outdoor relief orders were increasingly harder to obtain.

⁸¹ Although the law never defined the terms deserving and undeserving they had well-understood common meanings dating back to the Old Poor Law, which acted as a de facto limit on the discretion of the Guardians.

⁸² PLA 1834 s.LVI.

I do not argue that parents admitted their children with the express intention of securing access to industrial training methods for their children because the Guardians had the discretion to accommodate juvenile paupers in a range of childcare systems depending on their circumstances.⁸³ This discretion meant parents who did not desert their children entirely had no guarantee that their child would be sent to a district school rather than a workhouse. However, statistics from the late 1850s show that 78 per cent of children who were chargeable to London Poor Law unions were accommodated in district schools instead of workhouses.⁸⁴ Cautious inferences can be drawn that once austerity started in the early 70s that parents felt the risk of their child ending up in a workhouse instead of a district school was a risk worth taking.

As more ‘other’ children entered the care of the state a prominent lawmaker issued a cautionary warning about the dangers of not eliminating outdoor relief entirely.⁸⁵ Victorian academic and parliamentarian, Henry Fawcett, gave numerous lectures and published a book about the effects of pauperism on England. This book dedicated a chapter to the question of children. He declared that ‘England was brought nearer to the brink of ruin by the Old Poor Law than she ever was by a hostile army’ and reasoned that all support should thus be withdrawn to promote parental independence.⁸⁶ Fawcett defended his position on the basis that outdoor relief was fundamentally flawed because it allowed the parents to access relief without attaching the necessary stigma that was needed to deter people seeking assistance. He felt any form of adult dependency, including reliance on wage-earning children, was problematic and wanted to see England convert the Poor Law system into something akin to the Irish system where outdoor relief did not exist.

⁸³ See figure 1.1.

⁸⁴ Webb, *English Poor Law History* Page 112.

⁸⁵ See footnote 270 in this thesis for figures about the rising numbers of ‘other’ children entering district schools during this period.

⁸⁶ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Page 29.

Fawcett was also firmly opposed to Nassau Senior's calls for the expansion of the long-distance foster care system because he felt it rewarded undesirable parental decision-making.⁸⁷ The definition of juvenile pauperism was so tightly associated with parental agency that critics like Fawcett could not see a valid defence for a system of foster care. He argued that working-class men were responsible for their children in both life - and death - and that there was no justification even for orphans to be sent to foster homes because their fathers should have provided them with legacies.⁸⁸

He also felt the stakes for the broader working-class population were particularly high because a foster care system that assured a child would be raised away from the workhouse (with guaranteed education and medical costs) would encourage improvident married couples or destitute unmarried mothers to abandon their children. He claimed that a system with guaranteed child-maintenance payments that were issued by the government would encourage agricultural labourers to give up paid employment in favour of fostering Poor Law children. He queried [...]

‘The boarding out system would therefore bring home this extraordinary result to a considerable proportion of our labouring population, that a man would receive quite as much for the support of two pauper children as he is able to earn by hard toil. Could anything more powerfully tend far and wide to spread the feeling that pauperism is such a desirable profession that the children of the pauper are far better off and have a far greater chance of doing well in life, than the children of the man who tries to do all that can be done by hard work for his family?’⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Pages 79-91.

⁸⁸ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Page 84.

⁸⁹ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Page 82.

Fawcett expressed concern about how stigma would attach to the parents of children in district schools or workhouses – whether by voluntary admission or parental death or desertion. However, he still unequivocally supported institutional care over foster care because institutionalising children ensured family-based system did not expand. Fawcett believed family-based systems of care would place juvenile paupers in a position that was too favourable in light of their parents’ decision-making and that the loss of domestic influence was simply a consequence of allowing a child to fall into poverty.⁹⁰

Before the 1880s, Victorian commentators did not challenge the conception of juvenile pauperism as a system of parent-based welfare. Even progressives like Nassau Senior, who heavily favoured family-based systems, agreed that a tripartite system of classification based on parental circumstances was appropriate for labelling children in care. She agreed that classification based on parental status helped the authorities differentiate desirable juvenile paupers, who deserved favourable alternatives such as foster care, from undesirable children who did not.⁹¹ She sympathised with reformers who felt that ‘other’ children should be educated away from the parentless classes in schools that provided minimal academic instruction and favoured long days of outdoor labour because ‘it would probably be more easy to interest them in out-door work than in books’.⁹² However, she rejected such calls and cited the positive benefits that parentless children had on the disreputable class of ‘other’ as bettering influences.

Nationalist sentiment was on the rise during the late-nineteenth century and increasingly affected child welfare discourses throughout the mid 80s. I argue rising nationalism contributed to juvenile paupers being understood as something other than a burden on the state. Although later amendments to the

⁹⁰ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Page 91.

⁹¹ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 58-62.

⁹² Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 65.

Poor Law continued to rely on notions of parental agency to differentiate groups of juvenile paupers, and their availability for public law interference,⁹³ a more nuanced understanding about their political significance was beginning to emerge. The basis for state intervention into the lives of poor families shifted away from the idea that juvenile pauperism was a form of parent-based welfare in favour of ideas that emphasised the citizenship potential of poor children and the potential benefits to the public sphere.⁹⁴

Intervention was legitimised on the basis that was in the best interest of the country. I argue that as this change occurred, the concept of juvenile pauperism became more child-centred and the threat posed by unrestricted parental rights became exposed. This shift in thought not only made the passage of later amendments less controversial; it also helps explain why ‘other’ children were not excluded from district schools despite numerous calls for them to be housed away from the permanent classes. As the concept of juvenile pauperism shifted away from notions of parental agency and shame, ‘other’ children acquired their own value in the eyes of state because they could be perceived as potential English citizens, as opposed to potential burdens. This shift meant ‘other’ children were better off cared for by the state - as opposed to their parents - and was a complete reversal of the policies of deterrence that wanted to see poor parents assume responsibility for their children at all costs. This change quickly revealed that the real issue facing the authorities was unrestricted parental rights to custody rather than issues of how to attach shame to parents who sought support as argued by Fawcett.

1.4. Reductions in welfare and the erosion of parental rights

Welfare reduction in the 1870s precipitated a sudden and rapid curtailment of parental rights during the late-nineteenth century. Outdoor relief orders were

⁹³ See the Poor Law Act 1889 Vict. 52 & 53 c.56 and Poor Law Act 1899 Vict. 61 & 62 c. 60 (hereafter PLA 1889 and PLA 1899).

⁹⁴ See section 1.5 in this chapter for this discussion.

important because they allowed people to stay in their homes and avoid the shame of being labelled a pauper. These orders were implemented without criticism throughout the mid-nineteenth century as workhouses were still slowly built around the country. However, by 1860 it became apparent that a considerable number of parishes could not afford to build such large institutions on their own budgets and the government responded by passing the Union Chargeability Act 1865.⁹⁵ This statute forced parishes to pool their resources and lawmakers anticipated this move would reduce expenditure on outdoor relief. However, a report was published in 1871 that showed 843,000 people continued to be relieved in their homes by virtue of outdoor relief whereas only 140,000 people were relieved in workhouses.⁹⁶

It was at this time that a Poor Law inspector named Henry Longley delivered a report to the LGB requesting that Boards of Guardians throughout the country deny provision to most groups that were previously eligible. He suggested [...]

‘15. Out-relief should not be given to able-bodied widows with families

(except during the first six months of widowhood); --

(a.) Where they are in receipt of regular weekly wages.

(b.) Where their earnings appear to be below the general market price of their labour.

(c.) Where there is reason to believe that they have not truly stated their means.

(d.) Where they either have no home, or a home in which it is undesirable, on account of locality that they should remain.

(e.) Where there is reason to believe they are of drunken or immoral habits.

⁹⁵ Vict. 28 & 29 c.79.

⁹⁶ Williams, *From Pauperism* Page 102.

(f.) Where they have received out-relief for a specified period (e.g. a year), without making any progress toward independence.

(g.) Where they have refused a definite offer of employment, whether made by the Guardians or others.

16. No out-relief should be given to applicants of the disabled class (being capable of being removed to the workhouse); --

(a.) Where their home is such that they cannot be properly cared for there.

(b.) Where they are of bad character.

(c.) Where it appears that they have relatives able or liable to contribute to their maintenance, who refrain from doing so.

(d.) Where they have made no provision for their future wants, having been previously in receipt of such wages as to enable them to do so.⁹⁷

This guidance was hugely significant because it effectively recommended outdoor relief was denied to everyone who lived outside the workhouse who had been previously eligible.⁹⁸ Interestingly, Longley's recommendations were never reflected in law and were merely advisory. This meant parish officials retained the right to relieve those in need irrespective of their character or means. However, there is some disagreement about how consistently parishes followed Longley's advice. Williams argues most parishes not only followed Longley's advice, based on the idea that it was sound administration, but they also extended his proposals in what became known as the 'crusade against outdoor relief'.⁹⁹ He cites that the number of people receiving outdoor relief fell within five years by 276,000 and reduced the proportion of England's

⁹⁷ *The Local Government Board: Third Annual Report 1873-1874* (C (2nd series)) Pages 204-205.

⁹⁸ Note that the elderly were treated the same as the infirm under the PLA 1834.

⁹⁹ Williams, *From Pauperism* Pages 100-105.

population in receipt of outdoor relief from 3.8 per cent of the total population to 2.4 per cent as evidence of severe austerity.¹⁰⁰ Whereas Hurren provides a more nuanced approach to the question of crusading, and argues that while most unions adopted some of Longley's advice, very few adopted all of it, and in turn the distribution of welfare was patchy across England.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, workhouse populations also decreased throughout this period, which suggests the poor found other ways of navigating the consequences of extreme poverty during this period of severe austerity – an argument I will develop throughout this thesis.

Longley concluded 'out-relief is to be granted only as an indulgence to deserving cases [...] and when a more complete organisation of charity shall have been effected, to regulate such cases as these to the care of charitable agencies'.¹⁰² In some ways this was a reasonable request because the charitable sector was expanding rapidly during this period - especially where disadvantaged children were concerned. Middle-class activism developed into a movement called the 'child-rescue movement', which led to the establishment of key philanthropic institutions that still exist today including Barnardo's, the Waifs and Strays Society (Children's Society) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Swain explains how charitable children's societies viewed parental failure, rather than poverty or social inequality, as the 'key enemy of childhood [and] created a discursive environment in which removal could be justified as being in the best interest of the child'.¹⁰³ Monica Flegel further explains how societies such as the NSPCC presented normative children from poor backgrounds as delinquents such that only proper intervention by their superiors could restore their natural childhood

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *From Pauperism* Page 102.

¹⁰¹ Hurren, 'World Without Welfare' in *Obligation, settlement and dispute*; Hurren, 'Belonging, Settlement and the New Poor Law' in *Migration, settlement and belonging*.

¹⁰² *The Local Government Board: Third Annual Report 1873-1874* (C (2nd series)) Page 207.

¹⁰³ Swain, 'Sweet Childhood Lost' Page 208.

innocence.¹⁰⁴ Steven Taylor has also contributed to the historiography of the child-rescue movement by questioning the economic motives behind child emigration and the impact that middle-class ideas about parenting had on the experiences of poor families.¹⁰⁵

The crusade against outdoor relief, and the burgeoning children's charitable sector, precipitated a sudden and rapid curtailment of parental rights. Before 1889, a court could only order to remove a child from parental care using the Industrial Schools legislation but even then only for a fixed period of correction and parental consent was required.¹⁰⁶ The Poor Law Act 1889 (PLA 1889 hereafter) created the first legal mechanism to transfer custody to the state if a child was 'wholly or partly maintained by the Guardians'.¹⁰⁷ Two years later, two further pieces of legislation followed that reduced parental autonomy yet further, including the criminalisation of child neglect and court powers to refuse parental custody where a parent had abandoned or deserted their child.¹⁰⁸ The 1891 Act gave the state substantial discretion to usurp custody in a wide range of cases because it allowed the courts to refuse a parent's right to their child if he had 'conducted himself [in a manner] that the Court should refuse to enforce his right to the custody'.¹⁰⁹ By the end of the century, parental rights had been eroded to the extent that a child could be permanently removed for reasons ranging from a parent's ability to maintain them through to their moral character or mental fitness.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Monica Flegel, 'The dangerous child: Juvenile Delinquents, Criminality, and the NSPCC' in *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation, and the NSPCC* (Routledge 2009).

¹⁰⁵ Steven Taylor, 'Poverty, Emigration and Family: Experiencing Childhood Poverty in Late Nineteenth-Century Manchester' (2015) 18 *Family and Community History* 89.

¹⁰⁶ See the Industrial School Acts 1857, 1861 & 1866; Vict 20 & 21 c.48; Vict 24 & 25 c.113; Vict. 29 & 30 c.118 (hereafter ISA 1857, 1861 & 1866).

¹⁰⁷ PLA 1889.

¹⁰⁸ See the Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of Children Act 1889 Vict. 52 & 53 c.44; and the Custody of Children Act 1891 Vict. 54 & 55 c.3.

¹⁰⁹ The Custody of Children Act 1891 s.1.

¹¹⁰ These developments in the law are discussed in more detail in section 3.2 of this thesis.

Notions of protectionism were initiated by child-welfare reformers based on the threat posed by working-class parents to their children and the need for spatial controls to mitigate risks. Victorian commentators cast certain groups of poor parents who did not permanently desert their children to the public authorities, or philanthropic institutions, as the enemies of their children, as will be discussed in more detail later. With the crusade against outdoor relief gaining momentum at the same time, the ins and outs discourse effectively served to shame parents who required assistance, whilst simultaneously building the case for reducing their custody rights based on their need for help. During the second reading of the Act before it became statute Lord Balfour explained the necessity of the powers to the House of Lords [...]

‘It has become apparent that at present there is no sufficient or adequate protection for the interests of children against being handed over to care of their relatives or guardians if the relative or guardian are unfit to take charge of them [...] there is no likelihood that of the [Poor Law] Guardians being unduly anxious to maintain children at the expense of the rates if those who would otherwise have to maintain them are of sufficient character to discharge their duty; but if a dispute arises, there are provisions in this clause whereby a Court of Summary Jurisdiction may decide between the parties brought before them.’¹¹¹

The ins and outs discourse provided a crucial link between reduced welfare and the erosion of parental rights during this period and that is why it is crucial to my argumentation throughout this thesis.

Parental rights restrictions were unthinkable when the New Poor Law was established in 1834 because parental authority was absolute. But by the late 1870s unrestricted custody rights became heavily criticised, especially if

¹¹¹ HL 2 Aug 1889, vol 339, cols 161-169.

parents could not independently maintain their children without assistance from the state. Liberalist John Stuart Mill asserted [...]

‘It is in the case of children, that misapplied notions of liberty are a real obstacle to the fulfilment by the State of its duties. One would almost think that a man’s children were supposed to be literally, and not metaphorically, a part of himself so jealous is opinion of the smallest interference of law with his absolute and exclusive control over them; more jealous of almost any interference with his own freedom of action.’¹¹²

However, child-protection narratives started to emphasise the public interest as the basis for state interference in the private sphere by the late 80s. This change occurred at the same time that themes of nationalism were taking hold and legislative reform of parental rights was becoming imminent. Davenport Hill explained ‘the most righteous course seems to be [...] to maintain as closely as possible the balance between parental rights and parental duties; and when the latter are neglected with injury to the child and harm to the State, for the State to take her defenceless little citizens into her keeping’.¹¹³

The PLA 1889 authorised unions to transfer custody rights to the state where the Guardians wholly or partially maintained a child.¹¹⁴ This piece of legislation was a landmark in the history of child protection because it provided the first legal mechanism to transfer parental rights to the state without consent. It had far-reaching impact because it opened the door in swift succession for additional restrictions on parental rights that were disproportionately targeted at the poor. For example, two weeks later, the Prevention of Cruelty to, and

¹¹² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Longman, Roberts & Green 1869) Page 107.

¹¹³ Florence Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* (Macmillan 1889) Page 311.

¹¹⁴ See the PLA 1889. The details of this legislation and the role of the ins and outs discourse in its passage will be explored fully in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Protection of, Children Act 1889 was passed which introduced criminal penalties for the ill treatment, abandonment, neglect or unnecessary harm of a child.¹¹⁵ This statute allowed for the courts to charge a fine up to £100 if a parent was found guilty, and if they could not afford to pay, the courts had the authority to imprison the parent for a maximum of two years.

The Custody of Children Act 1891 extended the courts' powers to deny a parent custody of a child where they 'allowed [their] child to be brought up by another person at that person's expense, or by the Guardians of a Poor Law union, for such a length of time as to satisfy the court [...] that the parent was unmindful of his parental duties'.¹¹⁶ This statute could be applied regardless of the reason that a parent allowed their child to be maintained by the Poor Law – including if they were imprisoned for non-payment of a neglect fine. The cumulative effect of both Acts was that if an impoverished parent was found guilty under the 1889 Act, and could not afford to pay the fine, they would be sent to prison and parental rights could be permanently severed on the basis of being unmindful of their duties. Technically middle-class parents could be found guilty under the 1889 legislation as well, but they could probably also afford to pay the fine, and thus the impact of this legislation disproportionately affected the poor.

It is no coincidence that these developments took place at the same time that the Empire was at its height. This was a period in history where the middle classes were increasingly concerned about the condition of the domestic poor, as opposed to the colonial poor. By the close of the century, reformers agreed that even destitute children needed to be incorporated into the national citizenry because English identity was increasingly being distinguished from colonial otherness throughout child-welfare discourses.¹¹⁷ Poor Law children became

¹¹⁵Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of Children Act 1889 s.1.

¹¹⁶ Custody of Children Act 1891 Vict. 54 c.3 3(b).

¹¹⁷ Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* Pages 62-78.

known as ‘children of the state’,¹¹⁸ and were perceived to have an important stake in the future of the nation rather than being a mere drain on the public purse. Reformers became less focussed on the risk of future dependency of juvenile paupers and more concerned with their ability to be educated to a standard that they could become respectable English adults. Davenport Hill explained ‘children will be saved from the brand of pauperism, and passing under control of the State, receive at her hands the good gift of honest and loving family life; then, neither disgracing her in after years, nor ashamed themselves of her guardianship, shall rise up and call her blessed’.¹¹⁹

Narratives of nationalism soon eclipsed those of protection within child-welfare discourses.¹²⁰ Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s ‘The Cry of the Children’ and ‘A Song for the Ragged School of London’ became anthems for the child-welfare movement and popular novelists both informed - and were themselves informed by - the emphasis on notions of Englishness within the context of poor children.¹²¹ I argue that the rising value of English identity fuelled the importance of Nassau Senior’s original conclusions because the intrinsic value of the *domestic* family became more important than class-based moral idealism. By the end of the century other female administrators had joined the Poor Law inspectorate including Hannah Mason, Florence Chapman and Margaret Pell. These women broadly supported Nassau Senior’s conviction that family-based systems of public childcare were superior to institutional environments and justified state intrusion into poor families on the basis that English domestic influences were essential for a proper childhood.¹²²

¹¹⁸ See Florence Davenport Hill’s main treatises on the subject *Children of the State* (Macmillan 1889) and Gertrude Tuckwell, *The State and its Children* (Methuen & Co 1894).

¹¹⁹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 353.

¹²⁰ This argument will be advanced in section 1.5 of this chapter.

¹²¹ For example James Greenwood’s *The Little Ragamuffins or, Outcast London* and Charles Kingsley’s *The Massacre of Innocents*.

¹²² Ross, ‘Case Studies Senior of Women in 19th Century Social Administration’ Page 56.

These women collectively pushed for family-based arrangements and their efforts were reflected by a significant fall in district school populations while family-based alternatives blossomed. Statistics from 1871 show there were 39,542 chargeable children in England and that most of them were accommodated in workhouses or small separate schools.¹²³ Of this total, 4,705 children were housed in the nine district schools around London but only 122 children were accommodated in foster homes outside the union.¹²⁴ Fostering beyond the union did not gain momentum until after Nassau Senior's 1874 report but quickly gave way to cottage homes as the majority option for family-based care. By 1897 there were 38,260 chargeable children in England and most of them resided in cottage homes. Only 3,781 children were housed in district schools and 2,017 were accommodated in foster homes outside the union.¹²⁵

The work of Nassau Senior contributed to declining district school populations because her 1874 report embroiled them in controversy. District schools were presented as ineffective reformation spaces because of the population instability caused by ins and outs. This discourse provided a crucial link between the curtailment of outdoor relief and the erosion of parental rights. I develop this argument in more detail in chapter 3 where a detailed assessment of custody laws and the crusade against outdoor relief are offered. For now, it is important to understand that the reason the ins and outs discourse is significant to this thesis is because it planted the seed within child-welfare discourses that relationships between poor parents and their children were harmful, and that the state was better placed to raise poor children.

¹²³ *The Local Government Board: First Annual Report 1871-1872* (C (2nd series)) Pages XXXIV-V.

¹²⁴ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 7.

¹²⁵ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 7.

1.5. Secondary literature about public childcare under the New Poor Law

This thesis sits broadly across three areas of modern historiography: child welfare, imperialist nationalism and citizenship reform. Early historians did not talk about de-pauperisation at all because they accepted that the motivations of reformers were protectionist. There is acknowledgment of the Tufnell-Nassau Senior debate in certain historical accounts of childcare during this period, but few inquiries have been made about the citizenship aspirations behind child-welfare policies. Although modern historians have explored the need for ‘good citizenship’ during this period,¹²⁶ they have not specifically examined de-pauperisation or interrogated the link between the process of conversion and the erosion of parental rights.

For example, George Behlmer, who is the official historian of the NSPCC, discusses some of the measures used by rescuers like Dr Barnardo such as ‘philanthropic kidnapping [of] endangered children’. Behlmer accepts the idea that charities stole children from their parents as justifiable on the basis that ‘the gulf between “moral law” and “judicial law” remained wide’.¹²⁷ Behlmer argues that charities were morally compelled to kidnap children they perceived to be endangered in order to protect them from their parents because the law did not yet allow for children to be removed from parental custody. These assertions are made despite the controversial nature of Barnardo’s practices and the fact he was charged with kidnapping over 80 times. Jean Heywood provides another example of the motivations of reformers going unchallenged by sharing the assumption that all rescued children lacked familial ties. She argues ‘the principles of collectivism and mutual aid [...] were difficult to apply for the

¹²⁶ Tom Hulme, ‘“A Nation Depends on Its Children”: School Buildings and Citizenship in England and Wales, 1900-1939’ (2015) 54 *Journal of British Studies* 406.

¹²⁷ George K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford University Press 1982) Page 72.

help of the destitute and neglected child [who had no] family and community'.¹²⁸

Both historians raise no questions about the class issues underpinning the Victorian understanding of child endangerment or the accuracy of the child-rescue imagery that presented poor children as parentless. Historical accounts like Behlmer and Heywood continue to share the idea that state interference within parent-child relationships was based on protection and they allow important factors about the erosion of parental rights to be ignored. Contemporary issues such as class conflict; moral idealism and misunderstandings about the nature of child poverty are excluded by such reductive analyses because they do not challenge the motivations of the Victorian authors.

Later historians have started to sharply scrutinise the failure to interrogate the motivations of reformers in their scholarship. Harry Hendrick and Lydia Murdoch are some of the first modern historians to reassess the motivations underlying child-welfare policies from this period. Hendrick suggests philanthropists were motivated by a desire for the 'reclamation and reform' of impoverished children but argues philanthropists eventually became inspired by patriotism and nationalist concern toward the turn of the century.¹²⁹ Murdoch drew similar conclusions but went a step further to argue that philanthropists deliberately misrepresented children so that they could be made available for a conversion experience from 'street-arabs' into English citizens.¹³⁰ I agree with the conclusions of Hendrick and Murdoch, and this thesis builds on their work by closely examining two mechanisms of de-pauperisation – district schools and foster care outside the union. Demonstrating the importance of good

¹²⁸ Jean S Heywood, *Children in Care: The development of the service for the deprived child* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1965) Page 49.

¹²⁹ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare England: 1872-1989* (Routledge 1994) Page 41.

¹³⁰ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

citizenship challenges notions of protection as the primary basis for public law interference within the family (as opposed to philanthropic intervention as seen in Murdoch's work).

Exceptions to the lack of scholarship on de-pauperisation are the work of Lynn Hollen Lees, David Green and Jeff James. Lees argues in her book *Survival of the Unfit* that policies of conversion not only were prevalent under the New Poor Law but also were largely ineffective because most poor adults had their own ideas about how relief should be administered.¹³¹ She asserts that the poor rejected the intended stigma of associating with the Poor Law authorities and wanted to make the system work for them. Green and James build on this idea and collectively argue that Poor Law officials often struggled to subdue paupers who had clear ideas of their 'rights' under the New Poor Law.¹³² These works expand our understanding of pauper agency, which this thesis contributes. However, although these works provide relevant analyses because they engage with the lived experiences of the poor, they are different from this study because they focus on the pauper population as a whole rather than the subgroup of children.

I argue juvenile paupers need to be studied in isolation of the wider pauper population because they were targeted with tailored policies of citizenship reform that were used to justify the erosion of parental rights. Jane Humphries has recently shown that there was a cost to being poor, particularly for children during this period, and that this cost could be life long and affect life

¹³¹ Lynn Hollen Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit: Welfare Policies and Family Maintenance in Nineteenth-Century London' in Peter Mander (ed), *The Uses of Charity: the poor on relief in nineteenth-century metropolis* (University of Pennsylvania Press 1990) Pages 68-91.

¹³² David Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790-1870* (Farnham 2010); Jeff James, 'Sophia Heathfield of Hawnes, Bedfordshire: Punishment victim or victor?' (2018) 21 *Family and Community History*.

chances.¹³³ However, Humphries does not ask if those life chances could be improved by state intervention whereas this thesis does. This thesis contributes to the general scholarship about nineteenth-century child welfare but its most important contributions are to highlight the relationship between reductions in welfare and the rise of interventionist power and to raise questions about the legitimacy of that relationship. The aforementioned three areas of modern historiography will now be examined in turn in order to situate this thesis within them.

Child welfare

There is considerable scholarship on the topic of child welfare in nineteenth century and this thesis contributes to two distinct subgroups: those that treat the period of 1870-1900 as a distinct period and those that examine assumptions made about child poverty. The reason for focussing on these subgroups is partly because the relevant years of observation for the data samples fall within this period but also because Poor Law historians recognise the unique features of this phase of English history. Early contributors like Williams argues future historiographies of the New Poor Law need to emphasise the differences between welfare strategies before and after 1870 because policy objectives had changed so much since the regime was initiated in 1834.¹³⁴ He analyses how welfare policies had been defined by notions of deterrence and shame toward the pauper population as a totality during the mid-nineteenth century and asserts that they had evolved into a much more complex state of affairs by the late-nineteenth century.

By 1870, a complex system of diverse institutions had been built to impose spatial controls on different sections of the pauper population in order to deliver

¹³³ Jane Humphries, 'Care and Cruelty in the Workhouse: Children's Experiences of Residential Poor Relief in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth- Century England' in Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (eds) *Childhood and child labour in industrial England* (Ashgate 2013).

¹³⁴ Williams, *From Pauperism* Pages 93- 95.

tailored policy objectives. Juvenile paupers, and the various public childcare systems that were developed and employed for their reform during this period, were examples of this. Williams explains [...]

‘Historians who emphasise the persistence of the distinction between the deserving and undeserving simply miss the point [...] because the aim of splitting did not require any one specific kind of strategy, but could be articulated in various ways in strategies which differed radically about what kinds of relief should be offered to paupers and for what ends.’¹³⁵

He argues the main policy goal targeted at Poor Law children before 1870 was to separate them from adult paupers and provide them with a basic level of education through workhouse schools.¹³⁶ However, I argue that by the latter part of the century, lawmakers wanted more than to simply separate and educate children in public care – they wanted to shape their place in the national citizenry and were prepared to restrict parental rights to achieve it.

Over the past forty years historians have developed a critique about child welfare policy between the years of 1870-1900. For example, Behlmer adopts a chronological approach to his analysis in *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* in recognition of the uniqueness of this phase in history for impoverished children.¹³⁷ His book describes the socio-legal landscape between 1870 and the passage of the Children Act 1908, which was common dubbed the ‘Children’s Charter’ by contemporary critics.¹³⁸ It was the predecessor to the Children Acts of 1948 and 1989, the latter of which still sets the current threshold for the removal of a child from parental care and governs all modern care proceedings in England. Behlmer explores the relationship between historic child-protection problems (such as child cruelty or baby

¹³⁵ Williams, *From Pauperism* Page 95.

¹³⁶ Williams, *From Pauperism* Page 65.

¹³⁷ Behlmer, *Child Abuse*.

¹³⁸ Children Act 1908 Edw. VII 8 c.67.

farming) and the rise of philanthropy and protective legislation during this period. He concludes child abuse started far earlier than the current medical community accepts and his work shares some misleading assumptions about the nature of child poverty that were initiated by the Victorian sources.

For example, Behlmer accepts the assumption that poor children needed to be protected from their parents. He acknowledges that the officers of the London SPCC ‘tended to be from the middle or upper classes’ but claims ‘they disowned charitable motives partly because they wished for strategic reasons to avoid the appearance of social condescension or class bias’.¹³⁹ When analysing statistics gathered by the Liverpool SPCC about why parents sent their children to Barnardo’s homes, he uncritically concludes ‘to take the most obvious example, poverty doubtless drove some parents to drink, desertion, or prostitution [and] the society’s statistics suggest child abuse was, at base, an environmental problem’.¹⁴⁰ Such statements imply child abuse was disproportionately a problem for the poor, which was certainly an assumption child-rescue reformers were happy to spread. His book struggles to frame the rise of interventionist power, specifically within the context of the poor, as an illustration of class conflict or tactical social policy because it largely accepts narratives generated by the Victorian sources without questioning the agendas of the authors. For example, when recounting Barnardo’s rescue work, Behlmer claims that ‘the mass selection of “street arabs” was another [method of reaching needy youths] but whatever the means by which they were located, Barnardo’s children usually showed the marks of long-term parental neglect’.¹⁴¹ He makes no space for alternative explanations for the appearances of children under Barnardo’s care during this period.

¹³⁹ Behlmer, *Child Abuse* Pages 16 and 65.

¹⁴⁰ Behlmer, *Child Abuse* Pages 72-73.

¹⁴¹ Behlmer, *Child Abuse* Page 59.

Later child-welfare historians have taken a much more critical approach to their interpretation of the circumstances that led to children being admitted to charitable institutions during the late-nineteenth century and to the motivations of administrators. For example, Murdoch contends [...]

‘To avoid the challenges to family as an institution, reformers cast poor children as waifs and strays – a distinct class and race apart from any recognisably English domestic family structure, history, or nationality [which] allowed for the extension of social welfare practices without challenging the hierarchical organisation of society’.¹⁴²

She offers an alternative understanding of child-welfare policy that presents poor parents as conscious agents who made deliberate choices based on their limited resources. Her analysis of Barnardo’s fundraising photographs, along with children’s letters and parental complaints, reveal a much more nuanced reality behind the work of child saver organisations like Barnardo’s than is presented by Behlmer. She recounts the story of Florence Holder who posed for a series of photographs in one of Barnardo’s studios and was presented as a newspaper seller in a tattered dress with tangled hair.¹⁴³ Florence’s mother had agreed to let her daughter be cared for in one of Barnardo’s ‘Homes for Orphan and Destitute Children’ on the basis that she would be educated and trained as a domestic servant. However, she was shocked when she came upon an advert that depicted her daughter in this way two years after being admitted. She complained to the local police department and was reported to have said ‘I call it a systematic fraud upon a benevolent public, to strip them and then take likenesses for such a purpose’.¹⁴⁴

Other historians support alternative readings of the child-rescue movement and the decisions made by impoverished parents. Like Behlmer, Harry Hendrick also adopts a chronological approach in his first historical account of child

¹⁴² Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 16-17.

¹⁴³ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 14-16.

¹⁴⁴ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 16.

welfare titled *Child Welfare: England 1872-1989* but with a much more critical eye.¹⁴⁵ He divides his analysis into four sections based on different time periods and argues they were each defined by unique characteristics. The second section of his book explores the years between 1872-1918 and is entitled ‘From rescue and reform to “children of the nation”’.¹⁴⁶ Here, Hendrick explores the ineffectiveness of the bastardy laws (which allowed mothers to reclaim child maintenance from punitive fathers) and argues mothers were often forced to choose between their own survival and that of their infants due to the severity of their poverty. He asserts the infant life protection legislation that emerged during the latter part of the century was a consequence of mothers shedding newly born babies because it was ‘the only way in which the family, including other children, could survive’.¹⁴⁷

Like Murdoch, Hendrick explores themes of parental agency and frames the development of interventionist power as a struggle for control between destitute parents and the authorities. He claims [...]

‘By the 1880s, child abuse was being seen as a major social disease [because] there was a ‘condition of England’ question [which] had particular relevance to the urban slums, where informed opinion held that the poor – a race apart – needed to be civilised. Indeed, there can be no proper understanding of the NSPCC (nor any of the social legislation affecting children) without an appreciation of the social, economic and political nature of the society from which it emerged, and of the significance of social class in the creation of that nature.’¹⁴⁸

Class conflict and the rise of national sentiment were central themes behind the increasing regulation of the child because the middle classes wanted poor children to become more productive citizens. However, it took time before they

¹⁴⁵ Hendrick, *Child Welfare*.

¹⁴⁶ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Pages 41-127.

¹⁴⁷ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Page 44.

¹⁴⁸ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Page 50.

accepted such ambitions would involve recognising destitute children as part of the English race.

Because Behlmer continues to present child neglect and child abuse as a disproportionate problem for the poor, he is able to justify interference within parent-child relationships on the basis of protecting children. The more critical approach of historians such as Murdoch challenges this assumption by contextualising interference within a discussion of extreme poverty and parental agency, rather than rescue. By moving the emphasis away from the motivations of reformers, histories like that offered by Murdoch have been able to begin unpacking the reasons parents gave up their children to third parties during this period.

The rise of nationalism

The socio-political landscape in which parents surrendered their children is of critical importance to this thesis. The end of Britain's imperial period was a time of exceptional patriotism. By the turn of the century, the domestic recession was drawing to a close and London was the epicentre of the richest empire in the world. Land on every continent was under the rule of the Crown and English identity was perceived by the domestic authorities to be inherently superior to the indigenous peoples on those lands.¹⁴⁹ This perception meant all British subjects, including the children of destitute parents, were of value to the state by virtue of their nationality alone rather than by virtue of their citizenship potential in adulthood. I argue these changes in perception were important developments in the historiography of child welfare because they allowed narratives of the national interest to eclipse those of protection as the justification for state interference.

¹⁴⁹ Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* Pages 62-78.

Incorporating the nation's most undesirable children into the body politic was a radical concept during the 1870s and 80s because residual feelings about hereditary pauperism lingered on. As the economic and political order of Britain continued to evolve toward the turn of the century, important questions about the role of working-class children in future society began to emerge. Hendrick discusses the influence of key socio-scientific programmes that were popular at the time and asks how they impacted the development of child-welfare policy. He specifically engages with the impact of Social Darwinism and the British Eugenics movement on child-welfare policy.¹⁵⁰ Hendrick argues that ideas about the 'survival of the fittest' placed increasing pressure on lawmakers to reframe their policies toward poor children because it was feared that if juvenile paupers continued to receive minimal standards of care, they might contribute to the failure of the English race. During the mid-nineteenth century juvenile paupers had been seen as a burden on the state, which one reformer lamented: 'we cannot hang them, as we did then, at the rate of 30,000 a year'.¹⁵¹ But by 1870, things began to change.

Modern research has shown that the working-class birth rate was declining by the late-nineteenth century,¹⁵² however despite this change, the working classes still out-populated the middle classes. This imbalance prompted fears of racial degeneration to take hold. Hendrick explains how the language of race, parenthood, and survival became regular features of the political vocabulary and queries how they affected policies on child welfare. He argues that broader concerns for the wellbeing of the country had a significant impact on the advancement of key initiatives that affected disadvantaged children. Hendrick claims that social changes such as the introduction of specialist education for

¹⁵⁰ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Pages 84-85.

¹⁵¹ 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system' Page 21.

¹⁵² Jane Humphries, "'Because They Are Too Menny...'" Children, Mothers and Fertility Decline – The Evidence from Working-class Autobiographies of the Eighteen and Nineteenth Centuries' in Janssens, A., (ed), *Gendering the fertility decline in the Western World* (Oxford 2007).

handicapped children, the first school meals services and the beginnings of medical inspection in schools were all inspired by anxieties about the future of the Empire if policies of minimalist childcare were allowed to continue.¹⁵³ Hendrick argues such changes revealed that lawmakers still saw poor children as threats to the public interest, but he asserts that the public interest had changed from one focussed on limiting expenditure to one focussed on the advancement of the English race.

Numerous modern historians have analysed how Victorian discourses about child welfare fused images of the country with that of the family to promote racial agendas. Stephen Heathorn argues England suddenly became couched in language that made it sound like the ‘ultimate home’ in an attempt to help incorporate those on the fringes of society into the main stream.¹⁵⁴ Juvenile paupers were one of the largest recipients of such messaging because they were under the care of the state whose administrators were now authorised to resist parental custody claims on fairly broad grounds. Victorian commentators sought to reassure all those who ventured abroad for the purposes of spreading English civilization that they could rest assured that their homeland was waiting for them upon their return like a loving family.

Heathorn claims England was portrayed as the ‘perfect maternal guardian of domestic values’ and provided an ideal comparison to colonial lands full of ‘savages’. These comparisons inevitably highlighted the superiority of the English family. He comments [...]

‘This symbolism and imagery suffused [children] in a wide variety of forms, playing on the imagery of mother and father/son, family and home, as a means to explain the bonds of affection that it was thought

¹⁵³ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Pages 41-127.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School 1880-1914* (University of Toronto Press 1965) Pages 24-38.

elementary schoolchildren should develop towards both to their nation and their countrymen overseas.¹⁵⁵

As Heathorn recognises, notions of imperial citizenship permeated child-protection discourses as reformers sought to emphasise urban poor children's role as representatives of the Empire rather than their value as craft labourers. With the district school system in steady decline, the concept of the family became heavily emphasised as both a domestic environment and an unbreakable relationship with the nation. Conceptualising the idea of family in this way invariably contributed to cottage homes becoming the dominant method of public childcare by the start of the twentieth century.

Child-protection discourses stressed the common linkages of English heritage based on overt racial constructions. Murdoch suggests the concept of imperial citizenship gave poor children a direct link to their country along with an enduring responsibility that they never had before.¹⁵⁶ They became equal bearers of the nation's future, whereas previously they had been viewed as an underclass that was riddled with the physical and moral diseases associated with pauperism. My examination of district schools and foster care suggests that children under the care of the Guardians were heavily influenced by such messages because they had limited interactions with adults who were not Poor Law officials. However, even children in foster homes outside of London were affected by emergent discourses because racial propaganda infiltrated everyday life in a variety of ways.

Messages of imperial strength were conveyed to the younger generation on a daily basis through popular literature, recreational spaces, and children's entertainment. John Schmeer argues that the general population were not passive consumers of such messaging because they had the liberty to select

¹⁵⁵ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Page 149.

¹⁵⁶ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 265.

their methods of relaxation, and thus indirectly helped shape how notions of English superiority were conveyed to them.¹⁵⁷ He discusses how schoolchildren were given regular updates about the wild animals from the outer reaches of the Empire that were housed in Regent's Park zoo, and encouraged to read literature with undertones of imperial prowess, such as those of Arthur Conan Doyle. Schneer argues schoolchildren throughout the country were encouraged to view themselves as Anglo-Saxons - as opposed to Britons - in an effort to draw racial divides that brought impoverished white children within the remit of proper English citizenship.¹⁵⁸

Such efforts helped people of all social classes adjust their understanding of what it meant to be English and notions of good citizenship became embedded with the concept of the family.¹⁵⁹ By treating England as a metaphor for the ideal family unit, important class and gender roles could be advanced toward the younger generation in a subtle manner. Heathorn explains how the futures of both genders of working-class children were viewed as equally important because they played valuable roles in the future good of the nation.¹⁶⁰ He argues the cultural construction of national identity within the school environment reinforced the wider social consensus that questions about inequality, within the contexts of class or gender, needed to give way to more important questions about the strength of the Empire.

Heathorn suggests that the ideals of masculine skilled labour and feminine domesticity, which were emphasised in the district school system, could be understood as examples of citizenship ideals becoming a paramount policy concern. Anna Davin agrees and says 'the term "alien", so prevalent at the time, suggests the tendency to define self (or community or society or nation) against

¹⁵⁷ John Schneer, *London 1900* (Yale University Press 1999) Pages 93.

¹⁵⁸ Schneer, *London* Pages 93-119.

¹⁵⁹ Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire* Pages 62-78.

¹⁶⁰ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Pages 115-145.

‘other’: those who fit or belong as opposed to those who do not.’¹⁶¹ She argues poor children were able to cross into the group who belonged because new laws required compulsory school attendance and curtailed parental rights, which ensured the state had the upper hand over children in public childcare. Davin rightly points out that ‘where children did not fit the new requirements [...] the parents could be labelled as inadequate or bad, and might even have to hand over responsibility for their children to the state.’¹⁶²

This thesis builds on this body of scholarship by analysing the relationship between nationalist agendas and the efforts of the state to reform the citizenship status of Poor Law children during this period. It also shows the consequences of this interference by tracing a select number of juvenile paupers from the Poor Law sources into future non-Poor Law sources to capture specific features about their adult citizenship.

Citizenship reformation

Many modern historians touch on the idea of citizenship reform in their work but often frame it as part of broader issues such as class conflict, educational policy or mere social betterment. Tom Hulme explores how the focus on good citizenship during the late nineteenth century impacted the structural development of school buildings,¹⁶³ while Marjorie Levine-Clark looks at the ways that misunderstanding about masculine citizenship hampered the ability of welfare reformers to tackle the problem of male dependency.¹⁶⁴ Peter Yeandle investigates notions of citizenship and imperialism affected the

¹⁶¹ Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (Rivers Oram Press 1996) Page 204.

¹⁶² Davin, *Growing Up Poor* Page 208.

¹⁶³ Hulme, ‘A Nation Depends on its Children’.

¹⁶⁴ Marjorie Levine-Clark, *Unemployment, welfare, and masculine citizenship: “so much honest poverty” in Britain, 1870-1930* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015).

pedagogical development of history in the English national curriculum.¹⁶⁵ He argues that history as a subject was shaped by a carefully crafted curriculum for all children that mixed civic responsibility with imperial ambition rather than imposing national-identity teaching. The scholarship on good citizenship during this period is rich and diverse but none of it engages directly with questions about the modification of juvenile pauper citizenship and the outcomes of those efforts.

This thesis makes multiple contributions to this area of scholarship by addressing the question of childhood conversion, and by critically engaging with the citizenship aspirations behind child-welfare policy and the mutual agency of parents and welfare officials. A general social betterment example is Heywood's explanation that 'together with the emphasis on education and a corrective environment, we see an effort based on the experiments of the voluntary societies, to give to the child [...] some sense of belonging to a community'.¹⁶⁶ She draws relevant connections between the works of charitable agencies and the Poor Law authorities (including their shared desire to separate poor children from their parents in the hopes of limiting negative influences) but rarely engages with the goals of Poor Law reformers. She concedes that 'formal education was to be in harmony with their future position in life, and to give them no visions of dreaming spires'.¹⁶⁷ However, she makes no express mention about the deliberate process of creating industrious citizens.

Such statements do little to illuminate the actual goals of reformers like Tufnell and Nassau Senior. Heywood describes the events that led up to their fierce debate, and the changes to Poor Law childcare that resulted, in considerably more detail than many historians. Nevertheless, she focuses on how the

¹⁶⁵ Peter Yeandle, *Citizenship, Nation, Empire: The Politics of History Teaching in England, 1870-1930 (Studies in Imperialism)* (Manchester University Press 2015).

¹⁶⁶ Heywood, *Children in Care* Page 91.

¹⁶⁷ Heywood, *Children in Care* Page 76.

discourse demonstrates increasing regulation of the child rather than on its elucidation of the citizenship aspirations that motivated changes in the law. She acknowledges that ‘the Victorian doctrine of hard work, which permeated society and was responsible for the country’s prosperity, was as much in the interests of the child as of the citizens who paid the bill for his training.’¹⁶⁸ Yet, her historical account of juvenile pauperism fails to analyse the primacy of concepts such as self-sufficiency, the value of traditional craftsmanship or national belonging, which were key citizenship features of early child-protection measures.

Behlmer’s work remains equally estranged from such concepts of childhood conversion by focussing on the issue of class and racial conflict. His later book, *Friends of the Family: the English Home and its Guardians, 1850-1940*, moves beyond the history of child abuse to explore the ‘battle for parental responsibility’ within the context of working-class children.¹⁶⁹ But it does not engage with the social citizenship of juvenile paupers. He acknowledges that class conflict developed as the result of middle-class women wanting to inspect poor households in the hopes of ‘helping’ them, but he does not interpret the relationship between working-class parents and welfare officials as one of mutual agency. He argues [...]

‘The eagerness of religious and philanthropic bodies to act in *loco parentis* with respect to the moral training of children, had, it seemed, undermined poor mothers and fathers [but] sanitation now kept alive many persons who in earlier times would have succumbed to various forms of “selective agency,” and thereby enabled constitutionally weak individuals to “propagate their disabilities” [...] This threat to the vigour of the English race made it all the more vital that well-meaning

¹⁶⁸ Heywood, *Children in Care* Page 92.

¹⁶⁹ George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: the English Home and its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford University Press 1998).

philanthropists not crush the sense of social obligation of parents-to-be.¹⁷⁰

Behlmer's explanation for the increased regulation of poor children serves to highlight how prominent fears of racial degeneration were at the time, but also furthers popular assumptions about the altruism of welfare agencies from this period. His analyses compound beliefs that the poor were passive victims when navigating their misfortunes. Although it is relevant that Behlmer is the official historian of the NSPCC, his historical account of child welfare at the end of the nineteenth century does little to further our understanding about the reformation of juvenile paupers because it focuses on the charitable sector, and accepts misleading narratives established by Victorian sources rather than asking questions about citizenship reformation.

A more nuanced social betterment example is Anna Davin's book *Growing Up Poor*. This book was published two years before Behlmer's *Friends of the Family* and adopts a more critical approach to the wider questions about expanding regulation in the late-nineteenth century.¹⁷¹ While Behlmer generally positions the rise of interventionist power within poor households as measures of social support, Davin argues the state wanted to be the third parent of poor children because biological parents were generally viewed as defective. She accepts some legislation was genuinely humanitarian in nature, but asserts that the erosion of parental authority was in large part due to lawmakers viewing poor children as national assets that the state had valid claims over because of their dependency. She remarks [...]

‘If government and its officers (whether imperial, national or local) were “paternal” and took over parental responsibilities, and if England was the “Mother” of Empire, the governed, on the other hand, were children, helpless and incapable, perhaps wayward; their “need” was

¹⁷⁰ Behlmer, *Friends of the Family* Pages 118-119.

¹⁷¹ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*.

for direction and control rather than rights and powers. This was used at home to justify structures of government, which minimised both participation and accountability, along with denial of political rights to those deemed eugenically unfit. It was also the rhetorical justification for Empire, since natives were childlike and would regress into savagery without the firm adult hand to guide and control them.¹⁷²

Davin accepts certain interventionist initiatives were made for the purposes of child welfare (such as free school meals) but also pushes the role of class and race to the foreground when analysing the state's desire to 'civilise' poor children. Yet again the specific citizenship aspirations for juvenile paupers are left unaddressed, but she does appreciate that the state sought to 'transform' working-class children by passing laws that allowed them to be compulsorily educated and for their parents to be routinely supervised by public authorities.

The work of Stephen Heathorn looks at the question of citizenship reform but in the context of all working-class children during this period rather than the subgroup of juvenile paupers. He explores the language of citizenship within the context of working-class children in his book *For Home, Country and Race* but again does not engage with children under the control of the state.¹⁷³ Instead, he reflects more broadly on the need to civilise working-class children through formal education processes by exposing them to the writers, artists, and historical achievements of England. His analysis of 'good citizenship' has a markedly patriotic - as opposed to reformatory - tone. He explores the development of a national curriculum, which was distinct from industrial training techniques, and emphasises the importance of history as a subject for working-class children in national schools. He explains [...]

'Historical narratives in elementary school reading books – intended, as they were, to demonstrate to working-class children their place in

¹⁷² Davin, *Growing Up Poor* Pages 214-215.

¹⁷³ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Pages 24-55.

the great “national tradition” – amalgamated ideas about English nationality with that of appropriate social and gender roles. [...] The lesson of the past was that great men were Englishmen and therefore true “citizens” not through voting or other civic responsibilities, but because they had been defenders of the nation.’¹⁷⁴

This is an apt observation when looking at the school-age population as a whole but still leaves the uniqueness of citizenship retraining within the context of Poor Law schools unaddressed. There is no doubt that working-class children who remained free of public interference needed to be incorporated into mainstream society as well because they had been deemed a separate underclass for most the nineteenth century. However, their experiences in education were fundamentally different from those in district schools or foster care because lawmakers did not overtly try to reform them on the basis that their parents were moral contaminants.

Hendrick is one of the few modern historians to directly acknowledge that some forms of childcare were conversion experiences in his second book titled *Child Welfare: Historical dimensions, contemporary debate*.¹⁷⁵ After he describes the rise of philanthropic homes and Poor Law schools during this period he concludes [...]

‘It was an act of charity dictated by self-interest at a time when Britain was ceasing to be an agricultural society, so the full impact of urban conditions was making itself felt in terms of crime, disease, slums and urban poverty – all under the shadow of a rapidly changing political culture [...] the objectification of the child, no matter how old and responsible, in order to mould its character according to religious and

¹⁷⁴ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Page 54.

¹⁷⁵ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical dimensions, contemporary debate* (Policy Press 2003) (hereafter *Child Welfare 2*).

political principles, and often to exploit its labour power [were key parts of the institutional care of children].¹⁷⁶

Hendrick explores different systems of childcare including Poor Law schools, foster care, Barnardo's homes, the Waifs and Strays Society, and the NSPCC in order to emphasise the importance of religion on their 'path to conversion'. He argues Poor Law schools were heavily affected by the efforts of voluntary societies (which usually had strong religious affiliations) and in turn sought to improve children in their care by educating them in 'independence, employment and Christian adulthood'.¹⁷⁷

Child Welfare is one of the first modern histories to engage with the specific citizenship aspirations of Poor Law administrators. It also criticises previous historians (namely Heywood) for offering explanations about child-welfare policy that were too 'straight forward'. Hendrick attacks Heywood's analysis of Poor Law childcare as a 'developing experiment to meet the individual needs of deprived children' as misleading. Hendrick argues that Heywood's explanation serves to leave out key political considerations, which divorced social conditions from the objectives of policymakers.¹⁷⁸ He criticises Heywood's interpretation by asserting 'the social conditions of the time were not divinely ordained; they were made by people who possessed the power to change them had they so wished [and] little or no thought was given to the idea that [...] poor parents may well have been the best people to care for their own children'.¹⁷⁹ However, Hendrick also does not conduct an examination of the experiences of the participants in Poor Law citizenship conversion, nor query the agency of those directly involved.

¹⁷⁶ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* 2 Pages 48-49.

¹⁷⁷ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* 2 Page 41.

¹⁷⁸ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* 2 Page 42.

¹⁷⁹ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* 2 Page 43.

Hendrick offers the first modern historical account of public childcare during the late-nineteenth century that directly engages with the idea that child-protection policy was a campaign to improve the citizenship status of disadvantaged children. He incorporates broad themes associated with de-pauperisation that other historians analysed (such as class, race, and the rise of nationalism) but was the first to recognise the relationship between increased regulation over the child and Victorian misunderstandings about the nature of child poverty.

Historians like Heywood, Behlmer, Schneer, Heathorn, and Davin generally understand children in public childcare during this period as either passive victims who were saved by the child-rescue movement, or as national assets that were socially incorporated out of imperialist desire. However, these approaches struggle to convey the importance of citizenship reformation as a tailored policy objective aimed at poor children. This thesis builds on Hendrick's conclusions by showing there was not only a relationship between increased regulation of the child and misconceptions about childhood poverty; but also that there was a relationship between reductions in welfare and the erosion of parental rights. I argue the ins and outs discourse was the connecting factor in this relationship.

Relying too heavily on the child-rescue movement poses the risk of reproducing misleading assumptions about poor families that interacted with the Poor Law authorities. An example of this is Behlmer's suggestion that parental cruelty and neglect were disproportionate problems for the poor or that most child inmates did not have family connections. Historians specialising in other aspects of child welfare have started to challenge modern histories about the child-rescue movement on the basis that they are often overly simplified. For example, Swain warns modern theorists to resist the temptation to frame their accounts of the child-rescue movement as rigid binaries of altruistic intent

versus social control.¹⁸⁰ She urges future historians to favour multiple meanings because rigid interpretations risk divorcing individual families from their social context and reducing their experiences to simple narratives of ‘darkness and light, evil and innocence, danger and rescue’.¹⁸¹

Hendrick’s interpretation of late-nineteenth century child welfare fits well with Swain’s advice because it accepts social conditions were more complicated. He proposes that the increased regulation of the child be viewed as a series of dualisms of bodies/minds, victims/threats and normal/abnormal so that overlapping themes with modern child-protection practices can be observed.¹⁸² Framing the rapid expansion of child-protection legislation within the paradigm of dualisms allows for questions of citizenship reformation to be initiated. Hendrick explains [...]

‘The child victim was nearly always seen as harbouring the possibility of another condition, one that was sensed to be threatening to moral fibre, sexual propriety, the sanctity of family, the preservation of race, law and order, and the wider reaches of citizenship. [It is important] we recognise just how much of so-called protective legislation has been concerned with their presence as threats rather than their suffering as victims.’¹⁸³

Although his engagement with specific citizenship ideals is limited, he does provide astute observations about the social context of early child-protection laws. Hendrick’s analysis rightly argues intangible social factors, such as political fear and evangelical sentiment, contributed to increased regulation in addition to issues such as class, race, and nationalism. He argues it could only be made politically acceptable to save poor children if they were rescued by

¹⁸⁰ Shurlee Swain, ‘Child Rescue: The Emigration of an Idea’ in Jon Lawrence and Pat Starkey (eds), *Child Welfare and Social Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool University Press 2001) Pages 101-120.

¹⁸¹ Swain, ‘Child Rescue’ Page 104.

¹⁸² Hendrick, *Child Welfare 2* Page 1-14.

¹⁸³ Hendrick, *Child Welfare 2* Page 7.

appropriate entities (e.g. charities or the state), and that if they were not, they would become dangerous citizens.

Hendrick's analysis helps us see that juvenile de-pauperisation was born from a complex socio-legal landscape and illustrates why this topic struggles to fit neatly within binary structures or simplistic historical assessments. Murdoch responds to this challenge by offering the most comprehensive inquiry into the question of citizenship reform in her monograph *Imagined Orphans*.¹⁸⁴ This book is by far the most closely aligned piece of modern research to this project because it challenges contemporary narratives about parentless children and contextualises philanthropic intervention within parent-child relationships within the broader picture of citizenship reform. *Imagined Orphans* is first piece of empirical work to investigate the family backgrounds of child-rescue victims and contextualise the movement within a specific agenda of conversion. It focuses primarily on children in Barnardo's homes during the late-nineteenth century, and early-twentieth century, but also explores a small number of Poor Law records.

Murdoch investigates admission records for thousands of children who were sent to Barnardo's institutions between 1898-1924 along with 202 children that were admitted to the Kensington and Chelsea Poor Law District School between 1896-97. Her findings reveal upward of 70 per cent had at least one parent who was known to administrators.¹⁸⁵ This finding builds on earlier scholarship that exposed the misleading nature of Victorian narratives surrounding child emigration from England to Canada.¹⁸⁶ Records from charitable societies specialising in child emigration showed over a third of child emigrants had at least one parent that agreed to their emigration in the hopes of securing better employment opportunities abroad. Modern research has

¹⁸⁴ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

¹⁸⁵ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 185-187.

¹⁸⁶ See Swain, 'Child Rescue' Page 101-120.

concluded that most children were in fact exploited or neglected after they arrived.¹⁸⁷

Murdoch expands on the impact of these reassessments by demonstrating that the figures within the philanthropic sector were far worse. She asserts children were willingly admitted to rescuers like Barnardo because their parents were led to believe they would receive valuable employment training and better standards of life than if they stayed in their family homes. Murdoch explains how popular representations of the urban poor contributed to the idea that their environment precluded all domestic life. She explains that working-class households were perceived to blur the boundaries between important divides such as productive and reproductive spaces, public and private spaces, or human and animal spaces.¹⁸⁸ Poor households rarely satisfied middle-class aspirations for the separation of adults, children, sexes, and livestock; thus children from such environments fuelled the fear element expressed by Hendrick.

Murdoch also notes that urban children often played unsupervised in the streets, and powerfully argues that this violated reformers' desired spatial controls between the 'literal refuse in the streets' and the sanctity of the family sphere.¹⁸⁹ She persuasively contends that poor children were not only deliberately misrepresented as 'imagined orphans' in order to justify interference by rescuers, but they were also 'rescued' so that they could be converted into better people than their parents. Murdoch also argues that poor parents played an active role in this experiment because they had their own ideas about how charitable services should work. She claims most parents

¹⁸⁷ Examples include Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (McGill-Queen's University Press 1980); Philip Bean and Joy Melville, *Lost Children of the Empire* (Unwin Hyman 1989).

¹⁸⁸ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 90-91.

¹⁸⁹ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 90-91.

cooperated with officials like Barnardo in a conscious attempt to ameliorate some of the hardship associated with their extreme poverty.

Murdoch was the first historian to directly engage with the specific citizenship ideals that continually appear in the Victorian sources about child protection during the late-nineteenth century. She explains [...]

‘[There were] two forms of “Englishness” encouraged by children’s institutions: the craftsman citizenship that was dominant in the 1870s and 1880s, characterised by a preference for village life and artisan trades as opposed to factory work, and the imperial citizenship that began to take prominence in 1890s. Both citizen ideals sought to distance children from their roots.’¹⁹⁰

She cites the importance of pre-industrial ideals in her analysis and explains how the architectural designs of children’s institutions sought to recapture the social harmony of village life in the hope that children would develop vertical ties to their community rather than horizontal ties to their class status.

Murdoch also reflects on reformers’ nostalgia for rural ideals and the belief that people in the countryside experienced poverty differently than those in cities. Her investigation prompts two final conclusions. First, that despite the diversity of childcare systems at the time (e.g. orphan homes, cottage homes, foster care, district schools etc.) each system of care shared the ‘common threads of citizenship [which] were defined in contrast to the vices of their parents (and in the case of imperial citizenship, to colonial subjects)’.¹⁹¹ Second, that although reformation efforts sought to convert poor children into English citizens - in practice it was more of a process of cooperation and bargaining between parents, children and welfare officials who had competing agendas.¹⁹² This

¹⁹⁰ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 243.

¹⁹¹ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 287.

¹⁹² Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 7.

thesis builds on her work by expanding questions about deliberate citizenship conversion into the remit of children under the care of the Poor Law and providing empirical information about their adult lives.

1.6. Concluding remarks

My review of the secondary literature around the topic of public childcare under the New Poor Law intentionally focuses on the works that analysed the unique features of the last three decades of the nineteenth century because of the impact that the crusade against outdoor relief had on the socio-legal landscape. Issues such as child welfare, the rise of nationalism, and citizenship reformation cannot be fully understood without being situated in the context of severe austerity and the rapid expansion of child regulation during this period. The Victorian sources confirm citizenship aspirations were a shared objective for reformers and lawmakers, but also reveal there was considerable disagreement about how to achieve it. The Tufnell-Nassau Senior debate epitomises this conflict because it exposes the unique fears expressed by both sides, which this thesis tests.

The administration of public childcare was much more complicated than mere notions of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ as explained by Williams. It was a strategic exercise designed to reach specific ends – namely, to train children whose parents relied on the state to become more skilled and self-sufficient adults. Tufnell believed a system of industrial training in district schools was the best way to achieve this whereas Nassau Senior believed domestic training with a family was superior (especially for girls). Their debate is often referenced in modern histories about child protection but is rarely identified as a debate about the methodology of a conversion experiment.

Research such as Murdoch’s presents a more critical approach to the nature of child poverty during this period but is substantially different from this study because it focuses on the philanthropic sector and explores different concerns.

Murdoch initiates the first challenge to the parentage status of child inmates based on empirical information, and contextualises misrepresentations from the Victorian sources within the framework of citizenship reformation. This was a crucial development in the history of English child protection, but it is distinguishable from this study because it does not ask if reformation efforts were successful. This development also does not challenge the basis for the increasing public law interference between parents and children at the turn of the century.

This thesis investigates whether citizenship aspirations were fulfilled for children who were chargeable to the Poor Law within district schools between 1884-89 and foster homes between 1889-99. Its central research questions ask if: 1) children from either childcare system became the types of adult citizens desired by reformers; 2) if one system of care was more effective than the other in securing better outcomes. The answers to these questions shed light on the assumptions underpinning the ins and outs discourse, and thus shed light on the legitimacy of the erosion of parental rights in England during the late-nineteenth century.

The chapters are organised to highlight the relationship between the law as a means of regulating poor families during this period and the response of poor families to socio-legal developments. The second chapter sets out the methods that were used to locate and assemble the samples of children from district schools and foster homes and explains how a control group of biological siblings who had never entered public childcare was also developed. Chapters 3 and 4 rely on large-scale cohorts of children in care (2423 and 399 children respectively) to challenge assumptions about poverty made by Victorian child-welfare reformers that were made throughout the ins and outs discourse and used to justify the PLA 1889. Chapters 5 and 6 rely on smaller cohorts (150 children each) to test if either of these public childcare methods were successful in converting poor children into model citizens. The adult outcomes presented in the later chapters tell us that skills-based educational curriculums like those

found in district schools were more effective tools for reform than the mere use of spatial controls between parents and children. This raises important questions about the legitimacy of justifying the erosion of parental rights on the basis that it would improve adult citizenship of poor children.

Chapter 3 investigates the next of kin and discharge destinations for the largest district school in England to show that most of them had at least one living parent who strategically institutionalised their school-aged children to cope with extreme poverty. I argue this decision was an unintended consequence of the crusade against outdoor relief. The findings demonstrate that there was little empirical backing for contemporary suggestions that links with biological parents were responsible for significant population instability within the care structures of the Poor Law. This finding underpins a necessary reassessment of the ins and outs discourse, raising questions about the legal erosion of parental rights in the late-nineteenth century and the pronounced effect of the legislation on poorer families.

Chapter 4 examines the characteristics of foster children and the families that cared for them. This chapter confirms that the administrative discretion afforded to local committee members was used very widely. In fact sometimes committee members simply ignored the law in order to facilitate foster arrangements with families that did not comply with the legislation. The findings show that the majority of foster parents in this study were experiencing some form of extreme poverty as well. I argue that this was yet another unintended consequence of the crusade against outdoor relief because the rural working classes experienced the same type of problems as urban populations in the face of austerity, despite the assumptions by reformers that they did not. As a result, most foster children were sent to homes that were just as disadvantaged and unstable as their biological homes rather than households that complied with pre-industrial ideals.

Chapter 5 explores the citizenship outcomes for children from district schools, whilst chapter 6 explores the same for children from foster homes. Three specific questions were selected for this purpose due to the limitations of available sources. Problems with source limitations are explained in more detail in the next chapter. In brief, both of these chapters ask if children from each system of childcare: 1) established independent households; 2) became skilled labourers, and 3) had enduring relationships with their biological parents or foster parents in adulthood. The findings show that district school children had more skilled occupations and fewer lived as lodgers or institutional inmates in adulthood but that large numbers maintained contact with the parent who admitted them to care. By comparison, fostered children had more unskilled occupations, were more prone to living as lodgers or institutional inmates but often retained strong connections to their foster communities – as opposed to their foster parents.

Overall, this thesis concludes that the district schools observed in this study produced more skilled labourers and independent householders than the foster care scheme, but these schools failed to substantially weaken children's biological ties.¹⁹³ Many biological families reunited after children left district schools whereas far fewer foster children stayed with their foster parents as adults. Finally, although the children in the control sample established the most independent households, they entered similarly unskilled work to the foster sample. Case histories are presented throughout each chapter to shed light on the lived experiences of the different types of families that engaged with the Poor Law authorities during this period. These examples demonstrate why the assumptions of child-welfare reformers were too broad but also show how individual experiences of the poor were different.

¹⁹³ This supports new research that reveals ties between institutionalized children and their families endured despite lengthy stays in institutions such as ragged schools. See Laura Mair, 'Give my love': community and companionship among former ragged school scholars' (2018) 21 Family and Community History 166.

The final chapter of this thesis concludes that district schools were more effective mechanisms of citizenship reform than foster care but that spatial controls were ineffective. These findings suggest that the parent-child link was not as disruptive as assumed, which then undermines the prevailing narrative that legitimises state intervention into the family in the late-nineteenth century on this basis. The link between poor parents and their children did not need to be severed to protect their citizenship potential. Disadvantaged children needed skills-based training to improve their life chances. This concept was anathema during the late-nineteenth century because such assistance would have been perceived as rewarding defective parenting. These conclusions, and my overall argumentation, raise questions about the necessity of spatial controls within the Poor Law system generally and the resulting erosion of parental rights.

Chapter 2: Methods

2.1. Introduction

There are two central areas of inquiry that underpin this project: 1) questions about administrative practices in district schools and foster care; and 2) questions about how both systems performed as mechanisms of citizenship reform. In order to investigate these issues, it was necessary to carry out empirical research using the administrative records generated by the Poor Law Guardians because they were the arm of the government that was responsible for the provision of public childcare during the late-nineteenth century. Analysis was based on empirical evidence drawn from these sources because a merely doctrinal approach to the law, or its policy guidance and related secondary literature, would only serve to reproduce existing arguments. The practical application of Victorian child protection policy needed to be investigated first so that the consequences of state care could be situated within an authentic socio-legal landscape.

This chapter is organised into three sections that aim to explain the framework for the research, the structure of the samples used for data testing, and some of the issues that arose when using Poor Law records as sources of primary evidence. Section 2.2 offers a justification for why this type of scholarship is relevant. This section also identifies the evidence gap this thesis seeks to fill and explains why a mixed methodological approach was adopted. Section 2.3 explains how the data sets that were used for quantitative testing were assembled, and outlines their composition and identifying characteristics. This section also explores the questions applied to each sample, and attempts to account for any biases. This chapter concludes by offering a reflection on the challenges posed by the use of Poor Law records as sources and explains why connecting them to non-Poor Law sources through a unique research method

called genealogical triangulation makes an original contribution to our understanding of the history of child protection.¹⁹⁴

2.2. Framework for the research

The research questions at the heart of this project focus on the citizenship reformation of children in public childcare during a period of severe austerity. However, before those questions could be tested, other aspects surrounding the administration of unaccompanied children needed reassessment so that the socio-legal landscape behind interventionist power could be properly understood to expose any potential biases that may arise from the analysis of the empirical data.

All the data about children under the care of the state was drawn from the recently digitised records of the Poor Law Boards of Guardians between 1884-1899.¹⁹⁵ These records were accessed using the online database tool Ancestry.co.uk; but the records are also available in original format at the London Metropolitan Archives.¹⁹⁶ This project would not have been possible without the use of electronic research methods because they allowed detailed information about thousands of juvenile paupers to be extracted at a fraction of the speed of traditional archival methods. As a result, this study presents large-scale and small-scale data sets that allow Victorian assumptions and aspirations about public law interference in the lives of poor families during the nineteenth century to be empirically tested. This not only enables the consequences of a

¹⁹⁴ Genealogical triangulation will be explained in greater detail later in this chapter.

¹⁹⁵ London, England, Poor Law and Board of Guardian Records 1430-1930, Board of Guardians; *Register of Children Sent to South Metropolitan School District, 1884-1889*; Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002 (hereafter PLBG, Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002); London, England, Poor Law and Board of Guardian Records 1430-1930, Board of Guardians; *Register of Children Boarded Out, 1889-1899*; PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02 (hereafter PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02).

¹⁹⁶ See London, England, Poor Law and Board of Guardians Records, 1738-1930 available at Ancestry.co.uk or the London Metropolitan Archives.

largely unexplored area of child protection practice to be explored, it also provides an insight into the lived experiences of the first families to have their parent-child relationships interfered with by the English state.

Chapter 1 described how child-welfare reformers blamed parents that did not fully desert their children for unstable school populations, and explained how this led to ‘other’ children being perceived as sabotaging retraining efforts through their on-going parental relationships. In order to see if this claim was justified, chapter 3 provides a close reading of the logbooks from the biggest district school in England over a five-year period to see if ‘other’ children conformed to the criticisms advanced by the ins and outs discourse. Determining whether allegations of instability were accurate is relevant to the central inquiry of this study for two reasons. First, modern historians have not tested whether school populations were stable yet continue to echo the claims made by contemporary commentators about ‘other’ children throughout the secondary literature. Second, if fluctuation *was* a systemic problem it might have posed biases for the adult citizenship statuses of district school children because the children’s exposure to industrial training would have been disrupted.

Equally, questions about the administration of the foster care system needed critical assessment for the same reasons. Foster care under the Poor Law was highly deregulated, because most administration was left to volunteers, and has received virtually no scholarly attention by modern historians. The lack of current scholarship meant the question needed to be asked if local committees followed the law because there was significant potential for the law in practice to diverge from the law in theory.

Both of these reassessments are offered throughout chapters 3 and 4, and they serve to strengthen the academic rigour of the citizenship inquiries presented in chapters 5 and 6 because they expose how public childcare was *actually*

administered in the late-nineteenth century. Both systems functioned quite differently than Victorian sources imply, and the findings highlight why it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact of different kinds of public care. Most district school children had considerably more stable childhoods than reformers made out, and most foster children were not sent to the types of families that the law intended. Questions about administrative practices of both systems needed to be pursued before questions of citizenship outcomes were raised because there was always the possibility that there was a gap between the narratives generated by the Victorians and the reality on ground level. It turns out this was indeed the case, and this must be considered when interpreting the evidence presented in chapters 5 and 6.

All questions about adult citizenship status were tested against data captured from the 1911 census for England and Wales, this being the latest published census.¹⁹⁷ If a child could not be traced by the methods discussed in the next section, or had died before the census was taken, they were discarded from the study. I took the decision to prioritise children who entered care with biological siblings because it made it easier to make connections with non-Poor Law sources as will be discussed below. It is important to establish that there were also certain questions about the reformation of juvenile paupers that could not be empirically assessed because the Poor Law sources were too limited and did not provide first-hand narratives from biological parents, foster parents or child inmates.

To deal with this problem, I structured the study around questions about successful reformation that could be measured from the available sources and used a mixture of research methods to test them. These questions focussed on the three key ambitions that lawmakers hoped de-pauperisation would achieve:

¹⁹⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

1) independent household status;¹⁹⁸ 2) skilled occupations,¹⁹⁹ and 3) disrupted parent-child relationships within biological families and assimilated parent-child relationships within foster families. These questions were chosen partly because they were critical objectives of the reformation agenda that were capable of being assessed by the methods of this study, but also because they offered the best opportunity to answer the unsettled Tufnell-Nassau Senior debate. Understanding the merits of each side of this debate is of substantial relevance to this project because of the role the ins and outs discourse in particular played in eroding parental rights in England.

The regulatory provisions that governed public childcare, such as industrial training techniques or controls of fostering, were meant to ensure that juvenile paupers became productive adults who contributed to domestic interests and led independent lives. However, these provisions were fuelled by nostalgic middle-class ideals and misconceptions about working-class identity that did not take into account the suitability of such ambitions in a post-Victorian society. My definition of successful citizenship reformation is interpreted with this problem in mind. Sometimes children became the types of adult labourers that lawmakers desired but were unable to secure independent households due to their skills being obsolete within an industrialised society.

For example, Ethel Poppelwell and William Arthur Dickenson took up desirable occupations as a domestic servant and an agricultural labourer respectively. However, Ethel still ended up in the workhouse by the 1911 census and William became a farm servant in his foster parents' home.²⁰⁰ More

¹⁹⁸ This term is used to describe children who were listed as a head (or wife of a head) within an independent household during the 1911 census. This group is compared to children who lived as lodgers, with parents, or in institutions during the 1911 census.

¹⁹⁹ This term is used to describe occupations that conformed to pre-industrial ideals such as artisan trades, agricultural labour, military service and indoor domestic servitude.

²⁰⁰ See the cases of Ethel Poppelwell and William Arthur Dickenson in chapter 6 of this thesis. Both children were over the age ten at the start of their foster placements and exploited as cheap

fortunate children like Victor Bearcock also took up desirable occupations, in his case as a master tailor. However, he was forced to economically migrate because small communities no longer needed such skills because industrialised processes had taken over manufacturing needs.²⁰¹ The next four chapters illustrate how occupational ideals did not always correlate as closely with other forms of independence as reformers envisioned. This is clearly illustrated by the disproportionate number of skilled labourers who returned to live with their biological parents after leaving district schools.²⁰²

This project presents relevant correlations between competing systems of public childcare during the late-nineteenth century and trends in adult citizenship. However, it cannot account for the innumerable factors that affected the lives of the children from each cohort. Evaluating tendencies within each sample allows for tentative conclusions to be drawn that are relevant to the history of child protection because they cast light on the consequences of state interference within the private sphere, while individual case studies provide unique examples. Quantitative research methods were used for the central research questions so that conclusions could be based on large-scale data sets because that was the most robust means of testing prevailing narratives and exploring questions of citizenship. However, qualitative methods were also used to develop case unique case histories because that allowed the experiences of specific individuals and communities to be observed against the context of broad tendencies.

This mixed methodological approach allows for the intended, and unintended, consequences of initial public law interference within the family to be

labourers by foster parents because administrators breached their undertakings to the Guardians.

²⁰¹ See the case of Victor Bearcock in chapter 6 of this thesis. Victor was forced to migrate to York and leave his foster parish in order to find work as a master tailor.

²⁰² See figure 5.3 for information about the household statuses of sample three during the 1911 census.

examined on a whole new level. Presenting information from the perspective of the participants is an important feature of this type of scholarship because it allows those who were involved to be understood as conscious agents, who were active decision-makers in a landscape of severe welfare reduction, rather than as merely passive victims.

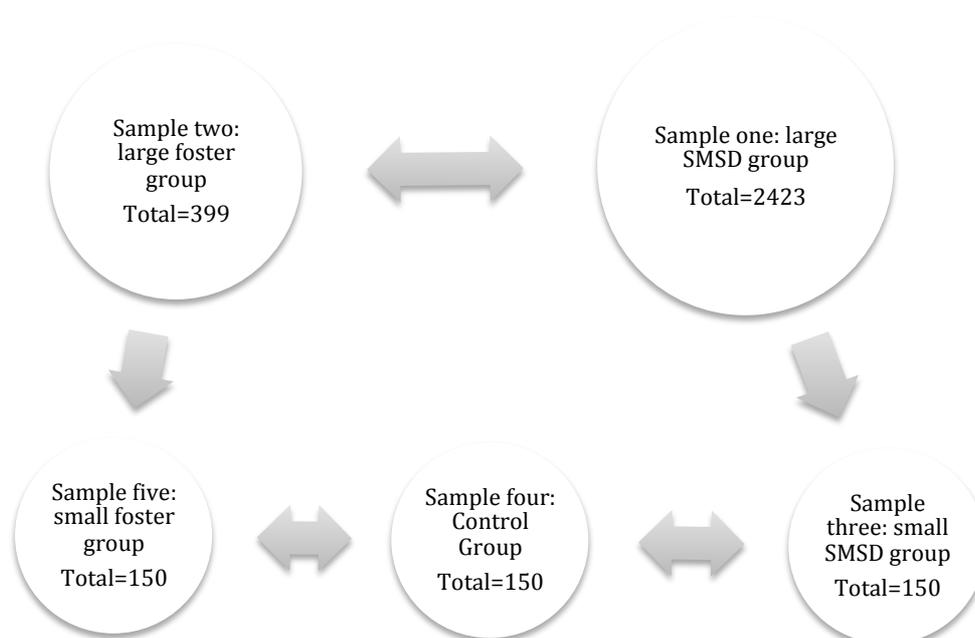
2.3. Structure, assembly and analysis of data samples

Five samples were assembled to investigate questions about administrative practice in district schools and foster care, and their potential as mechanisms of citizenship reform. Two samples of children were drawn from the records of the South Metropolitan School District (SMSD) between 1884-89 and two samples of children were drawn from the Boarding Out Agreements of Islington Poor Law union between 1889-1899.²⁰³ The SMSD records were selected over other district school logbooks because this particular group of schools accommodated more juvenile paupers than any other and received more criticism for population instability.²⁰⁴ The Boarding Out Agreements from Islington union were selected because Islington was one of the most prolific unions to foster children beyond its borders under the new powers during this period, and often recorded extra

²⁰³ PLBG, Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

²⁰⁴ John Mundella M.P., *Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the Local Government Board to Inquire into the Existing Systems for the Maintenance and Education of Children Under the Charge of the Board of Guardians* (C (2nd Series 1897) Pages 4 and 71-77; *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 349.

Figure 2.1 Diagram of sample structure



hand-written information about foster placements in the ‘remarks’ column of their logbooks.²⁰⁵ Finally, a control sample was also assembled that was composed of the biological siblings of the children from the other four cohorts who did not experience public childcare themselves (see figure 2.1).²⁰⁶

Large-scale data was needed to investigate questions about administrative practices in order to expose any incompatibilities with the claims made in the Victorian sources or non-compliance with the law. Sample one was composed of the entire population the SMSD between 1884-89 so that the empirical backing of key arguments advanced against the ‘other’ children population could be tested. Sample two was composed of approximately 20 per cent of the long-distance foster care population in England so that questions about administrative discretion could also be explored.

²⁰⁵ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Pages 214-215.

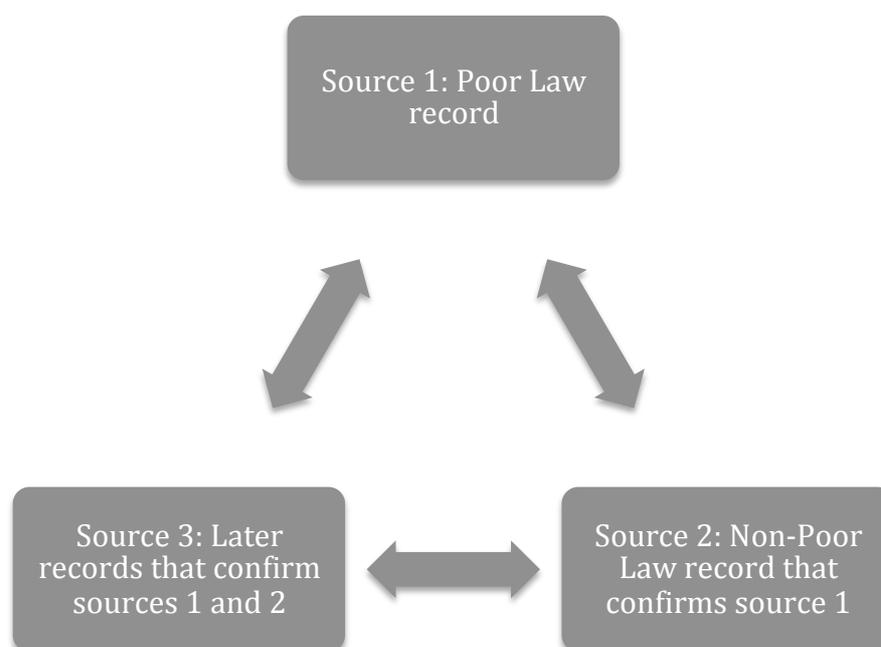
²⁰⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

Genealogical triangulation

Inquiries about citizenship outcomes were applied to the three smaller cohorts of 150 children. Smaller cohorts were used because each child had to be traced through later sources using a research method called genealogical triangulation in order to collect information about their adult lives (see figure 2.2). Genealogical triangulation allowed for Poor Law sources about individual juvenile paupers to be linked to non-Poor Law sources so that information about their adult life could be captured. Data was collected about individual children and used to make connections with non-Poor Law sources that offered additional information relevant to the central research questions of the study.

Samples three

Figure 2.2 Diagram of genealogical triangulation method



and five were drawn from children in samples one and two. Where selecting children for the smaller samples, preference was given to children who entered care with a biological sibling because groups of children were easier to triangulate to non-Poor Law sources than singular children, which will be explained in more detail below.

For example, the three Clampitt siblings were admitted to the SMSD in 1886 and classified as ‘other’ because their father John had been admitted to the workhouse (see figure 2.3).²⁰⁷ The only information about the children that was available from this record was: ‘Amy Clampitt DOB 1875; Daisy Clampitt DOB

Figure 2.3 Example of an admission record to the SMSD

The image shows a handwritten record on a grid. The first column lists names: 'Clampitt Amy', 'Daisy', and 'Gertrude'. The second column lists birth years: '1875', '1877', and '1879'. The third column contains the number '1'. The fourth column contains the date '19.3.86'. The fifth column contains the text 'Father, John, 12 Dover Buildings, G. R. R.'. The sixth column contains the text '12 Dover Buildings, G. R. R.'.

Clampitt Amy	1875	1	19.3.86	Father, John, 12 Dover Buildings, G. R. R.	12 Dover Buildings, G. R. R.
Daisy	1877	1	"	"	"
Gertrude	1879	1	"	"	"

1877; Gertrude Clampitt DOB 1879; classified as ‘other’; admitted 19/03/1886; father John 12 Dover Buildings Gordon Road Workhouse’. This meant there were four people in a family unit to trace rather than a single name. Although district school logbooks offer sparse detail about the children in their care, they often named a biological parent as a next of kin where relevant, which made genealogical research methods easier to apply because pre-intervention records could be located. Using the names of the Clampitt siblings and their father, the family was easily found in the 1881 census where more information could then be collected.

The census showed the family lived in Camberwell before the children were admitted to the Guardians, along with valuable data that could be used to make further connections (see figure 2.4).²⁰⁸ The census provided the name of their mother, details of their birth locations, names/birth locations of biological siblings, and John’s occupation as a commercial clerk, which made it possible to link the family to post-intervention records like the 1891 census.

²⁰⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002 Page 21.

²⁰⁸ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 676; Folio: 63; Page: 30; GSU roll: 1341157.

Figure 2.4 Example of a pre-intervention census record of a district school family

42	27	do	John Clampitt	Head	Man	30	1	Commercial Clerk	Devon High
			Marian	do	Wife	29			do
			Edith	do	Daughter	8		Schools	Miss Baywater
			Amy	do	Daughter	6		do	Miss Baywater
			Daisy	do	Daughter	4			do
			Frederick	do	Daughter	3			do

The 1891 census showed Amy had returned to the family home and that her mother Maria had taken in a male lodger named Henry Bates who had three of his own children (see figure 2.5).²⁰⁹ This information made it possible to follow

Figure 2.5 Example of post-intervention census record of a district school family

Maria Clampitt	Head	Wid	38	✓				Widow	CREATON
Amy	Do	Daughter	16	✓					London
Emily	Do	Daughter	10	✓					London
Elizabeth	Do	Daughter	8	✓					London
Henry	Boarder	Lodger	45		Foreman Tailor	A.H. Stone	X		Do
George	Do	Son	17			Z			Do
Charles	Do	Do	14						Do
Arthur	Do	Do	10						Do

Maria into the 1911 census to reveal that she had wed Henry Bates in the intervening years. The 1911 census also revealed that the second daughter, Daisy, had returned to the family home. This development allowed for data to be gathered and tabulated about Daisy's household status, occupation, and ongoing relationship with Maria (see figure 2.6).²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Class: RG12; Piece: 475; Folio: 93; Page: 15.

²¹⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2312.

Figure 2.6 Example of parent-child cohabitation record of a district school family

1	Maxian Bates	Head	56	Widow	—	—	—	—	None
2	Bessy Clappett	Daughter	37	single	—	—	—	—	Clerk 050
3	Evelyn Davies	ditto	30	Married	2	2	2	—	None
4	Edgar Davies	grandson	6	—	—	—	—	—	—
5	Evelyn Davies	granddaughter	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
6	Arthur Levy	Boarder	37	single	—	—	—	—	Manufacturers Agent
7	Robert Edmund protother	ditto	45	single	—	—	—	—	Secretary 050

This method was applied in a similar manner to the sample of children in the foster care system. However, in this case triangulation often required additional research because the Boarding Out Agreements provided no information about biological parents. This lack of information, coupled with the high levels of parental mortality in this group,²¹¹ made locating pre-intervention records more challenging. Pre-intervention records for fostered children were vital to the methodology of this study because that was how details about the biological siblings that did not experience public childcare were collected for the control group. For example, three Compton siblings were sent to foster homes in 1891.²¹² The Islington Boarding Agreements for William, Charles and Emily

²¹¹ This claim will be developed throughout chapter 4 of this thesis.

²¹² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02 Page 24.

Figure 2.7 Example of a Boarding Out Agreement record

Child Name	Age	Classification	Foster Parent	Parish
Lanthea Anne	7	Orphan	Henry Stocker	Combe Raleigh
Compton Wm	6	Father in Prison	William	Combe Raleigh
Furneave Eliz	11	Orphan	Henry Norton	Hendon
Frances Percy	5	Deceased	Henry Stocker	Combe Raleigh
Paley Henry	9	Father in Prison	Robert Thomas	Combe Raleigh
Furneave Eliz	11	Orphan	James Abernethy	Hendon
Thomas Wm	8	Father in Prison	John Hayes	Combe Raleigh
Compton Wm	6	Father in Prison	Thomas Gibson	Bookcroft
Compton Charles	9	Father in Prison	Thomas Morris	Wares Farm Cottages Hendon
Randall Ada	10	Orphan	Wm G. Davay	Wares Farm Hendon Hendon
Bradford Wm	7	Orphan	John Handkerwell	Wares Farm Hendon Hendon
Compton Emily	6	Father in Prison	Henry Abatto	Gottisham Hendon

Compton shows the limited information that the Poor Law authorities recorded for fostered children. It provides the following details (see figure 2.7).²¹³ The first two columns show the names of the children being fostered, and the fifth column records the name of the foster parent who signed the undertaking. Columns three and four show the ages and classifications of the children, and column six shows the parish the foster parents lived in.²¹⁴

For fostered children, the lack of information about their biological parents made pre-intervention records harder to locate than district school children. Identity confirmation with non-Poor Law sources was considerably easier if multiple biological siblings entered public childcare together and that is why preference was given to children who had biological siblings when assembling samples three and five from the two larger cohorts. Without this information, siblings from district schools would have disproportionately dominated the

²¹³ PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

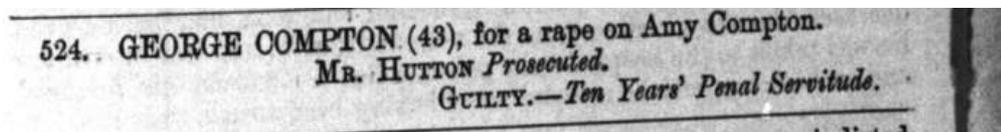
²¹⁴ Records for district schools and foster care often had significant information crossed out by hand as administrators made amendments to a child's records such as moving them to a new foster home or discharging them from public childcare.

Figure 2.9 Example of a pre-intervention census record of a foster family

George Compton	Head	Bride	X	Leicester	X	D ^o	Sharncliffe
Amy	D ^o	Daughter	X	General	X	Gloucester	
George J. D ^o	Son		X	Nicholas		London	Islington
Charles H. D ^o	Son		X	D ^o		D ^o	D ^o
William D ^o	Son		X	D ^o		D ^o	D ^o
Emily M. D ^o	Daughter		X			D ^o	D ^o

and criminal record (see figure 2.9).²¹⁷ The 1891 census was taken on the night of April 5th at which time the family was still intact. However, soon afterwards, George was prosecuted at the Old Bailey in mid-June for raping his 15-year-old daughter Amy, and sentenced to ten years penal servitude on the 29th of that

Figure 2.10 Example of a record triggering state intervention



month (see figure 2.10).²¹⁸ This event led to the three youngest children being admitted to the Islington Guardians. However, the newspaper coverage also allowed for information about their older siblings to be captured for the purposes of assembling the control group, and information about the event triggering state intervention to be collected, which will be discussed in chapter 5.²¹⁹

Information about biological parents was important for tracing children from both samples. This was especially true for females because paternal details allowed for marital records to be confirmed along with subsequent changes in surname. For example, Emily Compton married a man named John Thomas Burrell in 1918 and listed George and his occupation on her marriage certificate

²¹⁷ The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Class: RG12; Piece: 146; Folio: 32; Page: 62.

²¹⁸ Old Bailey: Sexual Offences: Rape: 29th June 1891: George Compton: Reference number: t18910629-524.

²¹⁹ See figure 5.11 for information about the triggers for state intervention within sample four.

Figure 2.11 Example of a marriage record of a female admitted to public childcare

1918. Marriage solemnized at <u>St. Stephen's Parish Church</u> in the <u>Parish</u> of <u>St. Stephen, Upper Holloway, N.1.</u> in the County of <u>London</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
118	August 28 th 1918	John Thomas Burrell	47	Bachelor	Marl Driver	Reton Street Barnsbury Park Hill	John Thomas Burrell	Engineer
		Emily Harriet Compton	31	Spinster	Domestic Service	32 Sholefield Road	George Thomas Compton	Bookbinder

Marrried in the Parish of St. Stephen according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Archbishop of England after Divine by me,
 This Marriage was solemnized between us, { John Thomas Burrell } in the Presence of us, { Thomas Durrant } W. H. Davies, M.A.
 { Emily Harriet Compton } { Ada Rowton }

(see figure 2.11).²²⁰ Although this specific information was not relevant to the citizenship analysis of this study, because it took place after the 1911 census, it demonstrates the method by which the identity of females who were married *before* the census were confirmed in subsequent non-Poor Law sources for the purposes of this analysis.

Composition of samples

The remainder of this chapter provides a detailed explanation about the composition of each sample and how quantitative methods were applied to them to address core research questions. All the information captured from non-Poor Law sources for each sample was tabulated into tables that were analysed using the Pivot Table analysis tool in Excel. This tool was chosen because of the sizes of the samples and the breadth of variables applied to them (e.g. gender, classification, adult occupation, adult location etc.).

Although the 1911 census was one of the main sources for this project, a wide range of non-Poor Law sources were used to make connections about the adult lives of the children from the SMSD logbooks and Islington Boarding Out Agreements. These sources include but are not limited to: baptismal/birth records, national school admission records, marriage certificates, military

²²⁰ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: p83/st2/015.

documentation, Poor Law settlement papers, war pensions, death indexes and probate legacies.²²¹ These sources were also found using Ancestry and were central features of the quantitative work because they allowed links to be made the 1911 census where large-scale data sets were used. They also played a vital role in the qualitative work because connections between a wide range of non-Poor Law sources was essential to the development of individual case histories.

Sample one – the large district school sample

Sample one was used to test questions about administrative practices inside the largest district school in England and the results of this inquiry are presented in chapter 3. It was created by capturing information about the admissions and discharges of the entire SMSD population between 1884-89.²²² Large-scale data was needed in order to ask if reformers' assertions about population instability caused by 'other' children throughout the ins and outs discourse were accurate. Unlike most district schools, the SMSD had four institutions under its control rather than just one. It was launched in 1851 with the development of Brighton Road in Sutton, which housed more than 1,500 juvenile paupers at any given time.²²³ The school district was expanded during the 1870s and early 80s to include Banstead Road in Sutton, Witham School in Essex and Herne Bay Convalescence Home in Kent. The two Sutton schools housed children of both genders irrespective of their age or classification whereas Herne Bay was a childhood infirmary with 160 beds and Witham School only accepted orphans and had 200 beds.²²⁴ Herne Bay was the only district school that did not use industrial techniques because it was an infirmary.

²²¹ London, Church of England Birth and Baptisms, 1813-1916; London, England, School Admissions and Discharges, 1840-1911, England and Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915; British Army WWI Service Records, 1914-1920; London, England, Selected Poor Law Removal and Settlement Records, 1698-1930; British Army WWI Pension Records; England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-2007; England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966.

²²² PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

²²³ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 10.

²²⁴ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 10.

Brighton Road was by far the largest of the nine district schools that accommodated a substantial number of London's significant population of unaccompanied children. The school had a population in excess of 1,500 children at all times.²²⁵ Both Brighton Road and Banstead Road were disproportionately criticised for instability problems compared to other district schools.²²⁶ Most district schools were considerably smaller than the Sutton schools with populations below 800 children and received less scrutiny.

The fact the Sutton schools were the largest in the system was a key feature in my decision to use the SMSD records in this study, because I wanted to understand if these particular criticisms, and the broader argument about instability, had merit. Herne Bay and Witham School had populations below 200 children,²²⁷ and I argue in chapter 3 that they functioned more as relief institutions for children from the Sutton schools who fell ill or whose parents died, rather than as reformation spaces. There were 2,423 children admitted to the SMSD during the five-year period of observation.²²⁸ I captured the following details for each child from the Poor law records: classification status; next-of-kin relationship; next-of-kin address and discharge destination where relevant. This data was tabulated into Excel spread sheets and the Pivot Table tool was used to test two main questions: 1) did 'other' children have a significant presence in the population of 2,423 children of the SMSD; and 2) did 'other' children fluctuate in and out of school as the result of parental agency?²²⁹

²²⁵ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 4.

²²⁶ *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 349; Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Pages 71-77.

²²⁷ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 4.

²²⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

²²⁹ The second question was tested by conducting a detailed reading of the discharge information for the 2,423 children to see how many were collected by parents and then looking for evidence of readmission over a ten year period. This will be explored in detail in chapter 3 of this thesis.

Poor Law Guardians collected limited information about juvenile paupers when they admitted them to care. Typically they wrote down the child’s name, age, classification status, admission date, discharge date, next-of-kin name/address, and discharge date (see figure 2.12).²³⁰ The ‘remarks’ column was left empty for

Figure 2.12 Example of admission record keeping from the SMSD

NAME	Age	Description			Date of Admission	Date of Discharge	Name and Address of Parent or nearest Relative	REMARKS
		Orphan	Destitute	Other Children				

some children but was usually used to explain where children were discharged or sometimes to provide unique information about their personal circumstances. Where relevant, I captured this information to expand individual case histories where possible.

To explore if ‘other’ children were a significant presence in the SMSD I tabulated classification statuses into the three known categories and organised the next-of-kin information into seven possible categories: named parent, aunt/uncle, grandparent, sibling, friend, stepparent or no next of kin. I then tabulated the next-of-kin addresses into 11 possible categories so that questions about the gendered consequences of poverty could also be examined: mother with address, father with address, mother without address, father without address, mother inmate, father inmate, aunt/uncle with address, grandparent with address, sibling with address, friend with address and no next of kin. This information was extracted directly from the SMSD records and tabulated without further evaluation for sample one due to its size.

Questions about instability generated by parental agency were measured by looking at the discharge information which was organised into nine possible destinations: parent, other family, service/apprenticeship, training ship,

²³⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

workhouse/infirmary, other district school, not discharged, unknown and absconded/emigrated. Once the children that were discharged to parents during the period of observation were identified, they were separated from the primary cohort to be traced through the SMSD logbooks between 1882-92 to look for patterns of readmission and discharge in order to see if the ins and outs discourse had empirical support.²³¹ External factors that might have affected the results of this inquiry include: the possibility that children could have been discharged or readmitted to a parent outside the period of observation; and, the possibility of inaccurate record keeping or administrative error on the part of the Guardians.

Accounting for these potential risks, I conclude in chapter 3 that although there were substantial numbers of ‘other’ children in SMSD schools, there were not high levels of population instability caused by parents exercising their custody rights. This suggests the Camberwell Guardians might have been more compassionate than Longley had hoped because they allowed parents to admit their children to the care of the state without the parent submitting to the workhouse as policy required. New research highlights, and seeks to fill, the lack of first-hand account from the poor themselves on the question of whether London Guardians were compassionate or severe in their approach toward relief.²³² The research concludes that there was a great deal of pauper agency taking place, particularly in East London, but that paupers often became stuck in a system designed to punish them and could not escape because the authorities were heavy handed. However, Camberwell was absent from that particular survey and this study suggests something unique was taking place in Camberwell because the Guardians appear to have acted more compassionately than other unions. They could have declined to accept the children or required the parent enter the workhouse first. But they did not. Victorian lawmakers arguably may have eroded parental rights ‘just in case’ but the evidence from

²³¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; CABG/202/003.

²³²

this chapter suggests there was very little empirical support for such dramatic measures. It seems more plausible that the erosion of parental rights is instead yet another manifestation of Victorian lawmakers' misunderstandings about the nature of childhood poverty because they perhaps did not appreciate some unions behaved more compassionately than others.

Sample two – the large foster care sample

Sample two was used to test questions about the administrative practices of foster care outside the borders of the union. The results of these inquiries are presented in chapter 4. Sample two was composed of the 399 children drawn from the Boarding Out Agreements of Islington Poor Law union between 1889-1899 that could be genealogically traced.²³³ Unlike sample one, this group was traced into census records to capture information about the foster parents.

Yet again, large-scale data was needed to see if local volunteers complied with the law or if they used their discretion to flout it. The annual report of the LGB from 1888-89 showed there were 1,369 children accommodated in foster homes beyond the union nationwide on Lady Day 1889 and this figure increased to 2,017 by Lady Day 1899 after the system became more popular.²³⁴ A limited number of London unions sent more children beyond their borders including: St George's, Lambeth, Paddington, St Pancras and Wandsworth.²³⁵ However, these unions were not selected for this study because they either did not have available records, or the records were even sparser than the Islington's records. All foster placements took place during the 1890s, which meant that the children were adults by the time the 1911 census was taken and could be traced.

²³³ PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

²³⁴ *The Local Government Board: Eighteenth Annual Report 1888-89* (C (2nd series)) Page 98; *The Local Government Board: Twenty-eighth Annual Report 1898-99* (C (2nd series)) Page 87.

²³⁵ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Pages 214-215.

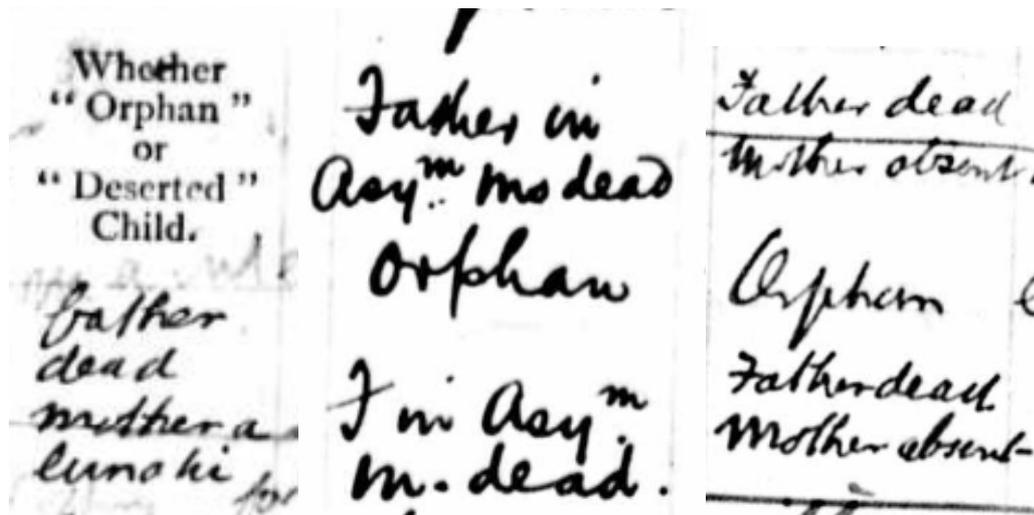
It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many children were sent to the countryside from London unions throughout the ten-year period of observation because there was turnover within this system as well. Although juvenile paupers ceased to be chargeable at the age of 16, children in foster homes usually had employment positions arranged by their foster parents or the LGB between 13 and 14 years of age. Also, foster placements often broke down for reasons that will be discussed more closely in chapter 4. These factors make it difficult to determine an accurate count of the total number of children in this system. However, an estimate can be made based on the statistics published in the LGB's annual report between 1889-99 that the 399 children in sample two represent approximately between 20 and 30 per cent of the nationwide total during the 1890s.²³⁶ Sample two was used to address two main questions: 1) were the children sent to foster care truly parentless; and 2) did committee members follow the regulatory provisions about the types of families and parishes to send children?

Information was drawn from the Boarding Out Agreements to understand if sample two were truly parentless because the law prohibited children with ongoing relationships from being fostered.²³⁷ A close reading of the Islington records suggests the Guardians dealt this with requirement by providing more detailed explanations of the children's classification status compared to the

²³⁶ 399 children represent 29.15 per cent of the 1,369 children recorded in the 1889 statistics and 19.78 per cent of the 2,017 children recorded in the 1899 statistics.

²³⁷ GO 1870 (Article V).

Figure 2.13 Examples of classification records from Boarding Out Agreements



SMSD (see figure 2.13).²³⁸ Unique information such as ‘father dead, mother lunatic’ or ‘father in asylum, mother dead’ or ‘father dead, mother absent’ provided nuance that the tripartite structure could not and verified that the children who entered foster care did indeed lack enduring parental connections. This data was organised into six categories to address questions of eligibility: legitimate both parents dead, legitimate one parent deserted/one dead, legitimate one parent inmate/one dead, illegitimate mother dead, illegitimate mother deserted and unknown.

Only children who could be traced to a foster home during the 1891 or 1901 census were used for sample two because this was how information about foster parents was captured. The undertakings issued by the Guardians did not account for any information about the ages, occupations or family sizes of the foster parents despite these being key features of the law. Tracing fostered children to their foster homes was an essential step in the methodology of this study because it allowed for information about these key elements to be tabulated. In total, 288 people signed undertakings for the 399 children in sample two and information about their ages, occupations, family size and

²³⁸ PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02 Pages 14, 31 and 39.

marital status was used to explore questions of regulatory compliance.²³⁹ Foster parents were traced using genealogical triangulation methods as well to discover information about their lives before and after Islington union arranged a foster placement.²⁴⁰

Their occupations were tabulated using the system of '24 occupational orders' that was established by the 1881 census enumerators to understand the industrial trends of England at that time.²⁴¹ The system classified employment industries into 24 orders based on the nature of the work, and the level of skill involved. Most orders were irrelevant to this inquiry because they were not prominent occupations within the rural working classes (e.g. positions in government, medical/legal etc.). The orders that were relevant and were tabulated included: unskilled, skilled trades, professional/commercial, unemployed, agricultural/animals and defence.

Chapter 4 concludes that very few foster parents met with the preferences of the law because most of them were experiencing extreme poverty and probably motivated by money or cheap labour. Inferences can be drawn from the substantial number of biological parents who chose to admit their children to the authorities in chapter 3 that people who were faced with the gravest hardships were often the most willing to cooperate with harsh welfare policies. I hypothesise that the rural poor were no different from the urban poor because they too made strategic choices in an effort to navigate a failed welfare system. External factors that might have affected the results of this inquiry include: 1) the possibility that the 13 foster parishes in this study were not representative of the entire system in England; and 2) the possibility of a genuine shortage of working class households that fitted with the aspirations of the law. The risk of

²³⁹ PLBG Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891 and 1901.

²⁴⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

²⁴¹ GB Historical GIS | University of Portsmouth | Industry Statistics | Occupational data classified into the 24 1881 Orders; Plus sex, A Vision of Britain through Time.

this bias is difficult to assess because there were 292 committees authorised by the LGB to arrange foster placements but many of them never received children from Poor Law unions.²⁴²

Samples three and five – the small district school and foster care samples

Identifying the inconsistencies between the contemporary narratives about public childcare and actual administrative practice helps situate this thesis within its socio-legal landscape before questions of adult citizenship outcomes are raised. The Victorian sources shared numerous assumptions about poverty that required empirical re-evaluation before fulfilment of the objectives of the de-pauperisation agenda could be investigated. I argue that district school populations were not as unstable as alleged by the ins and outs discourse, and instead functioned as coping mechanisms for parents facing extreme poverty who could not afford to keep all their children in the family home. I also argue that most foster children were not sent to the types of households preferred by the law, because the people who were most willing to open their homes for routine inspection (to a morally idealistic and highly patriarchal middle class) did so because they were desperate and had no recourse to public funds.

Inquiries about the effectiveness of district schools and foster care as mechanisms of citizenship reformation must be read in light of these conclusions. Although these realities are absent from the Victorian sources about public childcare, they are relevant features of the lives of children from both systems. Samples three and five were drawn from the large-scale cohorts used in chapters 3 and 4 to address specific questions about citizenship outcomes and the findings are presented throughout chapters 5 and 6.²⁴³ As discussed earlier in this chapter, when selecting children for these smaller samples I prioritised children with biological siblings who entered public care

²⁴² Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 7.

²⁴³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

at the same time because this made genealogical linkages easier to facilitate. All questions of citizenship reformation were tested against information drawn from the 1911 census.²⁴⁴ The following three questions were applied to samples three, four, and five: 1) were they independent householders; and 2) did they have skilled occupations; and 3) did they have on-going relationships with a biological or foster parent after care?

To explore the first question, household statuses were organised into four possible categories: head of household, lodger, parent or inmate. The term ‘head’ was applied wherever a person was recorded as the head of household by census enumerators, except in cases where a biological parent lived in the household in which case the term ‘parent’ was used to reflect their reunited status. The term ‘lodger’ was applied to anyone that lived in a household that was not led by a parent or themselves, and included those who lived as servants, friends or visitors of another household. Finally, the term ‘inmate’ was applied to anyone who lived in a public institution when the 1911 census was taken including workhouses, infirmaries, asylums and prisons. The findings from samples three and five were compared to those of sample four, which functioned as the control group of children who did not experience public childcare.

To explore the second question about skilled occupations the occupations of the children as adults were organised into the same six categories used for assessing the foster parents. This included: unskilled, skilled trades, professional/commercial, unemployed, agricultural/animals and defence.²⁴⁵ Additional information was also captured about their employment statuses to see which groups were more likely to establish their own trades rather than work in the employ of others. Nostalgia for traditional craftsmanship naturally

²⁴⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

²⁴⁵ GB Historical GIS | University of Portsmouth | Industry Statistics | Occupational data classified into the 24 1881 Orders; Plus sex, A Vision of Britain through Time.

favoured tradesmen who worked ‘on their own account’ because it aligned with visions of working-class identity that were not associated with trade unionism or workers rights.²⁴⁶ Information was captured and tabulated into four possible categories including: own account, worker, employer and unemployed in order to compare the occupational independence of both systems of care against sample four.

To answer the final question about on-going relationships, data was collected for all three cohorts to see if they lived with parents as adults (biological or foster).²⁴⁷ Reformers wanted children from district schools to take up occupations away from their birth communities in adulthood and loathed the prospect of parent-child reunions because they perceived such reunions as rewarding complacent parenting.²⁴⁸ By contrast, they wanted children in foster care to forge new ties with their foster family so that they would remain close throughout their lives and not return to their urban origins.²⁴⁹ As an approximate means of determining whether family ties were severed or created, evidence of parent-child cohabitation from both samples was collected from the 1901, and 1911 censuses.²⁵⁰ This information was organised and presented by gender and classification to see if either group was more likely to live with a parent compared to the control group. Data was also collected about the adult locations of the foster sample and organised into four possible categories: London, foster parish, English parish and abroad in order to see if fostered children stayed in their parishes after they were free to leave.

Chapters 5 and 6 present a variety of original findings. Overall, I conclude that district schools produced more highly skilled adults and greater levels of self-

²⁴⁶ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 244-246.

²⁴⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

²⁴⁸ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (2nd series)) Page 207.

²⁴⁹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 157.

²⁵⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901 & 1911.

sufficiency in adulthood than the foster care system – especially for parentless children. Foster children often integrated into their parishes over the long term, but struggled to establish their own households compared to the control group and struggled to secure skilled occupations compared to the district school group. I hypothesis this was largely an unintended consequence of the law that was triggered by the system’s heavily deregulated nature. Deregulation ultimately served to favour working-class families who had very little in common with the artisan craftsman that the lawmakers had in mind. Committee members often sent children to households in precarious circumstances, which arguably compromised their ability to reform children into productive independent citizens because such households were often unstable and under resourced.

Sample four – the control group

This sample was assembled from pre-intervention records of families from the district school and foster care groups.²⁵¹ Children in this sample have four unique characteristics: 1) they did not experience any kind of public childcare; 2) they too had disrupted and turbulent experiences of formal education; 3) they shared the family crisis that prompted public law interference (e.g. parental death, abandonment, or tactical choice); 4) they were raised by biological parents. These characteristics gave me the closest opportunity to establish approximate norms about the adult lives of children that grew up in families that interacted with the Poor Law authorities who were not de-pauperised. Comparing the results of the public childcare cohorts against the control group allowed the impact of public law interference to be measured between children of the same biological origins who had not been raised by the state. This strengthens the academic rigour of the methods used to assess the three key citizenship questions addressed by this thesis. The majority of sample four were

²⁵¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

the eldest children of the family and escaped public childcare because they had reached working age before family hardship had reached its climax.

2.4. Reflecting on Poor Law sources as a means of empirical inquiry

In this chapter, I have sought to outline the methods I used to answer the central research questions of this study and defend why certain decisions were made. On an empirical level, Poor Law sources provide vital information about the administration of public childcare during this period. However, variables such as the system of childcare, record keeping processes and continuous changes in policy had a substantial impact on the types of information that was captured. This meant there was a lack of continuity between sources because the same information was not always available for every child. Wherever this posed issues for triangulation (e.g. because they did not have a recorded next of kin or birth year) the child was excluded from the study. However, this continuity also exposes how little the authorities actually knew about the masses of children in their care. The SMSD records tabulate only basic information, and the foster care records captured even less despite fostering being a highly controversial system where it might be imagined that better records would be kept to defend the practice. Islington only tabulated: name, age, classification, name of foster parent, residence of foster parent, date of undertaking and remarks (which was a column often left blank). Together, these registers provide the only personal information about the children that was collected by the authorities responsible for their care, and would be all we knew about them without the application of genealogical triangulation methods.

On a practical level, these sources were also shaped by their context and purpose. They were drafted for administrative purposes and reflect the reality that large institutions like the SMSD needed to process vast numbers of children and that the primary administration of the foster care system was left to volunteers beyond the Poor Law framework. It shows that some information was absolutely essential while other information was wholly irrelevant. For

example, classification status was incredibly important within both systems because it ensured only eligible children were fostered and that ‘other’ children were easily differentiated from their parentless peers. In contrast, information about the reasons why parents of ‘other’ children admitted their children to the authorities were not of interest. The same can be seen in foster care because next-of-kin relationships were ignored, despite the fact that this research shows that such children almost certainly had enduring relationships with other relatives.²⁵²

The Poor Law authorities constructed these sources for their own use, and therefore, the empirical data within them reflects how the Victorians conceptualised child poverty in late-nineteenth century. My primary goal is to use the information contained within them to make connections with wider sources of evidence so that the consequences of early child protection law, and some of the individual experiences of those involved, can be observed. I argue that hardships such as the death or abandonment of a parent were heavily outweighed as the primary causes of childhood institutionalisation by more prevalent forms of adversity such as parental poverty. This study attempts to break away from the narratives established by the Victorian sources, and certain modern historians, to highlight the relationship between the law’s contribution to increasing poverty and its response to such increases.

In many ways changes to the law were responsible for rising levels of poverty during the late nineteenth century because unmanageable demands were placed on poor families. Examples of this obviously include reduced provision of welfare but also other factors such as the introduction of compulsory education for children aged five to 13 years and mandatory school-fees for parents. I argue throughout the remainder of this thesis that these changes led to substantial numbers of children being given up to the state because

²⁵² This inference is based on the next-of-kin data for the orphan children from sample three presented in chapter 3 of this thesis that shows most orphans had known ties to biological kin.

marginalised parents were unable to cope with the cumulative impact of such measures. I further argue that the law responded to the tendency of parents to give up their children to the state by labelling such agency as reprehensible and an unassailable justification for eroding the rights of poor parents to the custody of their children. These arguments highlight the relationship between misunderstandings about the nature of childhood poverty and public childcare, but most importantly they raise significant questions about the legitimacy of the origins of state intervention.

Chapter 3: District schools and separated families

3.1. Introduction

The child-rescue movement during the late-nineteenth century often characterised poor children as parentless and dangerously independent. Victorian sources presented them as an underclass devoid of family relationships and in desperate need of rescue. Contemporary examples include rescue activist Ellen Barlee explaining ‘they are the deserted, the illegitimate, the children of felons, the orphans, and the fatherless’.²⁵³ Davenport Hill questioned ‘where is a poor friendless orphan or foundling (for of these classes the great proportion of the workhouse children consist) to turn for assistance when it knows no one on whom it can place confidence or utter complaint?’²⁵⁴

These representations contributed to popular assumptions throughout the scholarship on early child protection that district schools were full of orphans or deserted children too. On one level, these representations can be understood as a reflection of the types of child poverty that fit within the narrative of child poverty at that time. A number of modern historians have continued to share these assumptions by uncritically referring to the masses of juvenile paupers in Poor Law institutions as ‘orphans, bastards and deserted children’ or the ‘illegitimate and motherless, whose parents are convicts, insane or have left the country’.²⁵⁵ For example, Hendrick asserts that the political significance of these children derived from their parentless status, rather than their status as victims, because their isolation allowed them to be restored to new families, and thus saved.²⁵⁶ Such analyses have furthered the misunderstanding that most child inmates were parentless and have erased their lived experiences from modern Poor Law historiographies.

²⁵³ Ellen Barlee, *Friendless and Helpless* (Emily Faithful 1863) Page 210.

²⁵⁴ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State 2* Page 7.

²⁵⁵ Heywood, *Children in Care* Page 67.

²⁵⁶ Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Page 75.

This chapter presents fresh empirical evidence that supports an emerging area of scholarship that argues child protection initiatives were largely targeted at children who were separated from their families for reasons other than parental death or abandonment. For example, Swain explores the impact of industrialisation, religious sentiment, and middle-class activism on poor families from this period to conclude that the child-rescue movement gained its momentum by misrepresenting parents as the enemies of their children.²⁵⁷ Her research shows us that most emigrated children had on-going relationships with parents and exposes a conflict at the heart of child welfare policy. Other historians such as Ellen Ross have explored alternative forms of childcare, such as informal adoption, to conclude that most mothers faced severely limited choices in the face of extreme hardship, and that these limited choices often forced them to send their children away from the family home.²⁵⁸ Ross argues many mothers resorted to a mixture of relatives, community support, and public/charitable childcare for help depending on what was most appropriate for their ages.

Murdoch's *Imagined Orphans* was a substantial contribution to this area as well. She uses Barnardo's précis books to conclude that most children in his charitable homes for orphans had parents that were struggling to maintain some degree of control over them.²⁵⁹ She asserts the poor had their own expectations about how welfare services should work, and that these ideas often directly challenged the goals of the authorities. Murdoch explains how Thomas Barnardo wanted to convert disadvantaged children into citizens that complied with middle-class ideals and that his agenda fiercely conflicted with parental goals that were focussed on navigating the hardships of extreme poverty and

²⁵⁷ Swain, 'Child Rescue' Page 102.

²⁵⁸ Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918* (Oxford University Press 1993) Pages 126-166.

²⁵⁹ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*.

childcare demands. However, it is important to establish that religious agencies and the philanthropic sector were not subjected to the same statutory constraints as the Poor Law authorities. Legislative developments such as the PLA 1889 did not affect the ability of private or charitable organisations to pursue acts of child rescue in the same way. This is why it is important to look at the children in public childcare, particularly during a period of extreme austerity when state assistance was highly conditional and restricted.

The findings presented in the next two chapters deliver an original illustration of the ways that the poor strategically interacted with public childcare for their own benefit in what may be viewed as a new contribution to scholarship about the ‘economy of makeshifts’.²⁶⁰ Numerous historians have written about the experience of being poor during the changing landscape of English welfare throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Steven King rightly observes, ‘the issue of how poor people ... should secure their weekly, monthly and yearly welfare manifested itself as *the* single most important social issue at local and national level’.²⁶¹

The economy of makeshifts literature is unique within the scholarship of poverty because it emphasises the lived experiences of people who experienced hardship. Unlike other historical accounts of the policies and opinions surrounding relief access, which arguably were shaped by an elite with no experience of being poor, the economy of makeshifts literature emphasises the decision-making processes of destitute people. The literature explores how underprivileged individuals and communities responded to social changes that affected their material survival and went on to develop ‘makeshift economies’ within domestic and local contexts. Examples of this include investigations

²⁶⁰ Alannah Tompkins and Steven King, *Poor in England, 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester University Press 2003).

²⁶¹ Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850* (Manchester University Press 2000) Page 1.

about the role of kinship as a supplement to relief,²⁶² the role of charity in navigating austerity measures,²⁶³ and acts of independent agency such as pawn broking or crime as a means of responding to cutbacks.²⁶⁴

The majority of the research framed within this approach looks at experiences before 1870. Thus, it does not examine how different sections of the poor responded to the crusade against outdoor relief, or the families that interacted with public childcare initiatives. Elizabeth Hurren aptly notes, ‘retracing the political reaction that *crusading* initiatives stimulated would give welfare historians concrete evidence that the experience of being poor could be dire in the later Victorian period’.²⁶⁵ She explains that in order for the experiences of impoverished people in the latter part of the century to be understood, their makeshift economies need to be studied within the framework of austerity.²⁶⁶

The next two chapters of this thesis seek to achieve this by presenting evidence about the decisions made by the underprivileged, and those responsible for their relief, within the changes in the law that were designed to punish poverty. This evidence will show that district schools and foster care were undoubtedly intended to be instruments of citizenship conversion by lawmakers, but often functioned as coping mechanisms for people who were trying to navigate harsh welfare policies.

²⁶² Sam Barrett, ‘Kinship, poor relief and the welfare process in early modern England’ in Tompkins and King (eds) *Poor in England, 1700-1850* Pages 200-227.

²⁶³ Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and The People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge University Press 1998) Pages 259-293.

²⁶⁴ Alannah Tompkins, ‘Pawnbroking and the survival strategies of the urban poor in 1770s York’ in Tompkins and King (eds) *Poor in England, 1700-1850* Pages 166- 198; Heather Shore, ‘Crime, criminal networks and the survival strategies of the poor in early eighteenth-century London’ in Tompkins and King (eds) *Poor in England, 1700-1850* Pages 137-165.

²⁶⁵ Elizabeth Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England 1870-1900* (The Boydell Press 2007) Page 160.

²⁶⁶ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* Page 159.

This chapter investigates a significant number of children in public childcare who had on-going relationships with parents and explores how these relationships contributed to the erosion of parental rights in England. I argue the vast majority of children in the SMSD had at least one parent that attempted to maintain contact with them and the government passed the PLA 1889 so that it could resist their claims for custody. Data extracted from the logbooks of the SMSD suggest the authorities knew about the presence of these parents because most ‘other’ children had parents outside the workhouse listed as their next of kin. Moreover, I argue that claims of instability caused by parental agency from the ins and outs discourse lacked empirical support because the evidence suggests most juvenile paupers were discharged to other public institutions or employment positions, not parents. Although district school populations did fluctuate, it was not for the reasons given by the authorities. Fears that parents who had contact with their children would exercise custody rights, and therefore cause instability, appear overstated because in the years immediately preceding the PLA 1889 there is little evidence to suggest that most parents with children in district schools were in a position to exercise such rights.

The ins and outs discourse produced misconceptions that affected the development of the law. I argue the first legal restrictions on parental rights were motivated by these misconceptions and were established to give the state more control over undesirable (as contrasted to unfit) parents. The painting of undesirable parents as harmful to children obscured the reasons why many children entered public childcare during the late nineteenth century. The poor were usually misrepresented as moral failures or helpless victims,²⁶⁷ which prevented them from being presented as agents that consciously responded to other legislative developments such as compulsory school attendance or welfare restriction. The empirical evidence presented in this chapter exposes a gap between this discourse and reality because the evidence reveals that the

²⁶⁷ James Philip Kay Shuttleworth, *The Training of Pauper Children* (William Clowes and Sons 1839) Page 13; *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-second Annual Report 1869-70* (C (1st series)) Page 135; *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 207.

very same administrators who initiated these misconceptions also produced the records that undermine their credibility.

3.2. The parentless myth and the erosion of parental rights

The crusade against outdoor relief forced thousands of families in precarious circumstances to make the exceptionally difficult choice to institutionalise their school-aged children. These children were often branded as ins and outs and viewed with considerable hostility by the authorities.²⁶⁸ This label was designed to differentiate child inmates who failed to qualify as members of the ‘permanent class’ that included children who were orphans, deserted or the children of workhouse inmates. Ins and outs were regarded as the lowest class of juvenile pauper because they were perceived to threaten the process of de-pauperisation and the broader reformation agenda. Reformers claimed they were the children of the casually poor who routinely fluctuated in and out of workhouses and used district schools in a similar fashion.²⁶⁹ Tufnell, Nassau Senior, and Dr Bridges repeatedly gave evidence to the LGB that this problem was rife and argued that destabilised school populations undermined the Guardians’ ability to eliminate the negative habits associated with pauperism.²⁷⁰

The ins and outs discourse represents the only acknowledgement within the Victorian sources that there might have been large numbers of juvenile paupers who were neither parentless nor the children of workhouse inmates. Commentators outside the debate generally erased the question of parental status either by implying ‘other’ children were a minimal presence or simply

²⁶⁸ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 305-324; Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 59-66.

²⁶⁹ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 60.

²⁷⁰ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 35; Dr Bridges, ‘Table showing Influx and Efflux of Casuals’, in Menella Bute Smedley (ed), *Boarding-Out and Pauper Schools Especially for Girls Being a Reprint of the Principal Reports on Pauper Education in the Blue Book for 1873-4* (Henry S King & Co 1875) Page 30.

failing to address the nature of their parental circumstances in the first place.²⁷¹ Erasing questions about the authenticity of parental classification meant that questions about the legitimacy of policies that eroded parental rights could be ignored as well because if schools had in fact been full of parentless children there would have been no need to restrict custody rights by statute. There is no obvious explanation why contemporary commentators continued to share parentless imagery in their writings about public childcare despite the works of Tufnell, Nassau Senior and Dr Bridges, which argued to the contrary. However, a consequence of this anomalous situation was that the parentless myth remained unchallenged and enabled modern scholars to continue sharing misleading assumptions about the lives of juvenile paupers.

Sometimes events occurred that forced the family backgrounds of children in public childcare to be thrust into the public domain. For example, the tragedies on the boys' training ship *Goliath* in 1875 and at the Forest Gate District School in 1889 led to considerable loss of life and drew public attention to the grieving parents of the victims.²⁷² The *Goliath* was a training ship run by the MBG that was moored in the Thames and housed approximately 500 boys at any given time. The ship housed teenage boys who had completed their industrial training at district schools and who were now being trained in the art of seamanship for future military service. The ship had a good reputation. Its band performed for Queen Victoria on her visit to the East End in 1873 where the newspapers reported the boys as 'pleasant, intelligent-looking fellows [who] bore about them ample evidence of the kind care and treatment they receive at this noble institution'.²⁷³ But two years later, tragedy struck. A paraffin lamp caught fire one early December morning in 1875 and the ship burned to the

²⁷¹ North Surrey School District, *Short History of the North Surrey District School* (London Metropolitan Archives 1908) 7; Webb, *English Poor Law History* Pages 185-195.

²⁷² R. J. Fenn, *The Burning of Goliath* (Shaw & Sons 1876); Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 176.

²⁷³ The Leeds Mercury, 'Visit of the Queen to East of London' *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900* 10914 (1873).

waterline leading to the loss of 17 children's lives.²⁷⁴ The tragedy generated considerable public sympathy for the bereaved parents and the Queen issued a statement of condolence to reflect the public mood.²⁷⁵ Fourteen years later the worst catastrophe to affect a Poor Law school occurred in the dormitories at Forest Gate School. A fire broke out in the early hours below the boys' sleeping quarters causing 26 boys under the age of twelve to suffocate.²⁷⁶ It was the largest loss of life in a Poor Law school, and newspapers reported hordes of parents attended the school at dawn to either collect their children or identify their remains.²⁷⁷ A public inquest was launched in order to identify the cause of the fire; numerous parents attended to demand answers from the authorities.²⁷⁸

Both disasters demonstrated that considerable numbers of children in public childcare had -- and were *known* to have -- on-going relationships with at least one parent. Despite this, contemporary child-rescue narratives continued to generate images of parentless children whilst child-welfare reformers campaigned for increased powers of intervention. Although these tragedies showed there was some public awareness about the parental status of juvenile paupers, they did little to challenge prevailing assumptions. The absence of a public dialogue about the backgrounds of child inmates made it easy for reformers to draw increasingly divided lines between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' at a policy level. 'Deserving' children included orphans, the deserted and the children of the permanently infirm, but excluded most others.²⁷⁹ Notions of permanency were important because the loss of parental

²⁷⁴ Birmingham Daily Post, 'Burning of the Goliath Training Ship' *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900* 5445 (1875).

²⁷⁵ The Morning Post, 'The Queen and the Goliath Calamity' *British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900* 32294 (1875).

²⁷⁶ The Star, 'Terrible Fire at a London Industrial School' *British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900* 87 (1890).

²⁷⁷ Western Mail, 'Frightful Catastrophe at a Public School' *British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900* 6436 (1890).

²⁷⁸ The Graphic, 'The Disastrous Fire at Forest Gate District School -- The Relatives of the Victims at the Inquest' *British Library Newspapers, Part II: 1800-1900* 1050 (1890).

²⁷⁹ *The Local Government Board: Third Annual Report 1873-1874* (C (2nd series)) Page 207.

care rendered children deserving in the eyes of lawmakers and distinguished ideal candidates for reformation from those regarded as irredeemable. The use of classification labels by Victorian welfare officials allowed them to target certain groups within the population with specific policies. Ins and outs were a unique subgroup of juveniles that reformers who did not subscribe to the parentless myth perceived to only be saveable if they were permanently separated from their families because pauperism was understood to be a hereditary disease that passed on habits of indolence and dependency.²⁸⁰

Beliefs in poverty genetics fuelled the expansion of the district school system throughout the 50s and 60s.²⁸¹ The school system was a major departure from the traditional workhouse structure because it divided parents and children much more decisively and effectively than the use of separate wards in the workhouse. Although children in workhouses were kept on separate wards from their parents there was still potential for mixing because adults and children shared common spaces. By contrast, district schools removed children from any contact with adults or their birth communities by placing them outside London in child-only institutions, which Murdoch explains were often a ‘fifty-mile train trip from the parent’s locality’.²⁸²

District schools were the flagships of the separate school system because they were larger than other institutions and had better resources. Tufnell hailed their ability to attract the best teachers because salaries were higher than in national schools or small Poor Law schools, and thus their potential for reform was perceived to be considerably greater.²⁸³ District schools offered a tailored curriculum that mixed traditional subjects with skills-based education, which was a significant departure from the national curriculum that did not teach trade

²⁸⁰ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Pages 79-91.

²⁸¹ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Pages 79-91.

²⁸² Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 97.

²⁸³ *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 206.

skills. District school children of both sexes not only learned the three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic but also spent a certain number of hours each day learning a trade. Although modern research has confirmed that beliefs in poverty genetics were starting to subside by the early 1870s,²⁸⁴ they still played a significant role in the development of the district school curriculum because misconceptions about the causes of poverty continued to linger and influence policies targeted at the poor.

Industrial training methods sought to improve children's employment prospects by giving them economically valuable skills that would prevent them from depending on the state as adults. Skilled craftsmen were brought in to teach the boys traditional trades, such as shoemaking and blacksmithing, while the girls were trained in domestic services to prepare them for adult roles as wives or servants. Lawmakers hoped that early exposure to skilled labour would give the children a hunger for industry, and they would naturally develop desirable habits such as truth and obedience, which their parents were perceived to lack. They hoped industrial training would convert this underclass of children into useful citizens, whether as artisan labourers, soldiers, or respectable servants.²⁸⁵

Juvenile paupers with known parents blurred the boundary between the reformatory environment and disreputable households. This division was regarded as a crucial spatial control for de-pauperisation and any potential redemption. The unfavourable status of children with parental links was highlighted by the use of derogatory names like 'casuals', 'revolvers' and the 'fluctuating classes'.²⁸⁶ Dr Bridges explained they were 'a foul stream running through district schools' that made it impossible to extinguish physical and

²⁸⁴ Lynn Mackay, *Respectability and the London Poor, 1780-1870: The Value of Virtue (Perspectives in Economic and Social History)* (Routledge 2013).

²⁸⁵ East End Juvenile Mission, 'Something Attempted Something Done' Page 146; Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 71.

²⁸⁶ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Page 60; Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 315-324.

moral diseases because of their disproportionate presence.²⁸⁷ Children with known parents were directly compared to orphans and deserted children who were presented as ideal candidates for de-pauperisation because they did not leave the reformatory space or have contact with their birth communities.²⁸⁸ Fears posed by casual children made it essential to classify children upon admission so those with known parents could be easily identified. A tripartite system of classification was employed from the late 60s onwards to label each child based on their parental circumstances as either 'orphan', 'deserted' or 'other'.

The PLB defined orphans as children 'whose parents had either died or one had died and the other was in prison, abroad or a permanent inmate of the workhouse due to sickness or infirmity'.²⁸⁹ This was a much broader definition of orphan than modern understandings because it emphasised notions of physical fitness rather than mortality. Deserted children were defined as 'children who were totally abandoned by both parents or abandoned by one and the other was in prison, abroad or a permanent inmate of the workhouse due to sickness or infirmity'.²⁹⁰ The final category was 'other' and had no definition in law or policy. 'Other' was a third column in the logbooks that appears to have been used for any children that were not classed as orphan or deserted. The use of the term 'other' expanded substantially as welfare was curtailed throughout the 1870s and 80s and reached its height immediately before the PLA 1889 was passed.²⁹¹ Throughout this period, child-welfare reformers like Tufnell and Nassau Senior persuaded lawmakers that children with this label were causing

²⁸⁷ Dr Bridges, 'Table showing Influx and Efflux of Casuals' Page 30.

²⁸⁸ *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 207.

²⁸⁹ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 35.

²⁹⁰ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 35.

²⁹¹ 32 per cent of the SMDS population was classed as 'other' between 1860-69 and this figure swelled to 72 per cent between 1887-89 (PLBG, Reference Numbers: WOBG/080/001; WOBG/080/002; CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002).

unmanageable instability in district schools and defended calls for restrictions on child custody on this basis.²⁹²

The crusade against out relief was well under way by the mid 1870s as Poor Law unions officiously restricted access to parish relief. Figures from 1872 reveal that women were far more likely to be given help, particularly if they were widowed mothers or wives of the permanently infirm.²⁹³ By comparison deserted wives, single mothers, prisoners' wives and able-bodied men were rarely given assistance outside the workhouse because their circumstances were perceived to be the consequence of personal failure.²⁹⁴ Outdoor relief was usually given as money, clothes or food but could also be given in the form of school fee waivers, which remained a compulsory requirement for parents throughout the late-nineteenth century. Parents were obliged to pay one penny a week for each of their children who were aged between five and 13 and non-payment led to economic sanction. Regulating access to relief in this way meant the parents who wanted to avoid sending their children to public childcare had to submit to the scrutiny of parish officials who were responsible for assessing their eligibility for a school fee waiver. I argue that the contemporaneous imposition of welfare reduction, compulsory school attendance and mandatory school fees forced poor parents to make tactical decisions in order to keep themselves out of the workhouse. These pressures made voluntary childhood institutionalisation a popular coping strategy.

The middle classes were the main ratepayers. They wanted children in public childcare to stay there so they could be reformed and their parents could resume paid employment.²⁹⁵ Before 1889 there was only one option to force a child

²⁹² Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 309.

²⁹³ Robert Humphrey, *Sin, Organised Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (Palgrave Macmillan 1995) Page 23.

²⁹⁴ Humphrey, *Sin, Organised Charity and the Poor Law* Page 23.

²⁹⁵ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* Page 23.

from a poor household remain in a reformatory environment and that was the Industrial Schools legislation. The courts could order a child to be sent to an industrial school if they were ‘vagrant, destitute and disorderly’,²⁹⁶ but such stays were for short periods of correction and did not prevent a parent from reclaiming custody of their child.²⁹⁷ The only mechanism available to transfer the custody of a child from one person to another were writs of habeas corpus, but such proceedings only allowed a parent to resume custody from an ‘unauthorised third party’. As most parents of ‘other’ children under the care of the Guardians had placed them there voluntarily, this mechanism was of no use to the authorities.²⁹⁸

In contrast, the PLA 1889 allowed the Guardians to pass a resolution transferring ‘all the powers and rights of a parent’ to themselves in cases where the Guardians wholly or partly maintained the child.²⁹⁹ The legislation established that the maintenance criteria was satisfied if a child was wholly or partly looked after in a workhouse, district school, separate school, infirmary, sick asylum, hospital for infectious diseases or an institute for the deaf, dumb, blind or idiots.³⁰⁰ This was dramatic encroachment of parental autonomy because the law allowed the Guardians to ‘at any time resolve that such a child shall be under the control of the Guardians until it reaches the age of sixteen’ without any scrutiny by the legal system or outside agency.³⁰¹

Resolutions were not court-based processes. However, the Guardians could rescind a resolution if they felt it was for the benefit of the child to be returned

²⁹⁶ ISA 1857.

²⁹⁷ ISA 1857 s. XII.

²⁹⁸ An exception to this is the Guardianship of Infants Act 1886 (Vict. 49 & 50 c.27) but this only allowed married mothers to share custody with their husbands in the event that a separation deed had been issued.

²⁹⁹ PLA 1889 s.1(1).

³⁰⁰ PLA 1889 s.1(3).

³⁰¹ PLA 1889 s.1(1).

to their parents either permanently or temporarily.³⁰² Parents could apply to a court to appeal the Guardians' decision if they were able to prove that the maintenance criteria had not been satisfied or if they could satisfy a judge that it was for the benefit of the child to be returned to them.³⁰³

This meant all the power lay in the hands of the Poor Law authorities, which were heavily pressured by central government to restrict public expenditure following Longley's proposals, unless a court intervened. Court attendance was wholly out of reach for the average nineteenth-century labourer and there were no controls in place to ensure parents had access to justice if the Guardians passed a resolution removing parental custody. This gave the Guardians broad scope to intervene in previously inviolable relationship between chargeable children and their parents. The new law was intended to empower the Guardians to stabilise district school populations, but also allowed them to control the first few years of a child's employment because the state retained custody until a child was 16 years of age. Compulsory education ended at the age of 13 and most children entered employment straight after. Allowing the state to maintain custody until a child was 16 years old allowed the state to have considerable control over the types of work that children entered if a resolution was in place. Interestingly, there was no evidence from the SMSD logbooks, or the wider Poor Law records on Ancestry, that shed light on how often the PLA 1889 was used in practice. Resolutions are rarely recorded but this does not necessarily mean they were rarely used.

Shortly after the PLA 1889 was passed, calls were made to expand the types of parents caught by its reach. Activists hailed the new law as a huge step forward for the protection of children. Delegates at the Annual Poor Law Conference in 1889 described section one of the Act as the most 'efficient means for

³⁰² PLA 1889 s.1(1).

³⁰³ PLA 1889 s.1(2).

protecting children from ill-usages’ and the ideal mechanism for ‘holding [parents] to their responsibilities’.³⁰⁴ Emotive language was directed at the parents of ‘other’ children to signal the importance of the new legislation and its ability to curtail the endemic problems caused by ins and outs. The keynote speaker of the conference described how the law would put an end to ‘seeing a child, to all appearances an orphan, and for years left under [Guardians] care, unexpectedly claimed, taken possession of by a worthless parent, and thereby condemned to a miserable and far worse than useless life’.³⁰⁵

The anti-cruelty movement, which was gaining considerable popularity and public support at this time, also applauded the arrival of the PLA 1889. They argued the new law would deter poor parents who turned to the authorities for help and potentially make ‘parental desertion therefore a blessing’ for those who were unable to resist the need for assistance outside the workhouse.³⁰⁶ High profile anti-cruelty activists like Thomas Barnardo publicly endorsed calls for expanding the reach of the legislation on the basis that it would improve the protection available to poor children from the dangers posed by their parents.³⁰⁷ Enduring parental relationships were painted as both harmful to the children and manifestations of irresponsible parenting. Impoverished parents were expected to maintain custody of their children regardless of their misfortunes or to accept the stigma of moral failure – and the possible loss of custody of their child - if they did not. Perhaps the most contradictory aspect to all of this was that the act of resumed custody - which should have been desirable – was deemed the worse crime a parent could commit.

³⁰⁴ The York Herald, ‘Yorkshire Poor Law Unions Conference at Harrogate’ *British Library Newspapers Part II: 1800-1900* 11999 (1889) Page 6.

³⁰⁵ The York Herald, ‘Yorkshire Poor Law Unions Conference at Harrogate’ *British Library Newspapers Part II: 1800-1900* 11999 (1889) Page 6.

³⁰⁶ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 311.

³⁰⁷ The London Standard, ‘To the Editor of the Standard’ *British Library Newspapers Part II: 1800-1900* 20411 (1889) Page 3.

Ten years later the law was amended to increase the powers of the state still further.³⁰⁸ The PLA 1899 expanded the categories of children eligible for resolution to include those where the child was maintained under the same criteria as the PLA 1889, and cases where the Guardians were of the opinion that the parents were of ‘vicious habits’, ‘mental deficiencies’ or simply ‘unfit’ to care for their children.³⁰⁹ The PLA 1899 also strengthened the effectiveness of custody transfers made under the PLA 1889 by making the appeals process available to parents more difficult. The old appeals process had required that parents initiate a complaint in court and satisfy the judge of one of two possible reasons for appeal: 1) the child was not maintained by the Guardians; *or* 2) it was for the child’s benefit to be returned. However, the new appeals process required both criteria be satisfied, and even then, only if the parents were able to initiate proceedings in the first place.³¹⁰ These changes further eroded the authority of those parents whose children were in public childcare at the turn of the century and also reflected broader changes in public discourse. This chapter will show how few ‘other’ children conformed to the imagery presented by the ins and outs discourse. As a result, I argue that the PLAs 1889 and 1899 were really heavy handed policies designed to punish the poor rather than genuinely useful administrative tools of child protection.

Population stability was important to the middle classes not only because of their misguided belief in hereditary poverty, but also because of the rise of nationalist sentiment at this time. It became apparent after the Boer Wars that substantial numbers of working-class soldiers were severely malnourished, and consequently unfit to fight. This issue led to fears about the defence of the realm. Anxieties about the physical health of poor children coincided with a developing awareness that the working-class birth rate was rapidly outstripping that of the middle classes, and thus the poor might have a greater stake in the

³⁰⁸ PLA 1899.

³⁰⁹ PLA 1899 s.1(1).

³¹⁰ PLA 1899 s.1(1); *Guardians of Wantage Union v Guardians of Bristol Union* [1907] 1 K.B. 68.

future of the Empire.³¹¹ This meant citizenship ideals became key to child-protection policy. Skilled-independent labour was no longer a means of merely reducing future dependency - it was now synonymous with imperial strength and preservation of moral ideals.

3.3. Parental agency and the 'crusade against out-relief'

Splitting welfare recipients into different groups was administratively efficient and was perceived to preserve moral ideals by separating paupers who were regarded as redeemably poor from those who were labelled incurable. Murdoch has described how some reformers viewed the process of classification as a solution to poverty itself because it prevented the deservingly poor from influencing those capable of self-improvement through the use of spatial controls.³¹² These practices, along with regulation of paupers' domestic spaces, were essential features of the New Poor Law. This was particularly true within the context of juvenile paupers whose adult citizenship, and thus the future of the Empire, was at stake.

The passion for parent-based classification was highly evident in the work of Hannah Archer. Archer was a child-welfare activist who developed a system to categorise juvenile paupers into eight groups based on their parental circumstances in the 1860s. Her pamphlet *A Scheme for Befriending Orphan Pauper Girls* explained how each group should be cared for to maximise efficiency.³¹³ Her ideas were published before the crusade on out relief had started and demonstrate a more nuanced approach to child poverty than the tripartite system that took hold after 1870 (see figure 3.1). Archer proposed that classes one and two should be sent to live with 'first-class cottagers' so that they

³¹¹ Davin, *Growing Up Poor* Pages 208-209.

³¹² Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 96-107.

³¹³ Hannah Archer, *A Scheme for Befriending Orphan Pauper Girls* (Longman & Company 1861).

Figure 3.1 Hannah Archer's classification system for juvenile paupers

Class one Orphans who have lost both parents.	Class two The children of lunatics.	Class three The children of infirm persons residing in the workhouse.	Class four The children of respectable persons residing in the workhouse.
Class five Children deserted by their parents.	Class six The children of persons in prison.	Class seven The children of disreputable married persons in the workhouse.	Class eight The children of unmarried women in the workhouse.

could be educated at national schools and assimilated into the general population. She advocated that their new carers be given allowances from the Guardians' budget so that the children could have holidays and access to industrial schools if any specialist behaviour intervention was required.

These recommendations were intended to reflect the worthiness of orphans and the children of lunatics, and their potential redemption, compared to other forms of poverty. Archer's care recommendations for orphans and the children of lunatics closely resembled the conditions of foster care, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Classes three and four were viewed less sympathetically. Archer recommended that children whose parents were in infirmaries or workhouses be sent to the workhouse too. However, she conceded that they should be educated at national schools so that they could mix with the general population and avoid exposure to pauper habits. She also

advised that they should have separate living quarters from their ‘disreputable parents’ but that they should be allowed access to attend church together on Sundays.

Archer recommended that classes five and six should be sent to purpose-built schools in the countryside. She argued that they should be connected to charitable persons who could then help find respectable friends in order to support their transition back into society. Archer felt strongly that geographic distance from London was essential for these children to erase the shame of their parents and to have any hope of moving on from their failures. Finally, she recommended that children from the lowest backgrounds – those in classes seven and eight – should be housed in purpose-built homes run by governesses and only allowed access to their parents once a month except in cases of severe illness. She recommended they should be allowed to attend divine worship on Sundays, but insisted that it was observed separately from their parents and the other classes of children to control their recovery.

Archer’s system is a perfect illustration of Karel William’s analysis of tailored policies being targeted at specific sections of the pauper population after 1870. There was considerably more sympathy for the children of the deceased or mentally ill than for the children of institutional inmates or unmarried mothers. It shows how disdain for children who were soon to be classed as ‘other’ was developing even ahead of the restrictions on outdoor relief and how it was thought that administrative efficiency could be improved by classifying based on parental status.

Archer’s system also shows how narrow the classifications of parents were. Murdoch argues that most parents agreed to give their children to rescuers as a result of an immediate personal crisis rather than an attempt to evade their

parental duties as stated in the Victorian sources.³¹⁴ However, common factors that might impel such a crisis - such as the loss of an earner, the burden of large numbers of children or housing difficulties - were not accounted for under Archer's system or the tripartite structure. These omissions highlight how easily a child could be classified as 'other' during the late-nineteenth century.

Most district school logbooks from the 1850s and 60s only distinguish between orphan and deserted children because the label 'other' was not commonplace until the early 70s when austerity was initiated. This binary classification structure remained in place despite evidence that indicates the authorities knew there were children in district schools with parents who were unwilling to relinquish contact with their children, such as Archer's leaflet and policies on parental visitation. Although there is no evidence about the approach of the SMSD on parental visitation, the Forest Gate District School (which ran the training ship *Goliath*) allowed parents and relatives to visit boys on the ship once every four months.³¹⁵ Murdoch explains how the Fulham Board of Guardians requested Forest Gate relax parental visitation rules but school managers refused and instead required visitors to obtain a special visiting order that had to be signed by a relieving officer.³¹⁶ Other hurdles were also put in place such as bans on non-institutional siblings. These strict controls on contact made it even harder for poor parents to maintain some degree of control over their children – especially if the district school was located a considerable distance from their community. It appears that Victorian lawmakers knew there were more complex reasons that children entered public children than parental death or abandonment, but did not act on them before or during the ins and outs discourse.

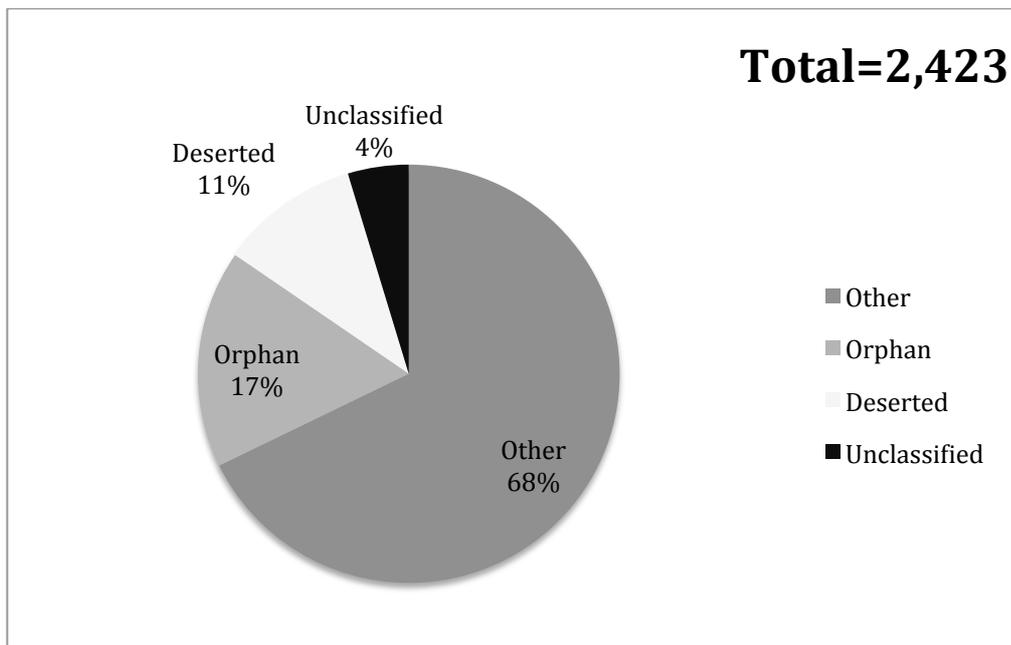
³¹⁴ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 156-179.

³¹⁵ Forest Gate School District, Signed Minutes of Ship (Training Ship *Goliath*), (November 14, 1870), FGSD 16, London Metropolitan Archives.

³¹⁶ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Page 101.

By the 1880s, most district school logbooks used the tripartite system so that ‘other’ children could be appropriately labelled. Administrators also started to capture next-of-kin information for all classes of children. This was a new development that further supports my argument that the authorities knew the parentless assumption was misleading. Sample one was composed of 2,423 children that were sent to the SMSD between 1884-1889.³¹⁷ The logbooks show that the potential for this population to be unstable was not overstated because over two-thirds of the children in the records were classed as ‘other’ and thus not part of the permanent class (see figure 3.2). Only 28 per cent of admissions to the largest school district under the control of the Guardians were parentless children, whereas 68 per cent were classed as ‘other’, and four per cent remained unclassified. This suggests the potential for spatial controls to be violated between parents and their children might have been as real as welfare reformers

Figure 3.2 Classification statuses of the SMSD population 1884-89



³¹⁷ PLBG, Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

asserted throughout the ins and outs discourse, but I will show that this was not the case.³¹⁸ Table 3.2 supports the possibility that all the schools in the SMSD, (except Witham, which only housed orphans) were capable of parent-led instability because most inmates belonged to the fluctuating class. However, I argue throughout this chapter that the fears expressed in the ins and outs discourse did not materialise as predicted because parents did not exercise their custody rights in significant numbers.

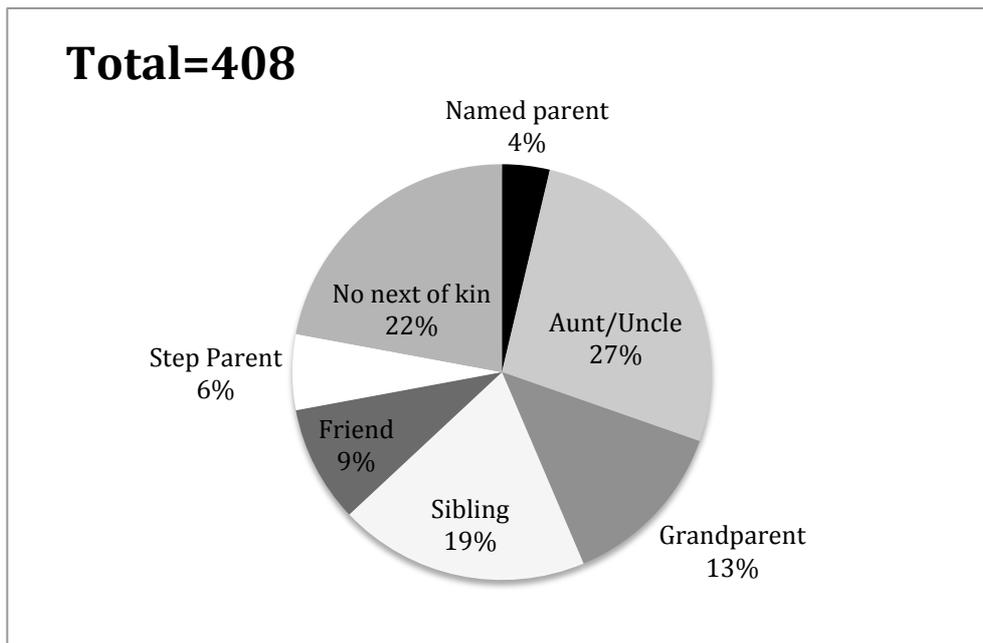
The next-of-kin details illustrates how the tripartite system was a blunt instrument for making sense of the reasons large numbers of ‘other’ children were being admitted to public childcare. Next-of-kin information provides a better insight into the family backgrounds of the sample and proves that most ‘other’ children had on-going relationships with at least on parent and most parentless children had enduring family connections too.

There were 408 children in the sample classified as orphans and their next-of-kin records show that they had biological relatives who were willing to be known to the Guardians (see figure 3.3).³¹⁹ Orphans were not devoid of family ties as

³¹⁸ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 59-61.

³¹⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

Figure 3.3 Next-of-kin relationships for orphan children from sample one



rescue narratives had implied, and in fact, the majority of them had a relationship with a biological family member other than a parent. The most common known relatives were aunts, uncles, siblings and grandparents, but sometimes non-biological relationships such as stepparents or friends made themselves known to the Guardians as well. Only 22 per cent of the orphans had no registered next of kin, which challenges the dominant narratives of ‘friendlessness’ advanced by rescue activists like Barlee. Although most orphans did not have had parental relationships, they did have families and friends from their birth communities attempting to remain in contact.

Interestingly, four per cent of the orphan class did not meet with the law’s definition of orphan because they had parents recorded as their next of kin.³²⁰ Welfare officials applied labels based on information provided at the time of admission but also recorded residential addresses for next of kin wherever possible. The SMSD records show that most orphans had extended relatives with residential addresses, but that there was a small number of mothers who

³²⁰ *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90 (C (2nd series))* Page 15.

lived outside the workhouse whose children were not labelled in accordance with the PLB's definition (see figure 3.4).³²¹

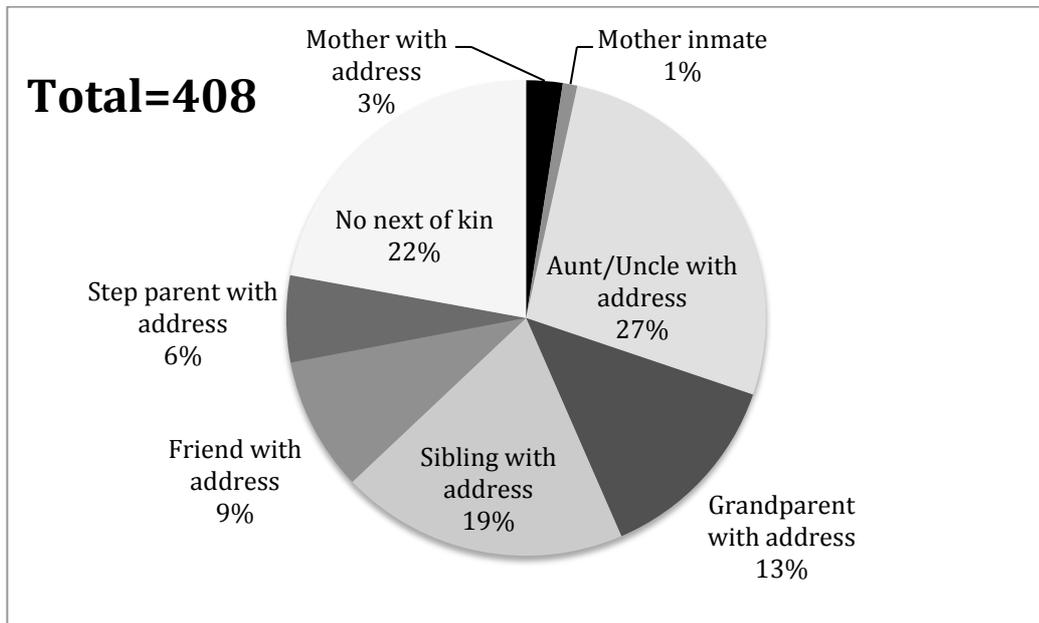
Ten orphans had mothers with residential addresses in the parish of Camberwell listed in their records. It is unclear why the children were classified this way and further investigation provided no answers. For example, William and Jabez Elliot were originally labelled as 'other' children when they were admitted to the workhouse with their mother in the early 80s.³²² However, when the Guardians transferred them to Brighton Road a few years later, they were reclassified as orphans. On the face of it, this suggests their mother died. However, when the children were later transferred to Witham School a few years later their mother was listed as their next of kin with an address in Newington.³²³ Subsequent marriage records for the boys reveal their fathers' name but there is no record of

³²¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

³²² London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/159; Film Number: X100/073.

³²³ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/001 CABG/202/002; Page 32.

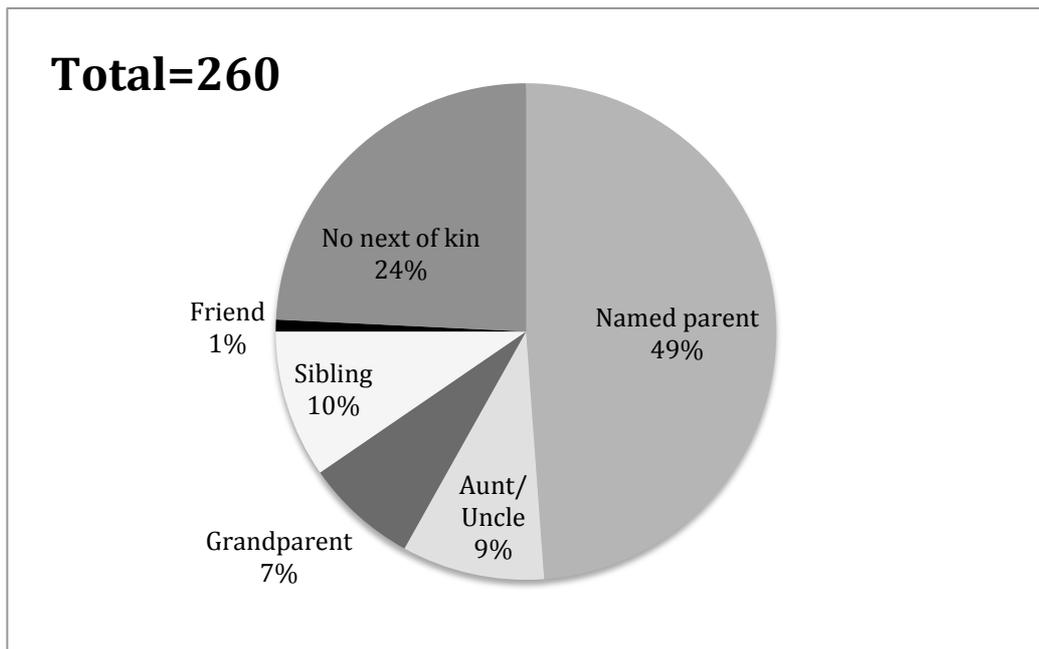
Figure 3.4 Residential addresses for orphan children's next of kin from sample one



a marriage between him and their mother. It is possible that the boys were illegitimate and that the Guardians knew the mother would never reclaim them so labelled them as orphans to reflect their permanence despite not fitting the PLB's definition. But this cannot be proved and we will never know.

Classification labels served an important administrative function because they helped the authorities assess the risk of population instability by monitoring the number of children with parents outside the workhouse who were capable of resuming custody. Whilst the disproportionate number of 'other' children in sample one implies there was considerable potential for instability, the next-of-kin information for the 260 deserted children in sample one introduce the unexpected possibility that permanent inmates were also capable of being discharged because they were not truly parentless.

Figure 3.5 Next-of-kin relationships for deserted children from sample one



Almost half of the deserted children in the SMSD between 1884-89 had named parents listed in their records (see figure 3.5).³²⁴ Far fewer deserted children had extended relatives compared to the orphan class and almost a quarter of deserted children had no recorded next of kin. The Poor Law authorities treated deserted children as part of the permanent population because policy defined them in similar terms to orphans except the word ‘death’ was replaced with ‘abandonment’.³²⁵ This meant children could theoretically have two parents that were alive, but still be classed as deserted if one of them abandoned the child and the other was incapacitated, incarcerated or abroad.

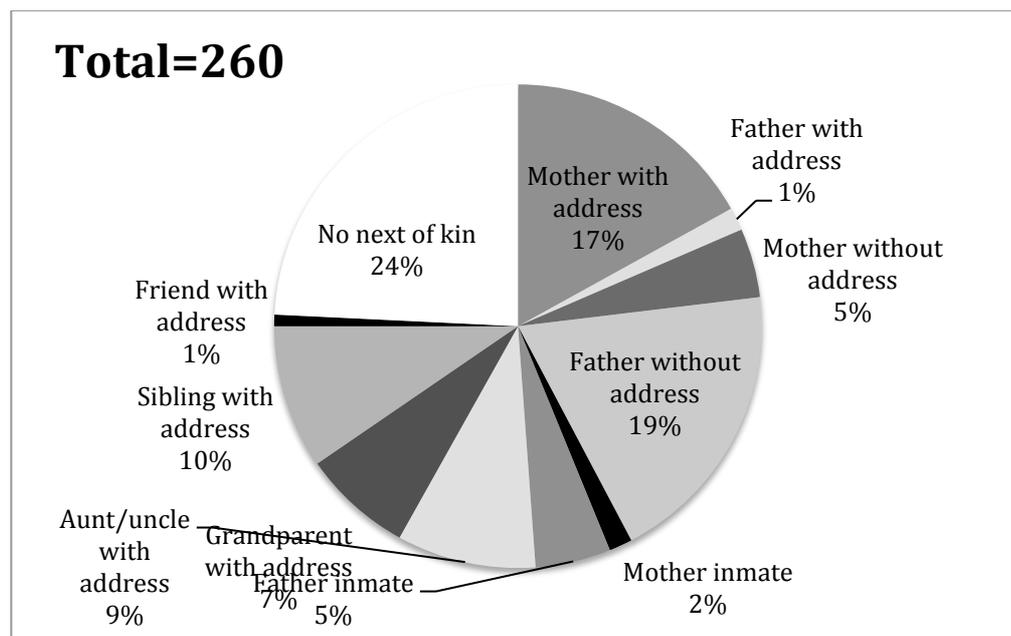
It might be reasonable to assume that the disproportionate number of named parents from the deserted class were a mixture of inmates, convicts or parents without known addresses who had permanently abandoned their children as

³²⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

³²⁵ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71 (C (1st series))* Page 35.

required by the PLB's guidance.³²⁶ However, the address information from the SMSD records shows this was not the case. The logbooks show that 18 per cent of deserted children had parents with known addresses whereas 24 per cent had parents who were untraceable (see figure 3.6).³²⁷ Only seven per cent had parents

Figure 3.6 Residential addresses for deserted children's next of kin from sample one



in the workhouse; the remainder had other relatives listed as their next of kin. There were 48 cases of children who were classified as deserted even though they had a parent that lived outside the workhouse, infirmary or prison. These children are definitive examples of the Guardians not classifying children in accordance with the PLB's guidance. Most traceable parents were single mothers, whereas the bulk of untraceable parents were fathers with warrants issued by the Guardians for financial contributions if they were found.³²⁸ There was clearly a lack of alignment between the PLB's definition of desertion and

³²⁶ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71 (C (1st series))* Page 35

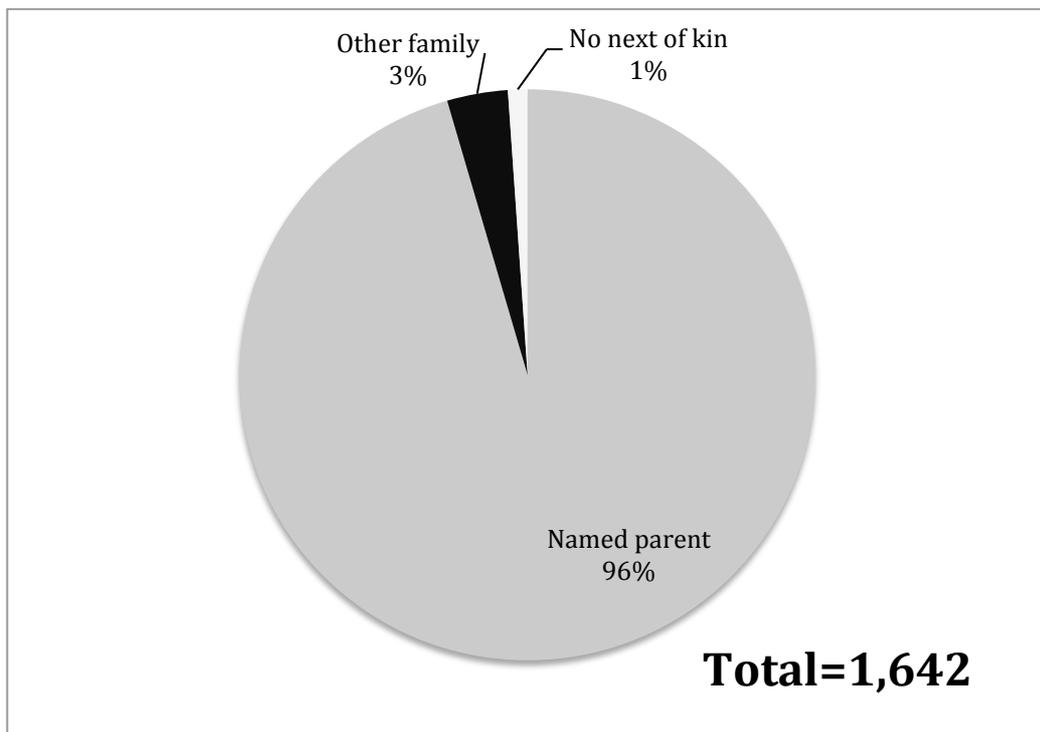
³²⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

³²⁸ See section 5.3 of this thesis for a more detailed discussion about the use of warrants in the context of district schools.

its practical application because the Guardians classified some children as deserted even when they had parents who were capable of discharge of them. This casts doubt on how many deserted children were truly abandoned in district schools, and leaves a margin of ambiguity surrounding the whole process of classification based on parental circumstance.

Unsurprisingly, the fluctuating class was much bigger than the permanent class. There were 1,642 children classed as ‘other’ within the sample of 2,423 children who were cared for at the SMSD between 1884-89.³²⁹ Their next-of-kin information implies that the anxieties expressed by reformers throughout the ins and outs discourse were not exaggerated because 96 per cent of ‘other’ children had parents listed in their records (see figure 3.7). There were 1,568 children

Figure 3.7 Next-of-kin relationships for ‘other’ children from sample one



³²⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

who had parents that were known to the Guardians and a very small number had no family or alternative relatives recorded as their next of kin.

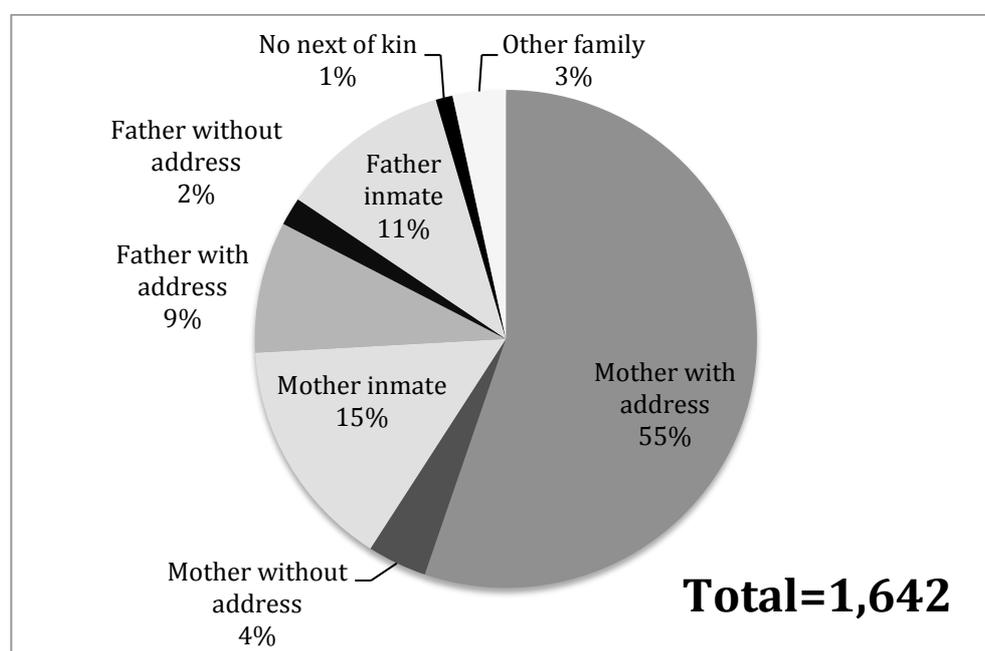
The substantial number of ‘other’ with known parents was one of many unintended consequences that resulted from the crusade against out relief and it shows that poor parents consciously institutionalised their children but refused to permanently desert them entirely. The ‘other’ class was substantially bigger than the permanent class because there were considerably more children with on-going parental relationships in need of relief during the late-nineteenth century than there were parentless children. The parentless assumption was not only misleading, it also obscured the reasons children entered public childcare during this period by falsely depicting juvenile paupers as lacking family connections.

The address information for ‘other’ children provides the best insight into the types of families that turned to the authorities for help. Unsurprisingly, gender norms were prominent features of the decision to admit a child to public childcare (see figure 3.8).³³⁰ Sixty-four per cent (1,047 ‘other’ children) had parents with residential addresses that were known to the Guardians, but only nine per cent of those were fathers. Lone mothers with residential addresses were the most likely parents to voluntarily admit their children and lone fathers with residential addresses were the least. Following Longley’s advice, neither gender were eligible for outdoor relief and both were responsible for maintenance payments towards their children, albeit lone mothers were rarely pursued. ‘Other’ children with lone parents would have been perceived as the worst candidates for de-pauperisation because they clearly had enduring ties to a disreputable parent. The significant presence of such children within the SMSD population helps explain why reformers campaigned to change the law even if, in reality, parents were not a disruptive presence.

³³⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

The SMSD logbooks also record some mothers as widows, or the wives inmates but generally speaking the records most make no mention of the father's status. The lack of information about paternal status suggests that one impact of Longley's proposals was that previously deserving women were now treated in the same way as irredeemable women such as unmarried and deserted mothers.

Figure 3.8 Residential addresses for 'other' children's next of kin from sample one



By comparison, where a father was recorded as the next of kin they always had the status of the mother noted in the logbooks. Fathers in the workhouse were almost always there with their wives and the fathers with residential addresses were all widowers.

Fathers received less sympathy from the Guardians because male dependency was considered particularly unacceptable.³³¹ Men could occupy more skilled

³³¹ See Mackay, *Respectability and the London Poor* for more on how men were treated differently under the New Poor Law.

trades and command better rates of pay than women. Generally if working-class women did work they entered the workforce as casual or informal labours.³³² Deserted mothers and the wives of inmates were perceived as unworthy of public support because their husbands' actions were seen as moral failures. In contrast, widowhood and illness were viewed with greater compassion - until the crusade was in full swing.

The SMSD logbooks suggest that the crusade against outdoor relief did not prevent women from continuing to seek support from the Poor Law but rather that the crusade simply changed how they went about accessing it. Instead of applying for an outdoor relief order, destitute mothers gave up custody of their children in an effort to materially survive. This observation fits well within the wider modern scholarship on the various ways that working-class women sought to navigate the burdens of childcare and limited means if they were ineligible for public support, particularly in cases of unmarried women. Ginger Frost explores the history of desperate mothers giving up their children throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the methods of childcare they turned to. She explains how fortunate women may have had access to family members or neighbours who were willing to help, but others turned to informal fostering with strangers or outright informal adoption in an effort to survive.³³³ Frost rightly acknowledges that the act of giving up a child was nothing new because desperate mothers often had no alternative depending on how public support was being distributed at the time, as evidenced by the records of 'fallen' women turning to the Foundling Hospital in the early-eighteenth century.³³⁴

³³² See figure 5.14 for information about the gendered differences in occupational skill level for sample four.

³³³ Ginger Frost, 'The kindness of strangers revisited: Fostering, adoption and illegitimacy in England, 1860-1930' in Rebecca Probert (ed), *Cohabitation and Non-Marital births in England and Wales 1600-2012* (Palgrave Macmillan 2012).

³³⁴ Ginger Frost, "'Your Mother Has Never Forgotten You': Illegitimacy, Motherhood, and the London Foundling Hospital, 1860-1930 (2014) 127 *Annales De Demographie Historique* 45.

The ins and outs discourse depicted ‘other’ children as children of ‘casual inmates’ who came and went from the workhouse with great frequency.³³⁵ However, the evidence from the SMSD logbooks suggests far fewer parents frequented the workhouse than implied by contemporary commentators. Instead, most were experiencing forms of misfortune that did not fit within Victorian understandings about the nature of childhood poverty, particularly lone mothers. The information drawn from the logbooks suggests the terms orphan and ‘other’ were generally applied in accordance with the PLB’s definitions, but that the desertion label was applied more ambiguously because more than half of the deserted children had parents that apparently had not abandoned them.

The biggest problems with the tripartite system was that it was capable of misrepresenting the parentless classes as devoid of family life and made no attempt to explain the family lives of ‘other’ children. It diluted the identity of juvenile paupers by over-simplifying their family backgrounds into simple administrative categories. Given the system was intended to differentiate children who were admitted by virtue of parental agency rather than parental death or desertion, it was an extremely blunt instrument. The tripartite structure was unable to account for the unstable lives of the poor and thus failed to capture the reasons why children were entering public childcare during this period.

A case study provides a concrete example of the inadequacies of the tripartite division. Henry and Fredrick Belville were the oldest two children of Emma and George Belville who moved to the parish of Camberwell from their original home in Brighton in 1873. George disappeared from the family home in the late 1870s and Emma was forced to seek work as a clothes-ironer in order to

³³⁵ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 82.

support her four children.³³⁶ After three years of self-support, Frederick and Henry were admitted to the Camberwell Guardians at the ages of ten and twelve. They were immediately sent to Brighton Road where they were classified as deserted with no recorded next of kin.³³⁷ The initial evidence from the SMSD logbooks suggests both George and Emma had permanently abandoned their sons, and they were labelled as deserted because the authorities had no reason to fear they were at risk of being collected. However, within a year of the children being admitted to Brighton Road, George reappeared and discharged Frederick and Henry to his care.³³⁸

There is no evidence that George reunited with Emma during this period. However, within six months he readmitted his sons to Brighton Road and the Guardians re-classified as the children as ‘other’ and named George as their next of kin without an address.³³⁹ The children remained at school until they were 14 and 16. At this point, the Guardians discharged them to the *Exmouth* training ship (which replaced the *Goliath* after it burned down in 1873). It is not clear how long they stayed on the *Exmouth* because from the age of 16 they were free to discharge themselves. Three years later, Emma remarried a man named George Bond and Frederick and Henry appeared living with them in the following census.³⁴⁰

Their case history illustrates how the classification system was unable to administer complex issues surrounding child poverty because it made no accommodation for the transitional nature of the personal crises than led to

³³⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881; Class: RG11; Piece: 690; Folio: 9; Page: 11; GSU roll: 1341160.

³³⁷ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/002, Page 10.

³³⁸ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/002, Page 10.

³³⁹ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/002, Page 11.

³⁴⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891; Class: RG12; Piece: 806; Folio: 6; Page: 7; GSU roll: 6095916; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 5147; Schedule Number: 227; England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915; vol 2b; Page 541.

abject poverty. Instead, it simply perpetuated existing tensions of ‘deserving versus undeserving’, ‘redeemable versus incurable’ and ‘parentless versus other’. Despite the limited sources, inferences can be drawn that Emma was forced to institutionalise her sons after the breakdown of her relationship with George, but had no intention to desert them, as evidenced by their later reunion. While there is no evidence of contact between the boys and their mother throughout their years at Brighton Road, their eventual reunion confirms their familial bonds remained intact despite a lengthy separation. Emma’s decision to admit her school-aged children, and keep her infants at home, had sound reasoning. The infants would have been sent to the workhouse because they were too young for school and conditions in workhouses were often perilous for babies. Emma would also have been responsible for paying one penny a week for Frederick and Henry to attend a national school and still receive no help from parish officials to cope with her marital crisis.

By presenting Frederick and Henry as deserted, she was able to avoid the stigma of the workhouse for herself and her infant daughters whilst ensuring her school-aged sons were educated as the law required. Their case history is one example of how poor parents responded to changes in the law, and how the classification system could misrepresent the reality of a child’s parental circumstances by over-simplifying them. Although the boys were initially classed as deserted, the wider evidence confirms neither George nor Emma intended to totally abandon them when they were first admitted in 1885. The boys were initially labelled as part of the permanent class despite the fact they had parents capable of causing instability as evidenced by George’s decision to collect them. Their subsequently stable presence within the fluctuating class shows that both parents were either unable, or unwilling, to disrupt their education.

3.4. Challenging misconceptions within the ins and outs discourse

Victorian commentators argued that the root cause of population instability in district schools was because parents of ‘other’ children often asserted their right to custody.³⁴¹ One of the key sources of evidence child-welfare reformers cited to support their claims were the reports of the LBG’s chief medical inspector Dr Bridges who issued two reports on population stability during the late-nineteenth century.

The first report was published in 1873 and claimed there were 1,051 admissions to Brighton Road that year and 744 discharges.³⁴² The report offered no detail of where the children were sent but provided a footnote that stated ‘I believe that about a third of this number may be reckoned as leaving for service’.³⁴³ Reformers used this statement as evidence that the remainder were discharged to parents despite its total ambiguity. The second report was issued in 1889 and reported there were 1,397 admissions to the SMSD between 1893-1894 (which now included all four institutions) and 1,373 discharges. Dr Bridges concluded ‘the population is in the highest degree of fluctuation’.³⁴⁴ Reformers including Tufnell, Nassau Senior, Davenport Hill and eventually members of parliament, referenced Bridges’ findings without criticism throughout the last three decades of the nineteenth century as proof that ins and outs were a serious problem.

The effect of this misleading and oversimplified information was that it was distributed at policy level to support the first laws to restrict parental rights.³⁴⁵ By not publishing details of where the children were discharged, the issue of population instability was overstated by ambiguous information. A close

³⁴¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 305-324; Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 59-66.

³⁴² Dr Bridges, ‘Table showing Influx and Efflux of Casuals’ Page 30.

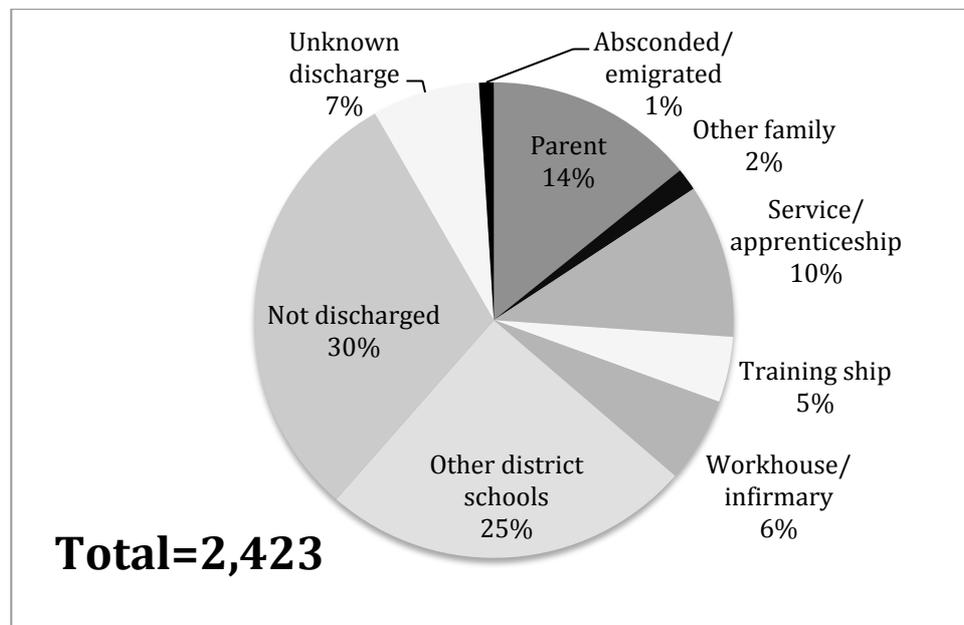
³⁴³ Dr Bridges, ‘Table showing Influx and Efflux of Casuals’ Page 30.

³⁴⁴ *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 349.

³⁴⁵ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Pages 71-78.

reading of the SMSD admission and discharge registers shows children in sample one were more likely to be transferred to another Poor Law institution or to additional training than to be collected by a parent (see figure 3.9).³⁴⁶ Only 70 per cent of the population were discharged during the five-year period of

Figure 3.9 Sample one discharge destinations



observation for this study and the findings show children were more likely to be discharged at the discretion of the system’s administrators than as a consequence of parental agency. Some children were transferred to other district schools like Witham or Herne Bay following a change of circumstance; others were sent to district schools outside the jurisdiction of the SMSD like Norwood School or Forest Hill School following a change in settlement paperwork. Still others were sent to St Mary’s Orphanage in Southall, which was run by the Catholic Church and sought to rescue Catholic juvenile paupers from the general population to prevent them losing their faith. Small numbers were returned to the workhouse to join their parents, or to the infirmarium because they were ill, and only one per cent absconded or were sent to Canada.

³⁴⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

Institutional sources like the SMSD logbooks reflect the values and practical requirements of the period. The Poor Law authorities accommodated tens of thousands of children throughout the late-nineteenth century and classification labels were used to target policies at specific sections of the juvenile population.³⁴⁷ It is possible that parents collected some of the 37 per cent of the children who were not discharged, or who were sent to unknown locations, and that administrator's either failed to record it or recorded it elsewhere. However, the logbooks do confirm that 46 per cent of the sample was discharged to locations other than family homes, which casts a different light on the severity of the instability problem. South Metropolitan Schools were criticised more severely than other district school for their inability to stabilise their substantial populations,³⁴⁸ but my work shows that a significant proportion of this fluctuation was the result of internal administration rather than parental misconduct.

The SMSD discharge records cast new light on the complexity of child poverty during this period because it proves children were often discharged from district schools for reasons other than parental interference. They were discharged because of their ages, faiths, health, disabilities, and behavioural problems far more often than because their parents decided to resume custody. There were considerably more factors at play that affected a child's ability to successfully complete their industrial training than capricious parental behaviour. Once children ceased to be chargeable at the age of 16, the Guardians were no longer required to supervise them.

The aftercare information in the Victorian sources is limited because lawmakers recommended that any follow-up work should be left to the philanthropic

³⁴⁷ The total chargeable population of children in 1907 was 69,080 see Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 5.

³⁴⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

sector.³⁴⁹ This left the outcomes of those children who were successfully sent to service, apprenticeship or the *Exmouth* training ship largely unknown, especially over the long-term. A small number of charitable organisations developed throughout the late-nineteenth century to make inquiries about recently discharged children including the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, the Girl’s Friendly Society, the Young Men’s Friendly Society, the Home for Working Boys in London and other regional equivalents.

A society in South London called the South Metropolitan School District Visiting Association focussed exclusively on the aftercare of children discharged from Brighton Road, Banstead Road and Witham Schools. The society was made up of over 100 volunteers who felt that the LGB’s criticisms about South Metropolitan schools were unduly harsh. They set out to visit boys who were recently discharged to service or apprenticeship positions in order to see if they showed signs of good moral character and industrious labour ethics. Their inquiry took place between 1893 and 1896 and represents one of the longest aftercare studies in the context of London’s district schools because it observed a period of four years (see figure 3.10).³⁵⁰

Volunteers met with 452 boys within 12 months of being discharged from the SMSD and determined that most of them were either ‘good’, ‘fairly good’ or

Figure 3.10 Aftercare study one

Total=452	1893	1894	1895	1896
Good	47	123	211	294
Fairly good	7	12	19	19

³⁴⁹ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 64.

³⁵⁰ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 307.

Gone to relations and doing well; gone to relations and no further record	6	27	51	105
Infirmary	0	2	4	2
Workhouse	0	2	4	4
Unsatisfactory	3	8	8	9
Dead; untraced; not reported	14	6	12	8
Visit refused	0	1	0	0

living with family. The terms ‘good’ or ‘fairly good’ were applied quite ambiguously because they were based on subjective assessments of the volunteers who looked at factors ranging from moral character to work ethic. Their findings show small numbers of children returned to workhouses or infirmaries and few were deemed unsatisfactory. The conclusions of the Association were that most children from the SMSD were a success, at least in the short term.³⁵¹ The society’s findings were published in the Poor Law School Committees Report of 1897 and served to correct some of the censure incurred by parliamentarian John Mundella’s report of 1896.³⁵²

The LGB occasionally recorded information about aftercare in their annual reports but only if external agencies provided them with it. Nassau Senior conducted the only other significant aftercare study between 1871 and 1872. This study provided the empirical basis for her major report that condemned district schools in 1873. She employed a group of female volunteers to obtain references for 650 girls who had been sent to domestic service from district

³⁵¹ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Pages 306-308; Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Pages 174-175.

³⁵² Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 424.

schools and requested they classify the responses into four possible outcomes: fair, good, unsatisfactory and bad.³⁵³ Only 490 references came back, and most of the girls were deemed unsatisfactory or bad based on the subjective assessments of the girls' employers. In response to these findings, Nassau Senior conducted a smaller survey of 51 girls who had had at least five years education at a district school and drew similar conclusions based on her own assessments (see figure 3.11).³⁵⁴ Her detailed survey showed that most girls from district schools either

Figure 3.11 Aftercare study two

Girls doing well, or fairly	Total=51	13
Girls dropped out of sight, of whom last tidings were satisfactory		7
Girls dropped out of sight, or whom last tidings were unsatisfactory		16
Girls incapacitated (one insane, one bad ophthalmia, one epileptic)		3
Girls of whom there is no record since they left school		2
Girls who went to relations from school		2
Absconded from school		1
Dead (of whom one had been on the streets)		2

could not be traced or were considered failures within the framework of moral reformation because they did not conform to middle-class values of female domesticity. She concluded that district schools were wholly inadequate because they damaged the physical, moral, and domestic training of girls, and

³⁵³ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Page 141.

³⁵⁴ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Page 146.

she insisted girls should be raised in family-based systems of public childcare.³⁵⁵

However, Nassau Senior's findings must be framed within her methodology. Unlike the South Metropolitan School District Visiting Association, she did not inspect the children directly herself. Instead, she relied on references from the girls' employers to make her assessments and admitted that this approach was capable of bias. Nassau Senior reflected on an unsatisfactory case (...)

'N.O. aged 16. One year in service. Described as idle, untruthful, and a pilferer, incorrigibly dirty in her habits, quiet tempered, but so hopelessly apathetic that no impression can be made upon her; fairly well taught in reading, writing, and religious knowledge, but quite ignorant of needlework, and also of house-work, except that she can scrub a floor. N.B. My informant did not say anything absolutely unkind, but I should not think her a gentle mistress; and I can hardly believe the girl to be quite as bad as described, since they have kept her twelve months.'³⁵⁶

Nassau Senior's conclusions were instrumental in driving changes to the law including the Boarding Out orders of 1889 and the PLA 1889. Both changes had substantial impact on the nature of public childcare because they restricted who could become a foster parent and contributed to the erosion of parental rights. However, her findings do little to advance our understanding about the success of moral reformation because they do not follow the young women into adulthood, or pursue the outcomes for males from district schools or any of the children who were discharged to other positions.

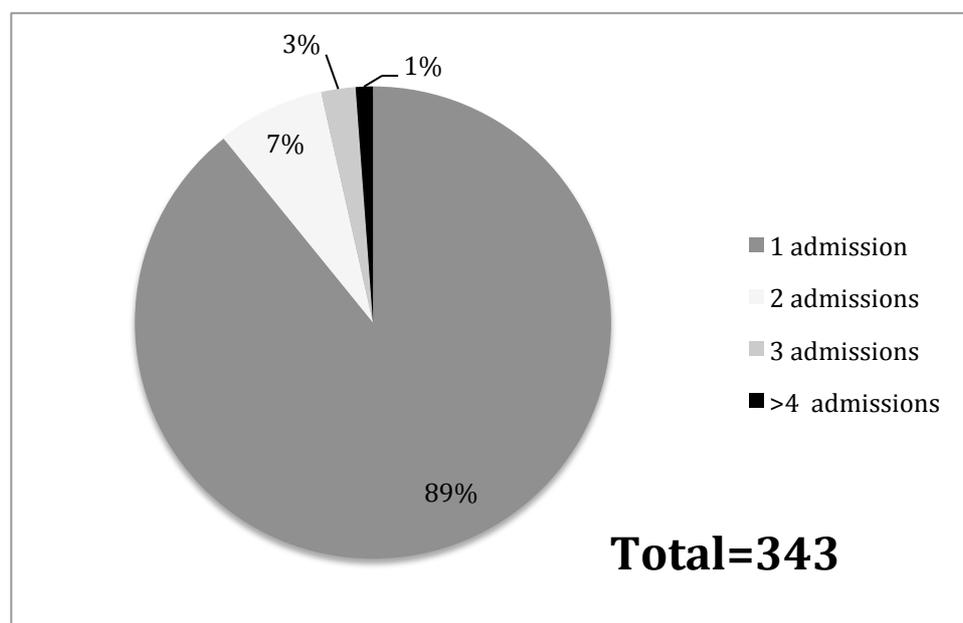
Female activists who contributed to the ins and outs discourse generally justified their interference into poor families on the basis that they could

³⁵⁵ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 59-149.

³⁵⁶ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 144-45.

improve them.³⁵⁷ Such ideas had currency with lawmakers because the state wanted to reduce dependency in future generations and promote industriousness and patriotism amongst the working classes.³⁵⁸ The SMSD logbooks show that 343 children were discharged to parents out of the 2,423 children in sample one (14 per cent shown in figure 3.9).³⁵⁹ The main arguments advanced by reformers were that children were routinely readmitted for short periods of time and that this violated the crucial spatial boundaries between reformation spaces and sources of contamination. Ninety-two per cent of the children who were discharged to

Figure 3.12 Sample one discharges to parents and readmissions



parents from this sample had been classified as ‘other’ but there is little evidence that supports reformers’ assertions that they were casually readmitted.

I traced the 343 children who were discharged by parents between 1884-89 through the SMSD records for between 1882 and 1892 in order to look for

³⁵⁷ See the work of Jane Nassau Senior, Florence Davenport Hill, Menella Smedley and Wilhelmina Hall for examples.

³⁵⁸ *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 15.

³⁵⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

evidence of fluctuation.³⁶⁰ I found that 89 per cent were admitted once during the ten years of observation and only four per cent were admitted more than twice (see figure 3.12).³⁶¹ The logbooks show that 306 children who were eventually collected by a parent had one admission record. Only 25 had more than two admissions records in the SMSD logbooks, and therefore could be considered to have ‘revolved’ through the system. It is possible children were informally released without records or that the problem manifested itself in a way that escaped central administration. However, when this information is contextualised within the patterns of ambiguity generated by administrators like Dr Bridges and Nassau Senior, it appears that claims of routine readmission were also overstated.

The consequence of a gap between activists’ accounts and the administrative reality is that the lived experiences of the poor are once again obscured. Murdoch argues poor parents viewed admissions procedures to Barnardo’s homes as a process of negotiation with officials in order to help them secure better training options for their children than they could offer.³⁶² I argue that the evidence from the SMSD logbooks shows something very similar was happening with district schools. Most parents who sent their children to public childcare either never resumed custody, or if they did, they did not return the children to care. Such parents viewed the drastic measure of admitting their child to the authorities as a one-off occurrence irrespective of how long their children were in public care. It is not surprising that the majority of children who were claimed by their parents were classed as ‘other’ because their parents clearly had no intention of deserting them. Inferences can be drawn that these parents, along with most parents of ‘other’ children, viewed public childcare as an alternative form of welfare relief rather than a conversion experience for their children. The label ‘other’ described children with parents who required

³⁶⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; CABG/202/003.

³⁶¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; CABG/202/003.

³⁶² Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 137-184.

state support but were unwilling to permanently desert their children. Although reformers tried to make out that the label ‘other’ was evidence of casual pauperism, it appears to be evidence of parental agency within a landscape of severe austerity.

The poor led exceptionally unstable lives in late-Victorian London. The combined pressures of welfare cutbacks and mandatory education placed tremendous burdens on impoverished families. The Victorian sources misrepresented the reasons parents institutionalised their children just as the tripartite classification system acted as a blunt instrument for differentiating children who entered public childcare by virtue of parental agency versus those that entered by virtue of parental death or desertion. Misconceptions about the nature of child poverty pervaded everyday life to such an extent that the ability to question its root causes was simply not possible. These issues can be explored more closely in the case history of Sarah Ann Carlo. Sarah Ann was one of five children born to John and Elizabeth Carlo in Camberwell during the 1870s. John was a bricklayer and the family lived on Crown Street, which Charles Booth classified in 1889 as inhabited by the ‘vicious and semi-criminal classes’.³⁶³ In 1880, John was admitted to Caterham Imbeciles Asylum, which left Elizabeth to care for their four school-aged children Emma, Arthur, William and Sarah Ann, along with their infant daughter Beatrice, on her own.

Immediately after John was admitted to the asylum, Elizabeth sent Emma to her sister-in-law in Essex and entered Gordon Road workhouse with her remaining children.³⁶⁴ She discharged herself within a matter of months and took Beatrice with her but left the three school-aged children behind with the agreement of

³⁶³ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour in London; Maps of London Poverty Districts and Streets* (Macmillan 1902) Descriptive Map of London Poverty 1889. South-Eastern Sheet comprising the registration districts of St. Saviour’s and St. Olave’s, Southwark, and parts of Lambeth, Camberwell, and Greenwich. Coordinates G 10.

³⁶⁴ Gordon Road Workhouse Admissions, 1880-1881, Reference Number: CaBG/176 and LEBG/1891/1; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881; Class: RG11; Piece: 1788; Folio: 26; Page: 29; GSU roll: 1341432.

the authorities. William was transferred to the infirmary for a period due to illness, which delayed his entry to Brighton Road until the following year. For unknown reasons Arthur was moved back and forth between Gordon Road and Havil Street workhouses for over a year before being sent to Brighton Road. Sarah Ann was transferred to Brighton Road within two weeks of her mother admitting them to the Guardians.³⁶⁵ All three children were classified as ‘other’ upon entry with Elizabeth’s name and address in their records as their next of kin.

After leaving the workhouse Elizabeth and her daughter Beatrice returned to Crown Street to live as lodgers with the Austin family and Elizabeth worked as a charwoman to support them.³⁶⁶ In 1886, Elizabeth married a local engineer who had three sons and whose wife had recently died.³⁶⁷ There is no death record available for her first husband John, so it is unclear whether Elizabeth was a bigamist, which often was the only exit from an unhappy union before divorce was made accessible to the general population. That same year, the Guardians arranged for William and Arthur to be discharged and sent William to an army band and Arthur to join the army as an infantry soldier.³⁶⁸ Two years after her marriage, Elizabeth approached the Camberwell Guardians and discharged Sarah Ann to her care.³⁶⁹ By 1891, Elizabeth lived on Addington Square with her new husband and her daughters. Booth classified Addington

³⁶⁵ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/160; Film Number: X100/082; London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/159; Film Number: X100/073; PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/002, Page 18.

³⁶⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881; Class: RG11; Piece: 694; Folio: 88; Page: 28; GSU roll: 1341161.

³⁶⁷ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Church of England Parish Registers, 1754-1931; Reference Number: Page 73/emm/020.

³⁶⁸ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/002, Page 18.

³⁶⁹ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/002, Page 11; Booth, Descriptive Map of London Poverty, Coordinates H 10.

Square as inhabited by the ‘comfortable classes on good ordinary wages’ and none of them returned to workhouses in their lifetimes.³⁷⁰

The triggers for public law interference within the lives of the Carlo children resulted from parental misfortune rather than deliberate reckless abandonment as implied by campaigners throughout the ins and outs discourse. Elizabeth sought custody of Sarah Ann once her circumstances stabilised, and managed to avoid admitting Emma or Beatrice to public childcare through the help of extended family and strategic decision-making for her school-aged children. She relied on the workhouse in the immediate aftermath of her husband being sent to the asylum, but this is hardly surprising given it left her without a wage earner and the burden of three pennies a week in school fees. Her case history shows how the complexity behind child poverty simply could not fit within narrow Victorian understandings about the reasons people were poor and highlights how inappropriate the policies behind early child-protection measures were in terms of helping vulnerable families. Victorian lawmakers constructed assumptions about child poverty that were so limited they effectively insisted that a mother should be able to cope through all circumstances, without any assistance from the state, or not cope at all and give up her children indefinitely.

Another argument advanced by reformers was that parental discharge led to short stays and caused administrative disruption.³⁷¹ Measuring the time between the admissions and discharges for the 343 children in the SMSD who were collected by a parent shows this claim probably had merit. Forty per cent of children stayed in the SMSD for less than one year, and a further 20 per cent stayed for less than two years. Only 29 per cent of cases stayed for prolonged

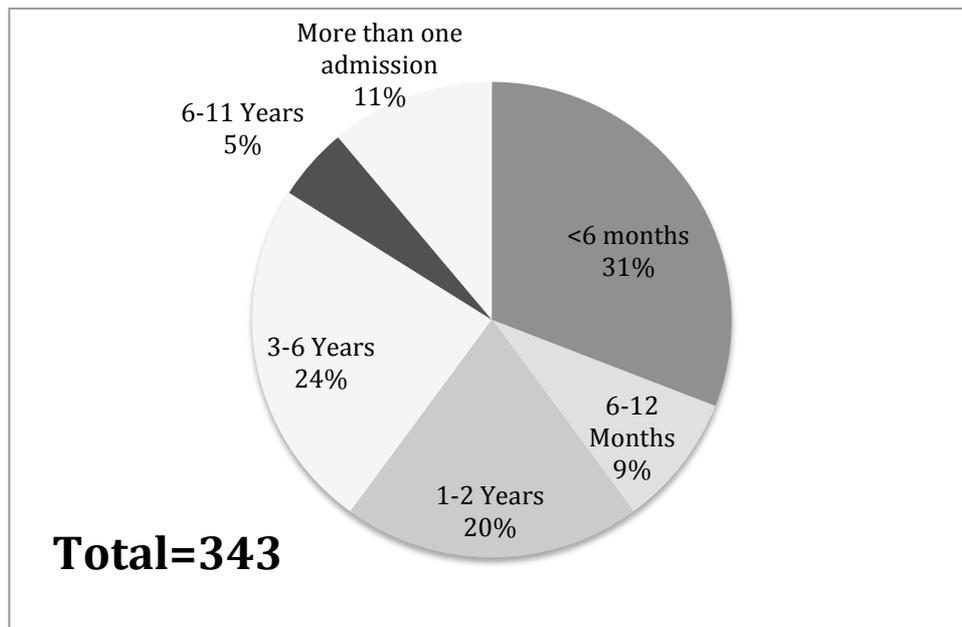
³⁷⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891; Class: RG11; Piece: 694; Folio: 88; Page: 28; GSU roll: 1341161; Class: RG12; Piece: 1407; Folio: 22; Page: 14; GSU roll: 6096517.

³⁷¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 305-324; Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 59-66.

periods like Sarah Ann Carlo who spent more of her childhood cared for by the Guardians than with her mother.

This data suggests that parents viewed public childcare as a temporary one-off

Figure 3.13 Admission durations for sample one discharges to parents



solution to help stabilise their lives after a crisis (see figure 3.13).³⁷² Assertions of dramatic instability caused by casual pauperism may have been overstated but claims that ‘other’ children were prone to shorter stays than permanent children had merit. The evidence of short stays suggests the poor approached welfare providers for far more nuanced reasons than the Victorian sources assumed. Streamlining complex social issues about the nature of child poverty in the late-nineteenth century into simplified notions of deservedness versus non-deservedness even distorted the lived experiences of those cases that *did fit* with reformers’ descriptions of ins and outs like the Beilby family because their lives were characterised by far more complex problems than indolence or moral failure.

³⁷² Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 60; PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; CABG/202/003.

George Senior and Catherine Beilby had eight children between the late-1870s and early-90s named Caroline, Catherine, George, Maud, Ethel, Elsie, Florence and Beatrice. The complexity of their family's circumstances first became apparent when Caroline was sent to Brighton Road because George Senior had entered Havil Street workhouse and brought her with him, presumably because she was the only school-aged child in the family at this time.³⁷³ Within three weeks of arriving, George Senior discharged himself and reclaimed Caroline from the Guardians in the process. Two years later he was forced to resubmit himself to Havil Street and this time he brought three children; Caroline, Catherine Junior and George Junior, with him, all of who were school-aged by this time. The children were sent to Brighton Road together. Three months later George Senior discharged himself again, but only took his son home with him and left Caroline and Catherine for a further month before discharging them to his care.³⁷⁴

Two years passed before George Senior resubmitted himself to the workhouse. This time he only brought Catherine Junior and George Junior who were returned to Brighton Road for an unknown period because no date was given for their eventual discharge.³⁷⁵ South Metropolitan's logbooks show they were readmitted 18 months later at the same time Catherine Senior bore twin daughters named Florence and Beatrice.³⁷⁶ The family remained free from Poor Law assistance for two years and presumably the older children contributed to the domestic economy by working or providing child-care assistance.

³⁷³ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/160; Film Number: X100/082.

³⁷⁴ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/161; Film Number: X100/082.

³⁷⁵ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/161; Film Number: X100/082; London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/162; Film Number: X100/083.

³⁷⁶ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/162; Film Number: X100/083; London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/186; Film Number: X100/086.

Unfortunately, on New Year's Day in 1889 George Senior returned to the workhouse and took George Junior, Caroline, Beatrice and Catherine Junior with him.³⁷⁷ Over the coming years Catherine Senior bore three more daughters named Ethel, Maud and Elise and they continued to fluctuate with their father in and out of Poor Law institutions throughout the early 90s. Florence, Beatrice and Ethel experienced similar levels of upheaval as their elder siblings once they reached school age. In total, three of George's children experienced five admissions to South Metropolitan schools, three others experienced three admissions and only Maud and Elsie escaped institutional care entirely because they were the last children that Catherine Senior bore.³⁷⁸

George Beilby Senior was exactly the type of parent that the ins and outs discourse used to justify the erosion of parental rights. He fluctuated between the workhouse and his family home for short periods, and almost always brought his school-aged children with him. Although this may have caused administrative disruption as asserted, we do not know the extent that it impacted the physical and moral retraining of the entire school population. The George Beilby case history provides an ideal example of pauper agency, as explained by historians such as Lees, Green and James;³⁷⁹ but also exemplifies how district school provided another opportunity for the poor to 'make shift' in an effort to deal with their misfortunes.³⁸⁰ However, the ins and outs discourse made no accommodation for these alternative depictions of poverty or the fact the fluctuation problem was not endemic.

³⁷⁷ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/187; Film Number: X100/087; London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SMSD/162; Film Number: X100/083.

³⁷⁸ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 651; Folio: 113; Page: 52.

³⁷⁹ Lees, 'The Survival of the Unfit'; Green, *Pauper Capital*; James, 'Sophia Heathfield of Hawnes'.

³⁸⁰ Tompkins and King, *Poor in England, 1700-1850*.

The ins and outs discourse made no allowances for broader causes of poverty because it conflicted with the values and moral ideals of the time. While the Beilby family were indeed casual paupers, they also proactively used the district school system to help them navigate the difficulties posed by being a large family responsible for state-imposed school fees in a period of limited state assistance. George Senior struggled to maintain a consistent occupation throughout his years of fluctuating through workhouses. In 1875 he described himself as a painter on Caroline's baptismal certificate, but described himself as a coachman to the 1881-91 census enumerators, and as a furniture porter to the 1901 enumerators.³⁸¹ Although this evidence does not allow us to assess George Senior's work ethic within the context of middle-class expectations of industry, it is clear he did try to hold down an occupation when he was outside the workhouse.

It appears the family also battled with securing suitable housing for their rapidly expanding family. In 1881 they lived on Frankton Street but records from 1888 show George sent Catherine and Caroline to Sumner Road School in Peckham and listed Bournemouth Road as the family's address.³⁸² This record was one of six school-admission records that demonstrate George Senior attempted to educate his children at national schools when he was able. There are no available records that verify how long the girls remained at Sumner Road, but 14 months later they were returned to Brighton Road because George Senior returned to the workhouse. In early 1890 George Senior sent his son

³⁸¹ Jersey Heritage; St Helier, Jersey; Jersey Parish Registers; Reference Number: G/C/03/A2/18; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881-1901; Class: RG11; Piece: 688; Folio: 54; Page: 13; GSU roll: 1341160; The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891; Class: RG12; Piece: 484; Folio: 64; Page: 7; GSU roll: 6095594; Class: RG13; Piece: 651; Folio: 113; Page: 52.

³⁸² London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; School Admission and Discharge Registers; Reference: LCC/EO/DIV07/SUM/AD/001.

George Junior to Comber Grove School in Southwark and told admission officials the family lived on nearby Imperial Buildings Road.³⁸³

Again, there is no discharge record for George Junior but he was admitted to Brighton Road in December of that year. It appears Comber Grove served as his only school experience outside the Poor Law system before the Guardians sent him to the *Exmouth* training ship in 1893.³⁸⁴ In 1892 George Senior registered Beatrice and Ethel at Maryon Park School in Southwark and told admission officials the family now lived on Meeting House Lane. However, by the time he admitted Florence to the same school later that year the family had moved again to Fenham Road in Southwark.³⁸⁵ The Beilby family moved two more times before establishing themselves in Croydon in 1901 with their three youngest daughters.³⁸⁶ National school records not only illustrate the family experienced severe housing crises but they also show that George Senior tried to comply with attendance laws.

By looking at the wider sources of evidence surrounding the Beilby family some of the misrepresentations about the nature of childhood poverty generated by the ins and outs discourse begin to emerge. Although George Senior had a casual relationship with the workhouse that necessitated his children also had casual relationships with district schools, he also succeeded in keeping his wife and infant children out of the workhouse and provided national education at his own expense where possible. Nuanced depictions of the poor such as this are absent from Victorian debates and allow prominent features about the nature of poverty – such as the death or institutionalisation of a spouse, unemployment or

³⁸³ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; School Admission and Discharge Registers; Reference: LCC/EO/DIV07/COM/AD/009.

³⁸⁴ London, England, TS Exmouth Training Ship Records, 1876-1918; 20 Sep 1893.

³⁸⁵ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; School Admission and Discharge Registers; Reference: LCC/EO/DIV07/CHO/AD/010.

³⁸⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 651; Folio: 113; Page: 52.

housing crises - to be removed from Victorian commentary about the predominant numbers of 'other' children in district schools. The failure to deal with the reality of childhood poverty allowed reformers to make huge generalisations about the parents of 'other' children and their abuse of custody rights that were largely untrue.

The decision to institutionalise a child was usually prompted by extreme adversity rather than laziness.³⁸⁷ A survey of 100 parents that sent their children to Poor Law schools during the late-nineteenth century revealed 44 per cent of them sought assistance following the death of a spouse whereas 13 per cent sought assistance in response to marital separation and a further 13 per cent of children accompanied a parent into the workhouse.³⁸⁸ The remaining cases from the survey revealed hardships such as parental illness, spousal desertion or imprisonment featured as triggers for public childcare. A further 20 per cent could not be attributed to one specific cause, much like the Beilby family. Interestingly, the survey also showed that gender played an important role: in 75 per cent of spousal-death cases and 63 per cent of workhouse-admission cases, assistance was sought by mothers.³⁸⁹

The different ways in which Emma Belville, Elizabeth Carlo and George Beilby experienced public childcare also highlights the gendered nature of welfare provision during this period. Mothers were much more likely to act as next of kin for their children, or to be the parent seeking custody, compared to fathers (see figure 3.14).³⁹⁰ The principle of less eligibility meant fathers were forced to choose between submitting themselves to the workhouse or abandoning their children entirely in order to get support for their children as

³⁸⁷ Rachel Pimm-Smith and Rebecca Probert, 'Evaluating marital stability in late-Victorian Camberwell' (2018) 21 *Family and Community History* 38.

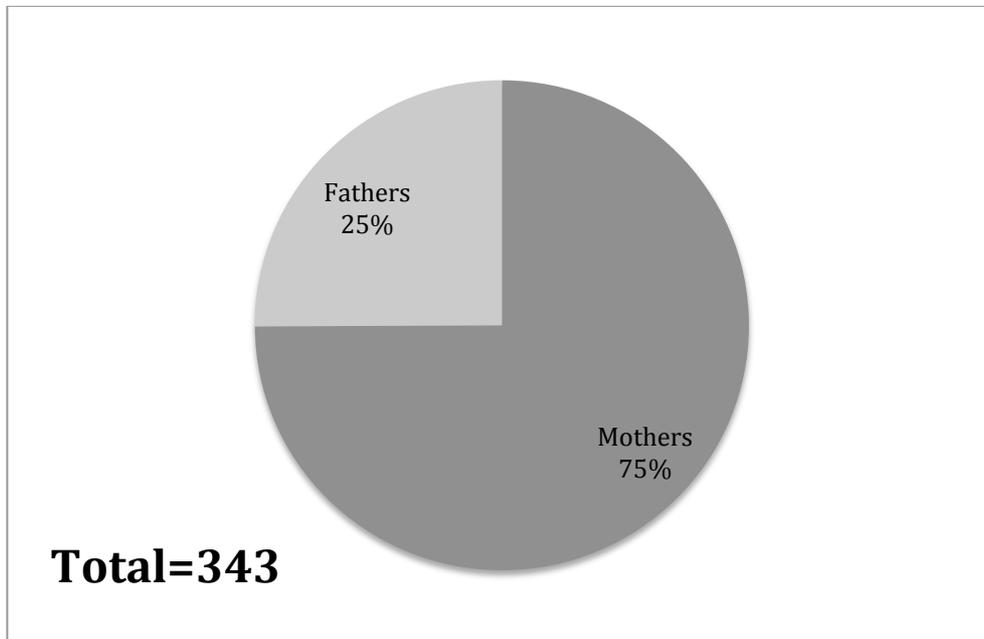
³⁸⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collections for England & Wales 1881-1901; England & Wales Civil Death Registration 1837-1915.

³⁸⁹ Pimm-Smith and Probert, 'Evaluating marital stability in late-Victorian Camberwell'.

³⁹⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

seen with George Beilby and George Belville. Reformers made no secret that they would prefer the poor abandoned their children permanently to the state rather than admit them to

Figure 3.14 Gender breakdown of parental discharges from sample one



the Guardians and then try to maintain contact as evidenced by hailing parental desertion ‘a blessing’ after the PLA 1889.³⁹¹ Although it is impossible to gauge whether fathers were more prone to desertion from the available sources, it can be inferred from the large number of mothers acting as next of kin for their children that women were less able to manage the burdens of extreme poverty without external assistance. Inferences can also be drawn from the fact that only 25 per cent of parental discharges from the sample were to fathers whereas 75 per cent were to mothers.³⁹² This finding suggests the pressures to provide adequate food; sanitary housing and school fees for what were often large numbers of school-aged children were generally more insurmountable for wives than for husbands, particularly after a crisis. The decision to send a child to public childcare during the late-nineteenth century needs to be framed within

³⁹¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 311.

³⁹² PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

context of changes to the law that reduced the ability of poor families to maintain custody of their children, particularly for women.

3.5. Concluding remarks

The SMSD logbooks reveal important information about the relationships between parents, children and welfare administrators that the ins and outs discourse sought to minimise and popular narratives either oversimplified or misrepresented. The same administrators who were empowered to restrict parental rights also produced the evidence that exposed such powers were unnecessary because the majority of parents of ‘other’ children did not abuse the system. Most district school children had enduring relationships with at least one parent (usually their mother) but were more likely to be discharged following actions by the Guardians, rather than exercises of parental rights.

Although school populations had the potential to be widely disrupted by the unrestricted rights of custody before 1889 there is little empirical evidence to suggest that this was a significant problem despite the evidence from Dr Bridges. Most parents of ‘other’ children allowed them to complete their training at district schools and did not pre-maturely discharge them. Those parents that did collect their children generally did not readmit them as seen with Emma Belville and Elizabeth Carlo. Connecting a wide range of sources exposes Victorians limited understanding about the nature of child poverty and the ways that the poor responded to unsuitable administrative structures that were based on inaccurate assumptions.

The SMSD records show on-going parent-child relationships were prevalent in the context of district schools but that the tripartite classification system was a blunt instrument with which to measure parental links and base assumptions about population instability in district schools. This system of labelling misrepresented the family backgrounds of large sections of the population and made inaccurate assumptions about why children entered public childcare.

Most children were classified as ‘other’ because there were no alternative labels for parents who needed assistance but refused to abandon their children or submit themselves to the workhouse. The desire to avoid such adverse experiences did not make those parents threats to school populations anymore than it made them threats to their children’s moral wellbeing.

The inaccurate assertions that district schools were full of parentless children, or that parents exploited unrestricted custody rights to their benefit, reveals there were murky norms of morality at play during the inception of early child-protection policy. Reformers campaigned to curtail parental rights to allow the state to better pursue its reformation agenda and passed key legislation, like the PLAs 1889 and 1899, based on misleading assertions that were accepted at a policy level. The Guardians were more responsible for population instability than parents because they internally transferred children between different institutions for a range of administrative reasons. Reformers consistently blamed population fluctuation on biological parents asserting their custody rights even though there is limited empirical backing from the aftercare sources or this study to support their claims.

It was not unusual for early child-protection measures to be passed on the basis of misleading information as seen with modern historiographies of other childcare systems like Barnardo’s orphanages. He used melodrama and ‘before and after’ photographs throughout the 1870s and 80s to gain public support for his crusade to convert poor children into superior citizens.³⁹³ Such photos were usually staged by his supporters, and thus unrepresentative of the children’s real appearances, but did contribute to the passage of the Children’s Custody Act 1891 (commonly dubbed the ‘Barnardo Relief Law’) all the same.³⁹⁴ The Poor Law system was no different from the philanthropic or emigration sectors

³⁹³ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 14-84.

³⁹⁴ CCA 1891.

because desperate parents also approached it tactically. Various agents misrepresented the actual disruption caused by biological parents and generated support for amendments to the law that gave the state rights of custody over working-class children. Such powers were intended to give the Guardians control over their school populations so they could pursue their campaign to convert poor children but appear unnecessary now more is known.

Chapter 4: Rural cottages and foster families

4.1. Introduction

Poor Law unions were allowed to foster juvenile paupers within the borders of their parishes, if they had permission from the LGB, long before long-distance foster care was authorised. However, fostering within the union was heavily criticised because it allowed biological family members and other associates within a child's birth community to remain in contact with them.³⁹⁵ Reformers argued that fostering within the union was tantamount to an alternative form of outdoor relief because it allowed parents to evade their duties without punitive consequences.

By contrast, Scotland and Ireland ran highly successful long-distance foster care systems that sent children far away from their birth communities and severed a child's ties to their origins. Scottish and Irish foster care schemes were praised by English reformers for their ability to impose severe spatial controls, and for their ability to accommodate vast numbers of children because any child that was reliant on the state was eligible to be sent away.³⁹⁶ This fuelled the desire of English reformers to lift the boundary restriction and allow Poor Law children to be sent nationwide.

In 1870 the law was amended to allow a select number of Poor Law unions based in London - and had the largest juvenile pauper populations - to send children beyond the borders for the first time. Only the parentless classes were eligible for long-distance fostering,³⁹⁷ and so the PLB clearly defined what the orphan and deserted labels meant to avoid children with parental relationships

³⁹⁵ Poor Law Conference, 'Assuming that boarding out is desirable, which is the preferable mode, within unions or without unions?' North Midland District 1898.

³⁹⁶ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* 2 Pages 141-175.

³⁹⁷ GO 1870 (Article V).

being removed from district schools.³⁹⁸ These definitions focussed heavily on a child's loss of parental connection rather than parental mortality. For example, children could still be made available for long-distance fostering if their parent was imprisoned, incapacitated or abroad.³⁹⁹

The law's emphasis lay on the absence of parental care because that is what made children eligible for reclamation by the state. If a parent did not make use of their right to custody - because they were in prison, or in an infirmary or away - the state was not intruding because the parent had in effect relinquished their rights. Nassau Senior was the main proponent for the expansion of long-distance fostering, and she particularly championed it for girls. She argued that the lack of mothering and domestic training in district schools increased the chances that female child inmates would go on to work in factories or even worse, on the streets.⁴⁰⁰ Although her proposals were met with considerable opposition by Tufnell, she successfully persuaded the president of the LGB, Lord Cranbrook (a staunch supporter of district schools), to declare that 'it is the link of home, which is the centre of all good influences in this country; and when you have created that, you have a new centre of love, and morality, and of hope'.⁴⁰¹ Foster-care reformers used highly idealistic language that drew on notions of working-class identity that emphasised traditional craftsmanship to describe their ideas of what foster care would look like. They wanted the children to be sent to traditional rural cottages that were located in remote areas and occupied by hard-working families so that the children would adopt a more desirable working-class identity than that of the urban pauper.⁴⁰² Agricultural labourers and artisan craftsmen were idealised by reformers who regularly compared them to London's slum dwellers. They compared nostalgic visions of

³⁹⁸ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 35.

³⁹⁹ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 15.

⁴⁰⁰ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 52-147.

⁴⁰¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 175.

⁴⁰² Miss Mason's Report, *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 198.

pre-industrial life to the East End slums in order to illustrate the differences between urban and rural working-class identity and highlight the moral reformation potential for juvenile paupers if foster care was expanded.⁴⁰³

The law required the chief medical officer of the LGB to issue eligible children with a valid medical certificate before they were sent to their foster home and the Guardians continued to be liable for their medical or burial expenses until they ceased to be chargeable.⁴⁰⁴ Foster children could only be sent to the homes where the foster parents were of the same religious persuasion as them, and the household was within two miles of a school and five miles of a committee member.⁴⁰⁵ Foster parents were also required to sign undertakings to the effect that they promised to raise the children ‘as their own’, ensure they attended school and church, and train them in ‘habits of truth, morality and industry’.⁴⁰⁶

Foster parents were not allowed to have more than two children at any given time (except in cases of siblings), and no foster household was allowed to have more than four children because the law sought to minimise the possibility of overcrowding or exploitation by greedy fosterers.⁴⁰⁷ Foster parents were paid four shillings per week for each child in exchange for this agreement. Shortly after the law was passed in 1870 amendments were made to allow all unions across England to participate. In 1889 further legislation was passed that required no more than five children be present in a foster home (including the fosterer’s biological children), and barred families that had received any form of parish relief within the previous year from applying.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 244-290

⁴⁰⁴ GO 1870 (Article II).

⁴⁰⁵ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁴⁰⁶ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁴⁰⁷ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁴⁰⁸ General Order for the boarding out of pauper children 1889 (hereafter GO 1889) was issued; GO 1889 (Article VI).

Both pieces of legislation were drafted in a way that left local committee members with a wide margin of discretion as to how to administer the system. The LGB's secretary, Arthur Peel, issued a letter of instruction to accompany the new regulations to help the Guardians understand the principles of the system. The letter explained that the policy underpinning the law was to 'merge the pauper child to whom it is applied, into the general body of the population' and argued that 'if this result can be achieved, no more powerful argument can be adduced in favour of the scheme'.⁴⁰⁹

However, the letter also voiced key areas of concern. The LGB were deeply concerned about the possibility that children might be sent to populated areas or to families that did not conform to pre-industrial ideals. Peel explained [...]

'The Board desire to state, in the strongest terms, that they watch with grave anxiety the placing out of pauper children in homes in populous or crowded places [...] so strongly do the Board hold this opinion, that if the practice of boarding out children in town homes were to become more general, they would have to consider the expediency of prohibiting it by a General Order'.⁴¹⁰

He further requested that 'children should not be fostered in any home where the father is employed in night work; and that in every case the foster parents should be by preference persons engaged in outdoor, not sedentary labour'.⁴¹¹

The LGB's preference for small communities and outdoor labourers reflected a middle-class nostalgia for an out-of-date vision of working-class identity. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century English farmers benefitted

⁴⁰⁹ Letter of instruction from the Local Government Board by Arthur Peel (25 November 1870) (hereafter LGB letter 1870) Page 8.

⁴¹⁰ LGB letter 1870 Page 6.

⁴¹¹ LGB letter 1870 Page 13.

from artificially high grain prices sustained by the Corn Laws,⁴¹² which heavily favoured domestic producers. However, these laws were repealed in 1846 in an effort to reduce the cost of living for the wider public. Repealing the Corn Laws led to a substantial increase in urban migration as farmers and smallholdings collapsed throughout the 50s and 60s. The middle classes associated these changes with the expansion of slum dwellings and trade unionism.

Child-welfare reformers hoped families still occupied in agriculture or skilled trade in rural areas would take up the task of caring for urban juvenile paupers. This aspiration was motivated by the hope such families would teach the children to be attached to the countryside rather than the overpopulated and largely unsanitary landscape of the East End.⁴¹³ Peel explained that the LGB still believed district schools was the best means of de-pauperisation for most children because it provided superior intellectual and industrial training (especially for boys), but conceded that for truly parentless children district schools left such children bereft of the benefits of family life.⁴¹⁴ I argue that narratives that fused concepts of familial and national belonging affected how long-distance fostering was interpreted by lawmakers and shifted the political significance of juvenile paupers from their value of being merely de-pauperised toward their value as legitimate English citizens.

As this happened, images of the rural poor were shared that were dramatically different from those of the urban poor. For example, when a sceptic of the system suggested there might be a shortage of suitable homes in the English countryside, another quickly replied that such assertions were ‘a reproach to our municipal and national legislation, and often, though not always, to the landlord’ but not a reproach on the rural poor.⁴¹⁵ The idea that middle-class

⁴¹² See the glossary of this thesis for a brief explanation of the Corn Laws.

⁴¹³ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 196-97.

⁴¹⁴ LGB letter 1870 Page 13.

⁴¹⁵ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 195.

interests in the law or property ownership were capable of contributing to the problems of the urban poor was wholly absent from the ins and outs discourse because they were seen as solely responsible for their own misfortune. In contrast, the rural poor were presented as noble working-class citizens and sharply compared to the urban poor who were consistently presented as morally and physically diseased.

However, by the time foster care reached its height at the close of the nineteenth century, even the urban poor were beginning to be presented as national citizens instead of mere slum dwellers as they had been depicted throughout the 1860s and 70s. One Guardian from the Eastbourne Poor Law union told the LGB in 1896 that ‘home training is what has made our English working classes as good as they are [because] children develop self-dependence, resourcefulness and thriftiness’.⁴¹⁶ The language of race, parenthood and citizenship merged into the wider political vocabulary and by the start of the twentieth century Poor Law children were increasingly known as ‘the children of the state’ rather than ‘street arabs’ or ‘vagrants’.⁴¹⁷ Trends in science like environmental eugenics exacerbated middle-class anxieties that poor communities like those in the East End were accelerating the deterioration of the English race and needed help instead of punishment.⁴¹⁸ Such fears fuelled support for alternative forms of public childcare, that were more closely aligned to family units, because child-welfare reformers started to see a child’s domestic space as a bigger determinant of their adult citizenship than their biological origins.

Foster care was one of several post-1870 systems of public childcare that was designed to incorporate disadvantaged children into respectable society by use

⁴¹⁶ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 91.

⁴¹⁷ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Page 25; Hendrick, *Child Welfare* Page 85.

⁴¹⁸ Richard M. Titmuss, ‘The social environment and eugenics’ (1944) 36 *The Eugenics Review* 53.

of spatial controls. However, it never became as prominent in England as fostering in Scotland and Ireland because it was never made available to ‘other’ children and remained plagued with controversy about its effectiveness as a means of moral reform. This chapter will show that in practice some of the LGB’s policies on foster care were closely adhered to whereas others were not. Although it appears the Guardians sometimes classified children as deserted who did not meet with the PLB’s definition of desertion, Islington’s Boarding Out Agreements show that this union only sent truly parentless children to foster homes. There is no evidence to suggest that the Guardians used resolution powers to convert ‘other’ children into the parentless class so that they could be sent to foster homes. This was an important finding because some reformers argued this would be administratively efficient.⁴¹⁹ However, the evidence from this study suggests the Guardians only made children whose parents were dead, had disappeared, were incarcerated or had gone abroad available to foster-care committees. It also appears the Guardians complied with the LGB’s request for small communities. None of the children from this study were sent to areas with populations in excess of 7,000 inhabitants and most were sent to communities with less than 1,000.

It is important to note that decisions with respect to the selection of children for fostering, or the community size in which they were placed, were exclusively within the remit of the Guardians who were part of the Poor Law framework as opposed to the committees who were not. It is therefore unsurprising that they complied so closely with the few recommendations within their control. However, local residents who volunteered to serve as foster-care committee members conducted the bulk of administration and flouted the law in a number of ways. The law imposed very few controls on the formation of foster-care committees, or eligibility criteria for being a committee member, aside from a preference for persons of ‘respectability and disinterestedness’.⁴²⁰ This meant

⁴¹⁹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 314-316.

⁴²⁰ LGB letter 1870 Page 9.

the only influence the LGB had over the committees was to refuse to allow the formation of a particular committee altogether, or dissolve the committee if they breached the law.⁴²¹

Seven years later the law was amended to require all committees to have at least three members and to sign undertakings that they would comply with the law.⁴²² The LGB annual report of 1870 stated ‘the [general] order is founded on the assumption of voluntary associations being formed for the purpose of co-operating with the Board of Guardians in providing and superintending homes for pauper children [...] for the purpose of the legal requirements attaching to the work which they undertake’.⁴²³ However, no penalties were attached to breaches of undertakings, which I argue happened regularly. Volunteers used their discretion to create substitute families that did not reflect pre-industrial life and because the households most willing to open their doors to middle-class scrutiny rarely fitted with such ideals. Such families were not only poor, but often lived as precariously as the urban families that strategically used district schools to cope. I argue that most foster parents were motivated to become foster parents in order for the benefits of money or cheap labour because they too needed coping strategies during this period of severe austerity.

4.2. Compliance with the law: parentless children in rural villages

The tripartite classification system signalled who was eligible for long-distance fostering and who needed to be accommodated in district schools or workhouses. Chapter 3 discussed how labels were sometimes misapplied and did not accurately reflect parental circumstances as evidenced by the discovery of orphan and deserted children with known parents within the SMSD and ‘other’ children with no listed next of kin. These mislabelled children were

⁴²¹ GO 1870 (Article VII).

⁴²² GO 1877.

⁴²³ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 14.

comparatively small groups of children when presented within the wider SMSD population, but they clearly illustrate how the tripartite system could be applied imperfectly and such mistakes could lead to the fostering of children with on-going parental relationships. This chapter uses the Boarding Out Agreements of Islington Poor Law union to investigate how the authorities and the local foster-care committees exercised their decision-making powers.⁴²⁴ The evidence shows that the Poor Law authorities largely complied with the law but that voluntary committee members regularly breached their promises to the LGB.

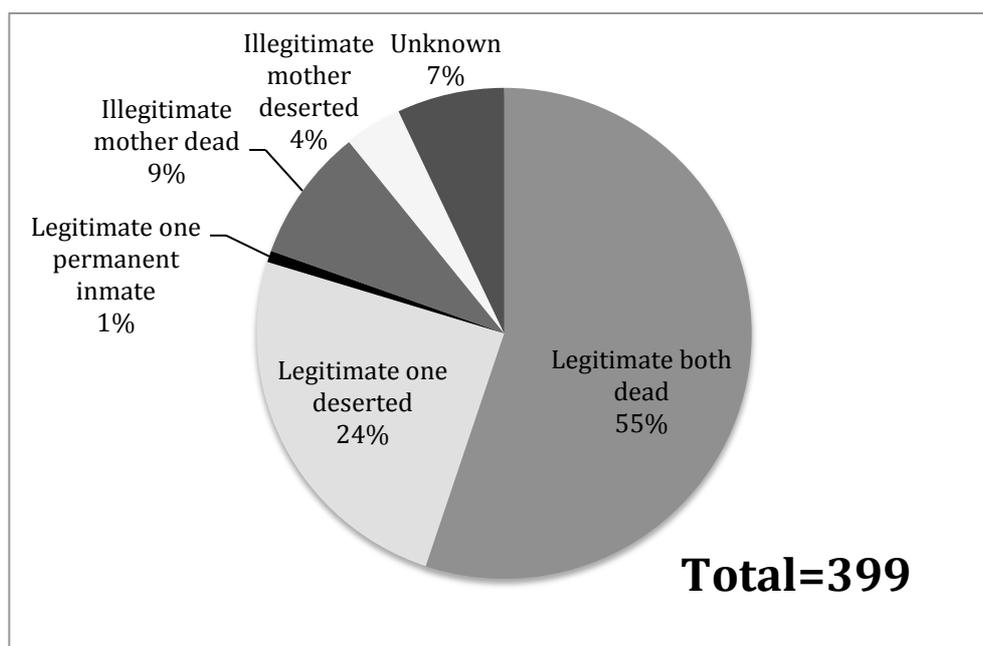
Islington was one of the biggest unions in London and sent hundreds of children to the countryside between 1889-1900. The Islington Guardians recorded very limited information in their logbooks about each foster arrangement, but did at least generally include the child's name, age and classification, along with the foster parents' names/address and local committee. Sample two was composed of 399 children who were sent from Islington union to foster homes around the country between 1889-1900.⁴²⁵

Interestingly, a more nuanced classification system emerged from the foster care records than was observed in the records created by the SMSD. The Guardians not only noted if a child was an orphan or deserted, but also recorded details of

⁴²⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁴²⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

Figure 4.1 Sample two parental circumstances



their birth legitimacy and the whereabouts of their parents to demonstrate their compliance with the law. It appears that the Islington Guardians took a very cautious approach when selecting children from their juvenile pauper populations (see figure 4.1).⁴²⁶ Over half had lost both parents and almost a quarter had lost one parent to death and the other to desertion, whereas a minority had a parent incarcerated or no recorded information. Unlike the district school sample discussed in chapter 3, there were no anomalies in this group where children were erroneously classified as parentless. The LGB's letter of instruction gave a clear cautionary warning that it was 'important on all grounds to avoid severing or weakening in any way the ties of family, even where owing to the character of the parents, it might be thought that the children would benefit by removal from their control'.⁴²⁷

Initially cost-savings were not a driving force in the decision to expand foster care. The foster care system was considerably cheaper to administrate than the

⁴²⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁴²⁷ LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

district school system, and yet the system never accommodated much more than 2,000 children at its height.⁴²⁸ The LGB estimated the annual cost of accommodating one child in a district school to be approximately 29 pounds five shillings and six pence in 1897, whereas the annual cost for sending a child to foster care was approximately 13 pounds six shillings and eight pence.⁴²⁹ Nassau Senior tried to persuade the LGB of the benefits of cost savings, but Tufnell extinguished the value of her submissions by explaining that the system could not deal with the most prevalent classes of children in the system (e.g. ‘other’ children) unless further amendments to law were made. Later, cost was one of several reasons why alternatives such as cottage homes became exceptionally popular by the turn of the century with an annual cost of approximately 15 pounds 12 shillings. Although cottage homes were still more expensive than foster care they were far less controversial. Cottage homes were considered far more attractive by some because they allowed chargeable children to remain under the supervision of the authorities and they could accommodate ‘other’ children.⁴³⁰

There were almost 70,000 children who were chargeable to the Poor Law by 1907.⁴³¹ Alternative systems offered substantial savings without the need to introduce a broader deregulated foster care system, such as that as seen in Scotland. The Scottish system allowed for children of any class or age to live in a foster home outside the union if they became chargeable to a Poor Law union for any period and was widely used. Scottish law required the authorities to return children if their parents sought custody, but the courts often refused to enforce parental rights if they had not improved their habits.⁴³² Foster-care

⁴²⁸ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 7.

⁴²⁹ Jane Nassau Senior’s Report, *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-second Annual Report 1869-70* (C (1st series)) Pages 116-117.

⁴³⁰ *The Local Government Board: Seventh Annual Report 1877-78* (C (2nd series)) Pages 42-44.

⁴³¹ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 5.

⁴³² There is no direct evidence of this claim but rather is an observation noted by child-welfare reformer Florence Davenport Hill in 1889. See Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 155.

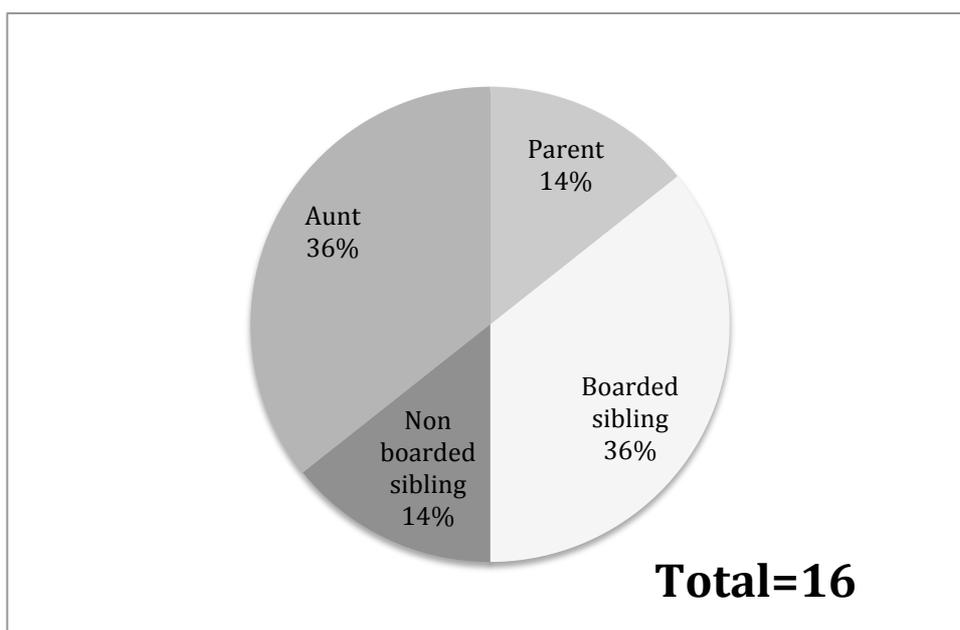
advocates praised the Scottish system for its ability to normalise substitute families and create an affordable system of public childcare that was capable of accommodating all types of juvenile paupers. However, Tufnell and his supporters argued that a system as deregulated as Scotland's risked undermining the sanctity of the English family. Both sides of the debate used inconsistent language when discussing the value of biological relationships of children under the care of the Poor Law. It is curious that the same commentators that generated the ins and outs discourse (which presented the parents of 'other' children as disreputable contaminants) also criticised the expansion of foster care on the basis it could infringe inviolable relationships within poor families.

None of the children from sample two had on-going parental relationships. Yet, the wider evidence suggests biological relationships amongst the working classes were more robust than the Victorian middle classes had assumed,⁴³³ and therefore it should be unsurprising that some of them reunited with biological family members as adults (see figure 4.2).⁴³⁴ Only 16 children from the 399 children in sample two (four per cent) returned to a family member's home after they ceased to be chargeable. Most of them went to the homes of an aunt or a sibling who had also been fostered by the Guardians; but two were reunited with a biological

⁴³³ A., Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth century England* (Palgrave 1999); Taylor, 'Poverty, Emigration and Family'.

⁴³⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901-1911.

Figure 4.2 Sample two biological reunions after foster care



parent after care. The children's names were Frank and Arthur Hollidge and their case history is an illustration of how a child could have an on-going relationship with a parent but still comply with the law. The boys' parents' marriage broke down when they were young, which set in motion a series of events that culminated in their admission to St John's Road workhouse in Islington.⁴³⁵ They were born to Frank Senior and Florence Hollidge in the mid 90s but the 1901 census showed that they lived with their mother on 71 Studley Road in Lambeth.⁴³⁶ Other sources imply marital breakdown might have been the cause of admission because it is clear that both parents survived and their father did not in fact permanently desert them. Florence was described in the 1901 census as married despite her husband's absence, but two weeks later Frank Senior admitted the children to a local school and admission officials noted the children lived on Studley Road without him.⁴³⁷ Three years later the

⁴³⁵ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1659-1930; Reference Number: ISBG/283/059.

⁴³⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 416; Folio: 85; Page: 7.

⁴³⁷ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; School Admission and Discharge Registers; Reference: LCC/EO/DIV08/STBAR/AD/002.

boys were found wandering the street near their grandfather's residence and were taken to the Greenwich workhouse by police. Their admission document named their grandfather as their next of kin, but did not mention either parent.⁴³⁸

Six months later they were transferred to St John's Road workhouse in Islington where the Guardians classified them as deserted and recorded their mother's name along with an address for their father in South Africa.⁴³⁹ The records imply their mother had disappeared and their father was abroad, which fitted within the PLB's definition of desertion and the Guardians arranged for them to be fostered at the ages of eight and 11.⁴⁴⁰ Three years later, Frank Senior returned from South Africa and sought custody of his sons.⁴⁴¹ The Guardians requested the boys be returned to Islington and three years later, the 1911 census showed Frank Junior and Arthur living in their birth community with their father.⁴⁴²

The Guardians could have used the PLA 1889 to resolve custody in their favour in order to resist Frank Senior's rights, but there is no evidence that suggests this happened to any children from sample two. Instead, it appears the Guardians actively avoided sending children with parental connections into foster care and complied closely with the requests of the LGB. The English system was fundamentally different from the Scottish system and as such often delayed fostering of potentially eligible children because the Guardians did not have sufficient information about their family circumstances to classify them

⁴³⁸ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1659-1930; Greenwich, Reference Number: GBG/250/38.

⁴³⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Pages 103-104.

⁴⁴⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Pages 103-104.

⁴⁴¹ The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; Board of Trade: Commercial and Statistical Department and successors: Inwards Passenger Lists; Class: BT26; Piece: 234; Item: 28.

⁴⁴² UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 6159; Schedule Number: 115.

appropriately. For example, Gertrude and Maud Denson were admitted to the St John's Road workhouse in Islington on 14th September 1888 at the ages of eight and ten without any information in their records explaining their circumstances.⁴⁴³ Admission officials left them unclassified and sent them to a district school because there was too much ambiguity surrounding their background to consider alternatives.⁴⁴⁴ The girls stayed in the district school for one year and when the Guardians were alerted to their mother's death, they were immediately placed into a foster household outside London.⁴⁴⁵

The Guardians also approached the LGB's preference for unpopulated areas with equal consistency. Unlike the controls on eligibility, this request was merely made in the letter of instruction and never incorporated into law. The Board retained the right to reject formation requests and could simply decline requests from volunteers in large towns or cities. There were 292 approved foster-care committees that were responsible for the selection and supervision of the entire scheme throughout England during the late-nineteenth century.⁴⁴⁶ Islington worked with 13 of them between the years of 1889 and 1908, but this study only looks at children admitted before 1900.⁴⁴⁷ Most of the communities were over 60 miles from the union border and almost a quarter of them were over 100 miles from the reach of the Islington authorities (see figure 4.3).⁴⁴⁸ They included Croxton in Cambridgeshire, Grafham in Huntingdonshire, Emberton in Bedfordshire, Denmead in Hampshire, Steep in Hampshire, Hampton in Arden in Warwickshire, Marston Moretaine in Bedfordshire, Flitwick in Bedfordshire, Henfield in West Sussex, Toddington in Bedfordshire, Honiton in Devon, Mildenhall in Suffolk and Ringwood in

⁴⁴³ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1659-1930; Islington, Reference Number: ISBG/271/004.

⁴⁴⁴ London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1659-1930; Islington, Reference Number: ISBG/271/004.

⁴⁴⁵ PLBG; Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; Page 5.

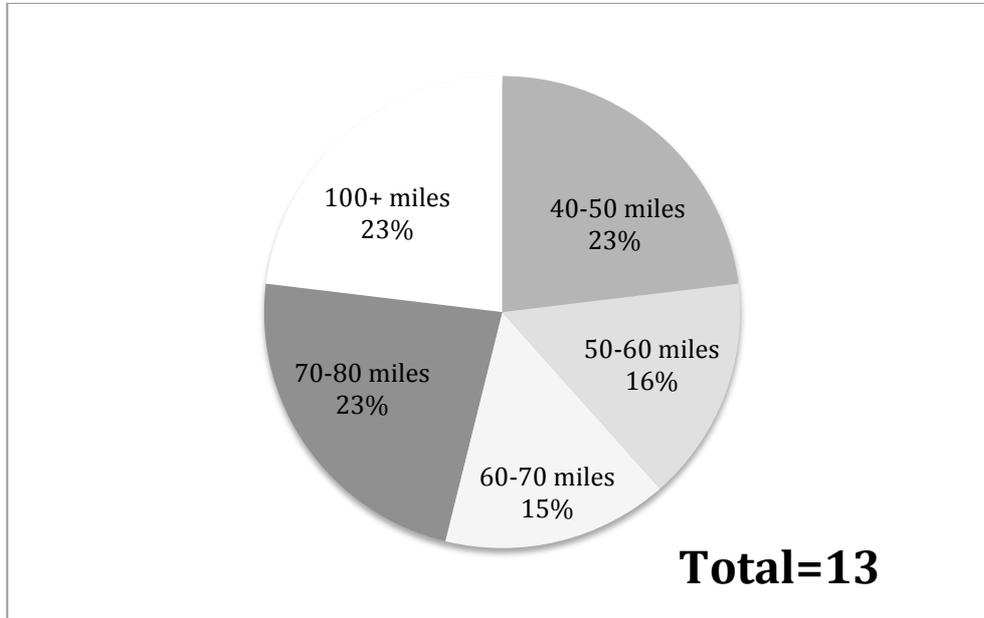
⁴⁴⁶ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 7.

⁴⁴⁷ PLBG; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁴⁴⁸ PLBG; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

Hampshire. Flitwick was the closest location to Islington in the sample, being 42 miles from Islington, while Honiton was the furthest being 165 miles away. Most of the committees that the Islington

Figure 4.3 Distances between Islington Poor Law Union and foster parishes



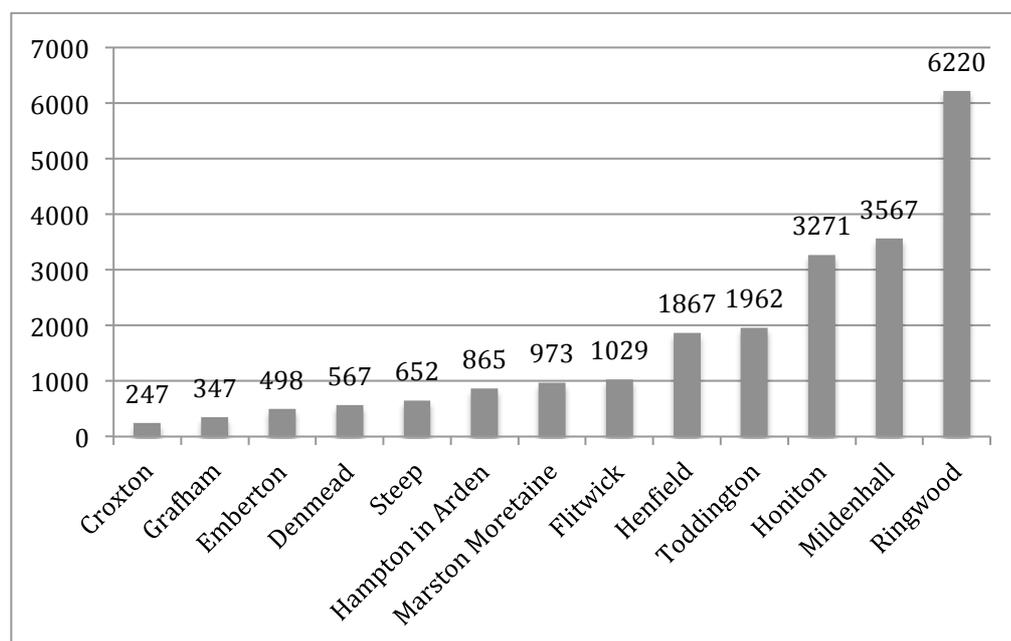
Poor Law union worked with were in the Southeast or Southwest; none were located north of Warwickshire. The LGB wanted children sent as far from their origins as possible so that they would not be tempted to abscond from their foster homes and return to their birth communities. Evidence from the Scottish system showed children over the age of ten were the most likely candidates to run away and the Guardians feared this would not only fail to satisfy reformation ideals but could increase their chances of returning to the workhouse.⁴⁴⁹

The law requested that priority be given to young children to reduce the risks of absconding but, as this chapter will show, the ages of children was one of many areas that committee members in their discretion deliberately opted for older

⁴⁴⁹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 158.

children.⁴⁵⁰ Despite this, children did not appear to run away in significant numbers. While the railway system expanded substantially throughout the 1880s in order to put rural communities within 25 miles of a link to London,⁴⁵¹ even third-class travel remained prohibitively expensive. Journeys in excess of 40 miles usually equated to a week's wages for the average farm labourer, making it considerably beyond the means of most foster children.⁴⁵² Yet again, spatial

Figure 4.4 Foster parish populations during the 1901 census



controls were used to create barriers between juvenile paupers and their birth communities to assist in their rehabilitation. The law required the Guardians to issue a set of clothes to each child when they were sent to a home.⁴⁵³ It mandated that these clothes did not resemble workhouse uniforms or that the clothes give any indication of the children's background as paupers.⁴⁵⁴ This

⁴⁵⁰ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁴⁵¹ Victorian Railways Commissioners Act 1883 (Vict. 47 c.767).

⁴⁵² Aston Police Court, 'Birmingham Daily Post' *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900* 13042 (1900); British Labour Statistics, *Historical Abstract 1886-1914* (Department of Employment and Productivity 1971).

⁴⁵³ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁴⁵⁴ LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

level of detail was needed because foster care policy sought to merge the children into the general population, and the close reliance on small communities meant their true identity would otherwise have been known from the outset (see figure 4.4).⁴⁵⁵ The population statistics for the foster parishes were drawn from the 1901 census because that was the closest census to the period of time that most children from the sample arrived in their foster homes. Over half of the foster parishes had less than 1,000 inhabitants and, tellingly, the smallest communities usually received more children than the larger communities.

The four smallest villages accommodated 28 per cent of the children from sample two. These placements affected the villages' populations in different ways. For example, the Grafham Boarding Out Committee organised for eight households in Grafham village to receive 13 children from Islington workhouses on the same day in 1889, which raised the population from 407 to 420 overnight.⁴⁵⁶ By 1901, 16 of the 85 households in the village had juvenile paupers from Islington living in their homes, eight of them located next door to one other on Grafham High Street.⁴⁵⁷ Grafham was highly dependent on agricultural work. Over half its inhabitants were occupied in farm labour during the 1881 census and over 80 per cent were working-class cottagers.⁴⁵⁸ It was one of many areas heavily affected by the Corn Law repeals and saw its population decline from 426 in 1851 to 347 by 1901 as urban migration trends took hold.⁴⁵⁹ Located in a remote part of the South Downs, most residents in the community depended on the land for their livelihoods and struggled to retain

⁴⁵⁵PLBG; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901.

⁴⁵⁶ PLBG; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 11.

⁴⁵⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 972; Folio: 55.

⁴⁵⁸ GB Historical GIS | University of Portsmouth, Grafham CP/AP through time | Industry Statistics | Occupational data classified into the 24 1881 Orders; Plus sex, A Vision of Britain through Time.

⁴⁵⁹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1851 and 1901; Occupational statistics UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1831.

skilled labourers once the economic consequences of industrialisation had set in.

Modern scholars have extensively surveyed the effects of urban migration on late-Victorian England and their findings show the LGB's assumption that rural villages were full of skilled independent labourers were probably overstated because often the most qualified and able-bodied workers were the ones that migrated to cities. Labour markets were extremely efficient at recruiting the most skilled.⁴⁶⁰ Approximately half a million people internally migrated each decade throughout the late-nineteenth century from small villages like Grafham and eight of the 13 foster parishes from this survey experienced notable population reductions between the 1851 and 1901 censuses. Grafham and Emberton lost over ten per cent of their inhabitants and larger communities like Honiton lost as much as 16 per cent over that period.⁴⁶¹

Child-welfare reformers did not engage with issues of diminishing rural populations in their policy literature on juvenile de-pauperisation. Some reformers suggested there might be a shortage of suitable homes because English cottagers were of lesser quality than Scottish peasants. However, these fears were officially rejected during a public meeting between parliamentarians, reformers and middle-class activists who met to discuss the expansion of the system.⁴⁶² The meeting concluded that there were plenty of suitable rural cottagers in England respectable enough to house pauper children who would hopefully be motivated by both 'God and the financial rewards' from foster care.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶⁰ Jason Long, 'Rural-Urban Migration and Socioeconomic Mobility in Victorian Britain' (2005) 65 *The Journal of Economic History* 1.

⁴⁶¹ UK Census Collections England and Wales 1851 and 1901.

⁴⁶² 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system'.

⁴⁶³ 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system' Page 27.

Lawmakers were deeply uncomfortable with the idea that committee volunteers might be financially motivated and reflected this in law by prohibiting them from ‘deriving any pecuniary or other personal profit’.⁴⁶⁴ They placed no such restrictions on foster parents. English agriculture continued to be badly affected by falling grain prices, fuelled by huge surpluses from the continent and North America flooding the market. Many domestic farmers struggled to retain ownership of their land. I argue that foster care was a means of alternative income for poor rural families because they too were affected by the crusade against outdoor relief, along with the additional burdens of agrarian decline and urban migration.

Foster parents like Salter Alberry were particularly vulnerable in a market of falling prices. Salter fostered a number of children from Islington workhouses after he was forced to sell the family farm in Grafham and take up as an agricultural labourer on another farm.⁴⁶⁵ After a few years, Salter abandoned farming to pursue bricklaying, and had five children with his wife Ellen throughout the 1870s and 80s. But the demands of school-aged children and compulsory school fees took their toll, and on October 28th 1889 Salter signed an undertaking to raise sisters Georgina and Julia Wells as his own.⁴⁶⁶ The girls were aged four and seven at the time and similar in age to his biological children.

The Wells sisters stayed with the Alberrys until they reached working age and the Guardians arranged for them to be sent to service. The departure of the sisters meant Salter’s maintenance payments stopped. Salter immediately signed another undertaking to care for Charles Cook aged three, Maud Clabbon

⁴⁶⁴ GO 1870 (Article III).

⁴⁶⁵ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1851; Class: HO107; Piece: 1652; Folio: 523; Page: 11; GSU roll: 193557; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1861; Class: RG 9; Piece: 621; Folio: 39; Page: 7; GSU roll: 542673.

⁴⁶⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 11.

aged 11 and her sister Emily aged 13.⁴⁶⁷ By this time Salter was in his late 50s, but he continued to work as bricklayer until the Clabbon girls were sent to service in 1901. Fortunately, the Guardians agreed to let Charles stay with Salter once he reached employment age.⁴⁶⁸ The 1911 census shows Charles continued to live with Salter as an adult lodger for many years and worked as a cowman in Grafham.⁴⁶⁹ Unlike many foster parents from this sample, Salter conformed quite closely to the ideals of working-class identity that reformers envisioned because he lived in a small village, had a family and was an outdoor labourer.

Rural communities were adversely affected by the crusade against outdoor relief too but were additionally affected by losses of land and urban migration of their skilled labourers as seen in Grafham. Child-welfare reformers failed to engage with such issues in their policy directives about public childcare, and instead emphasised how cottagers could be morally incentivised to improve their domestic lives if they were given the opportunity to foster juvenile paupers from London. Davenport Hill explained in her revised edition of *Children of the State*:

‘It induces the cottagers themselves to make and to keep their houses more commodious and healthful when they find these conditions are necessary to enable them to obtain children, while they learn how such bettering may be done from persons of higher education with whom the system brings them into friendly intercourse.’⁴⁷⁰

It appears that the foster care system was indirectly intended to reform foster parents too because it provided monetary relief in exchange for middle-class intervention into their domestic spaces. Preferences for young parentless

⁴⁶⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 10.

⁴⁶⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 10.

⁴⁶⁹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 5295; Schedule Number: 47.

⁴⁷⁰ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 195.

children, small communities and prohibitions on large foster families or those in receipt of parish relief, allowed the law to incentivise certain types of poor families and exclude others. It was designed to reward those households that fitted with middle-class ideals by giving much needed financial relief, and punish those that did not, by denying them access to this stream of income. However, the system was administered so capriciously this does not appear to have happened.

4.3. Practical realities: rural cottagers were in need too

Decisions about a foster parents' suitability fell squarely within the remit of the foster-care committees who lived in the local parishes. The LGB requested that they be persons of 'respectability and disinterestedness' so that they would not use their discretion politically.⁴⁷¹ However, once a committee was formed the government had very little control over how they applied the law because there were no consequences for breach of an undertaking. In reality, there was nothing to prevent committee members from exercising significant discretion to accommodate the wishes of foster parents, and the evidence from this study suggests that this is exactly what they did.

The law focussed on two key aspects of foster care to improve the chances of moral reformation: the ages of the children and the identities of the foster parents.⁴⁷² Age restrictions were put in place for a number of reasons. Firstly, the LGB thought younger children would elicit more natural affection than school-aged children and such feelings would create ties similar to those experienced in biological families.⁴⁷³ They also believed younger children were at less risk of absconding and would be socially integrated by the time they were old enough to run away. However, Arthur Peel's letter of instruction

⁴⁷¹ LGB letter 1870 Page 9.

⁴⁷² GO 1870 (Article V) and LGB letter 1870 Page 13-14.

⁴⁷³ LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

revealed another motivation behind age policies that prioritised sending children out ‘as early as possible after infancy’.⁴⁷⁴ Peel explained that the LGB believed older children would possess ‘formed habits’ from their lengthy stays in workhouses and that this would make it impossible for fosterers to treat them as their own. The government wanted the scheme to produce stable substitute families where children could rely on their fosterers throughout their lives, and seek their support during periods of instability or hardship, instead of the state.⁴⁷⁵ The Scottish system had proved that children over ten years old were the most likely to abscond and return to their birth communities so the law restricted eligibility to children between the ages of two and ten.⁴⁷⁶

Foster parents continued to receive maintenance from the Guardians until the children entered the labour force or ceased to be chargeable at the age of 16 (whichever happened first). Sometimes, as was the case with Salter Alberry, foster parents requested to keep the children past the age of employment and the children continued to live in their foster homes as adult lodgers in lieu of maintenance. The Guardians selected children with the best physical and moral temperaments to increase their chances of being accepted by their fosterers, which exacerbated fears that the best children were being removed from the system and dooming district schools to failure.⁴⁷⁷

The Guardians were free to pick their preferred candidates for foster care but had no control over the ages or genders of the children because potential foster parents were allowed to request the types of children they wanted to accommodate directly from their local committee rather than the Poor Law authorities. Once a request was received, the Guardians were compelled to identify a child that met with the request irrespective of the regulations on age.

⁴⁷⁴ LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

⁴⁷⁵ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 158.

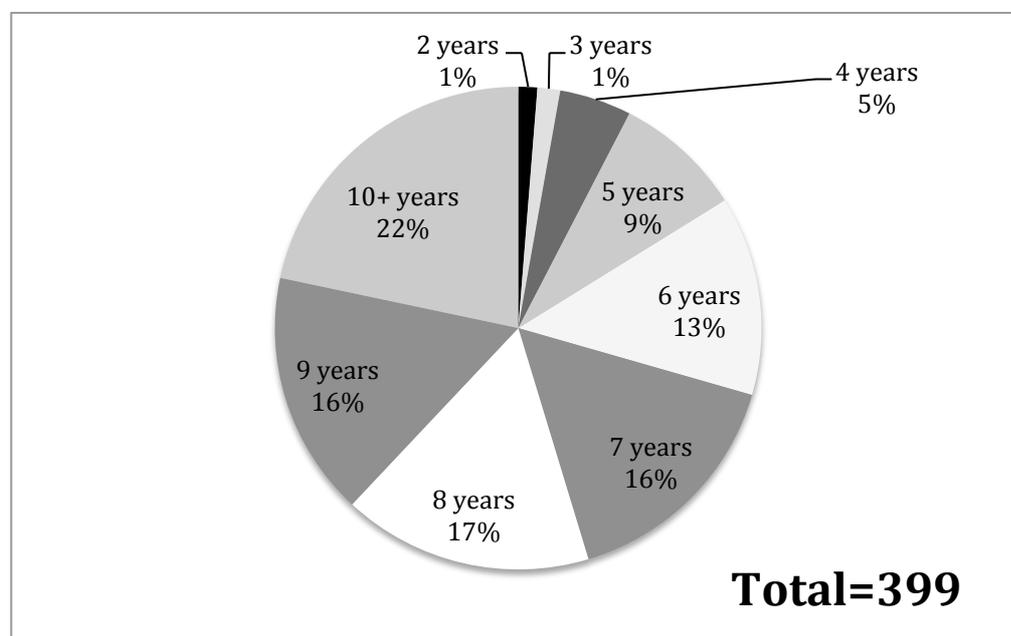
⁴⁷⁶ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁴⁷⁷ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Pages 207-208.

Committee members were responsible for a wide range of administrative tasks including the supervision of placements, contact with schoolmasters, physical inspections of children, drafting reports, payment of school fees/maintenance payments, organisation of a burial in the event of a child's death and resumption of custody if requested by the LGB, but their primary responsibility was to identify suitable homes.⁴⁷⁸

It appears committee members largely ignored the LGB's preference that fostering be reserved for younger children and were prepared to act in breach of

Figure 4.5 Ages of sample two children at the start of foster care



the 1870 legislation, which prohibited children over the age of ten being sent out (see figure 4.5).⁴⁷⁹ Only 7 per cent of the children from sample two were under the age of five (the preferred age) whereas 71 per cent were between five and ten years of age and 22 per cent were over ten years old (the age limit) when they started fostering. Not only did foster parents clearly not share the government's preference for children under the age of five, but also they

⁴⁷⁸ See the wording of undertakings in Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 410.

⁴⁷⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

actively preferred children who were approaching the end of their schooling. Lawmakers' aspirations for natural affections and lifelong interdependence within substitute families appears as misguided as their belief that most working-class families in the countryside conformed to pre-industrial ideals. Younger children required greater levels of care and imposed significant childcare demands that would have been unappealing for families that were already struggling. Older children were not only more self-sufficient, but they were also able to contribute to domestic economies through childcare or housework. Unsurprisingly, they were more popular amongst the poor than children under the age of five.

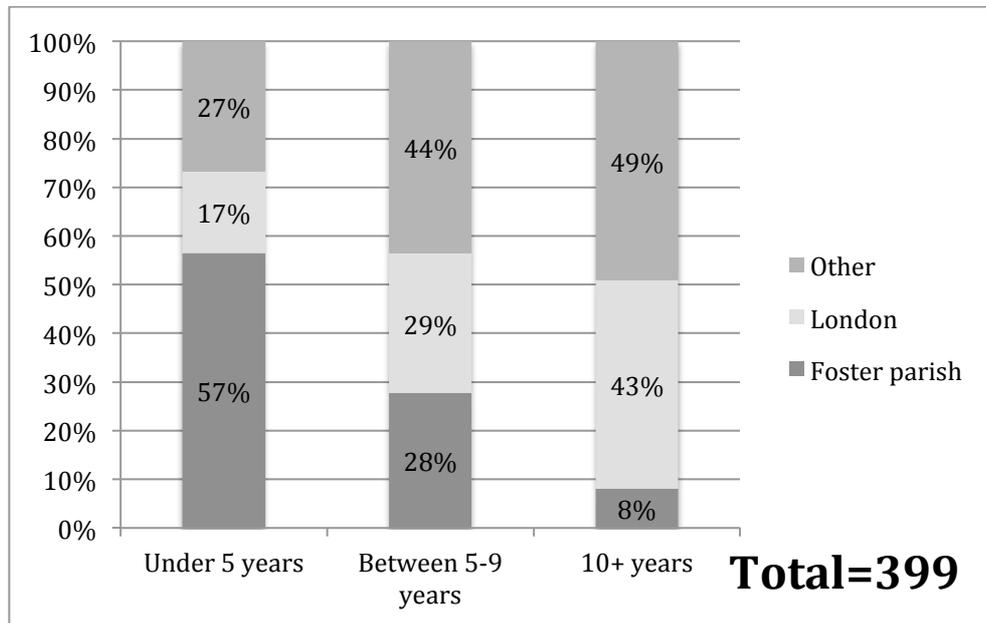
Reformers felt that young children would assimilate better in their new communities over the long term because they would not have acquired the undesirable habits associated with longer-term institutionalisation.⁴⁸⁰ The experience of the Scottish system had reinforced this belief. Scottish fosterers were asked to either adopt their charges at the age of 13, or allow them to be relocated to remote parts of Scotland to reduce the risk of them returning to their birth communities or the workhouse.⁴⁸¹ English child-welfare reformers were unwilling to request informal adoption from foster parents and instead focussed on policies that prioritised fostering for young children even though the *Guardians* had no control over the ages of potential foster children.

The promoted age policy was supported by empirical findings as substantially more young children stayed in their foster parishes over the long term, and older

⁴⁸⁰ 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system' Page 4.

⁴⁸¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 158.

Figure 4.6 Sample two adult locations organised by age at the start of foster care



children were more likely to return to their birth communities as adults (see figure 4.6).⁴⁸² Compulsory education ended at 13 years of age, so some of the older children from this sample would have had very little exposure to the national school in their parish and were thus deprived of opportunities to forge friendships and social ties in the new community unlike younger children.

For example, John Walker was six years old when the Guardians sent him to the home of Eliza Sparrow in 1899.⁴⁸³ Eliza was married to a retired shoemaker and lived in Mildenhall in Suffolk. The couple were in their mid 50s when they signed undertakings to care for John and a nine-year-old orphan named Robert White. Unfortunately, Eliza died two years after the boys moved in,⁴⁸⁴ which forced John to be relocated to another foster family in Mildenhall and for Robert to be returned to a district school because no suitable arrangements

⁴⁸² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

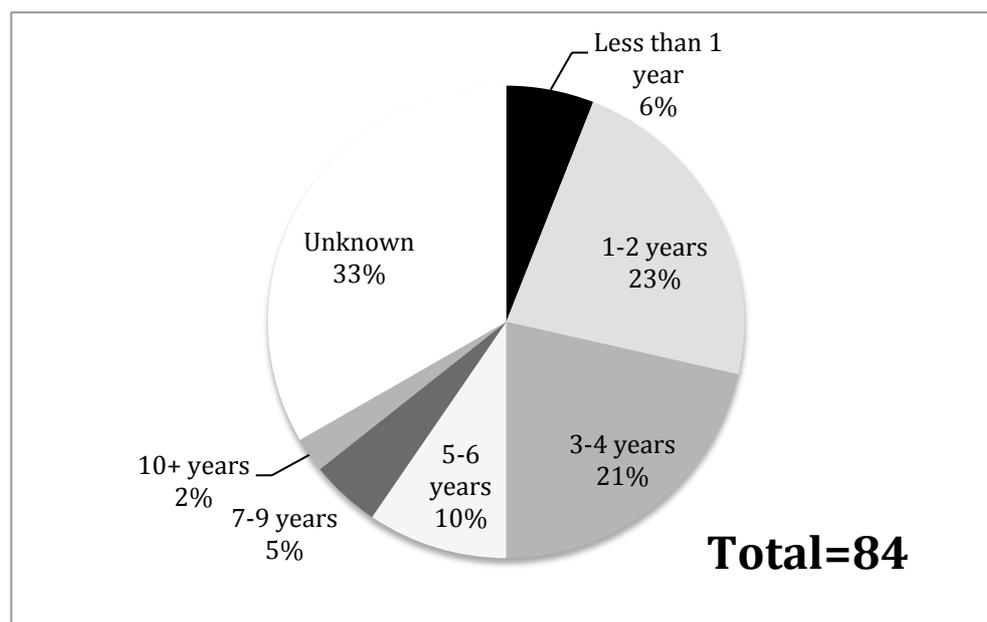
⁴⁸³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 33.

⁴⁸⁴ England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915: vol 4a; Page 515.

could be made in his foster community.⁴⁸⁵ It is unclear what happened to Robert in the meantime, but by the following census he had returned to Mildenhall to live with John in their own independent household.⁴⁸⁶ These kinds of foster-sibling relationships in adulthood were much less prevalent for children over the age of ten from sample two and suggests lawmakers' belief in the benefits of younger foster children had merit because younger children had more opportunity to develop bonds.

The data from the sample confirms that there was an inverse correlation between age and higher levels of integration over the long-term just as reformers had anticipated, based on the evidence of Scottish system. However, this did not

Figure 4.7 Placement durations for children over 10 years of age from sample two



necessarily mean that older children failed to assimilate. The data shows they often stayed with their foster parents once they ceased to be chargeable, which

⁴⁸⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 34.

⁴⁸⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 10661; Schedule Number: 79.

implies they were there by choice (see figure 4.7).⁴⁸⁷ Fears about the unsuitability of older children appear unfounded because not only were they more popular with fosterers than infants or toddlers, but many of them also stayed in their foster homes after they entered the workforce. Thirty-eight per cent of them stayed in their foster homes for at least three years whereas only six per cent left within six months of arrival.

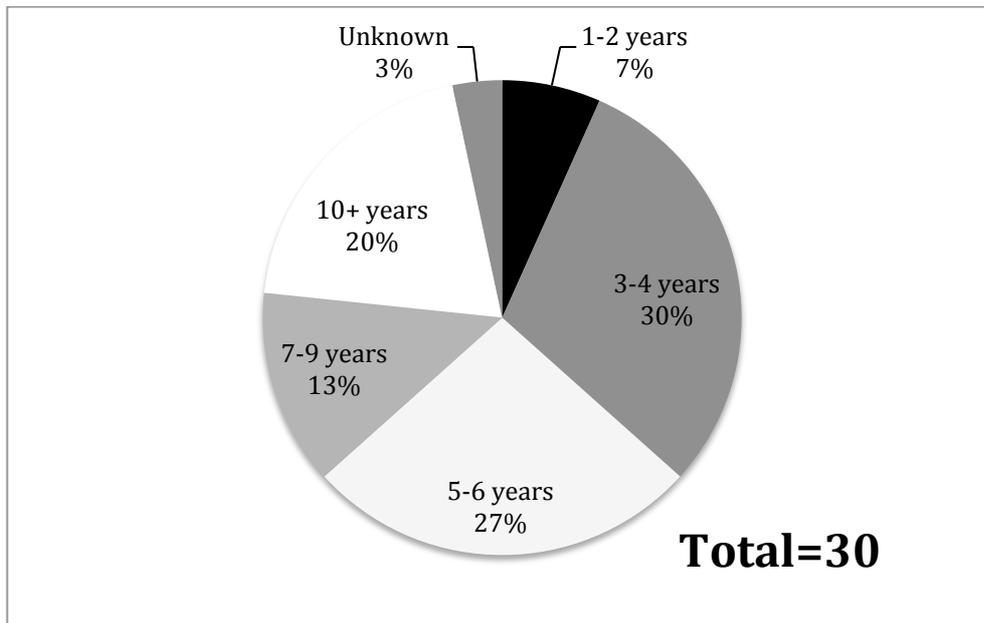
The fact older children often stayed in their foster homes as adults suggests that reformers' fears about older children were misplaced, and potentially, yet another illustration of their inability to consider the strategies employed by the poor to cope with their circumstances. Older children attracted the same level of financial support as younger children but without any of the childcare demands, and as I argue in chapter 6, older children often stayed in their foster homes as adult lodgers bringing in further necessary income. However, this finding may also provide an illustration of a trend historians such as Steven Taylor have observed, which is that poor children in good health were more likely to be strong workers and thus retained by the Canadian families that received from the English emigration societies.⁴⁸⁸ Taylor concludes that Victorian efforts to civilise children by sending them away from London often resulted in exploitation rather than reform. It is distinct possibility that this was also happening in the context of domestic long-term fostering.

The under-fives were the least popular age bracket amongst foster parents despite the law's preference for them as fostering candidates. Where younger children

⁴⁸⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁴⁸⁸ Taylor, 'Poverty, Emigration and Family' 97-101.

Figure 4.8 Placement durations for children under 5 years of age from sample two



were selected for fostering, their placements were generally more stable, just as reformers anticipated (see figure 4.8).⁴⁸⁹ Only seven per cent of placements for children under the age of five broke down within two years, whereas 57 per cent lasted between three and six years and a further 33 per cent lasted over seven years. Foster placements could come to an end for numerous reasons including the child being sent to service or at the request of the foster parent. I argue more placements ended following the death of foster parents than for any other reason because forty-six per cent of children who started foster care before the age of five moved following the death of a foster parent. This was surely an unintended consequence of committee members relying on older fosterers.

⁴⁸⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

Poor Law inspector Miss Mason told the LGB that the typical foster family was composed of a ‘working man and his wife with children of their own’.⁴⁹⁰ However, the evidence from this sample reveals a wholly different picture (see *Figure 4.9 Ages of foster parents of sample two children at date of undertaking*

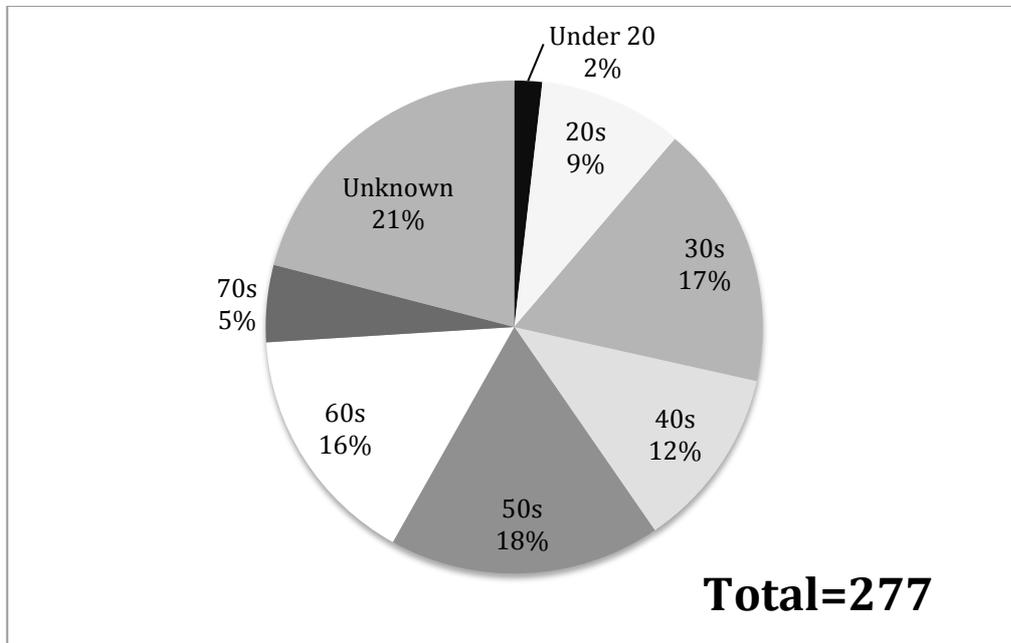


figure 4.9).⁴⁹¹ The average lifespan at the turn of the century was in the low 50s, yet 39 per cent of foster parents were over this age when they signed their first undertaking and 38 per cent were either widowed or unmarried.⁴⁹² Almost all of the sole foster parents of sample two children were women, another illustration of the gendered aspects of poverty and need during this period. It is worth noting that Miss Mason was involved in numerous movements at the same time, all centred on middle-class female activism,⁴⁹³ and as such she may not have understood the alternative family structures of the poor.

⁴⁹⁰ Miss Mason’s Report, *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 198.

⁴⁹¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁴⁹² Office for National Statistics.

⁴⁹³ Steven King, *Women, welfare and local politics, 1880-1920* (Sussex Academic Press 2006).

Such women took up fostering as a means of financial support to counter-balance the impact of reduced outdoor relief.⁴⁹⁴ Older widows usually provided more stable placements compared to younger fosterers within the cohort, and children were usually only removed from their care because the child ceased to be chargeable or when the foster mother died. Widowed foster mothers almost exclusively requested older girls.⁴⁹⁵ Only one child under the age of five from sample two was placed with a widowed foster mother, and even she had two sisters over the age of ten who joined her and thus was part of a more desirable sibling group. It seems that older working-class women viewed the foster care system as a legitimate occupation in its own right. For example, 74-year-old Rhoda Poat told census enumerators that her job she was ‘keeping children’,⁴⁹⁶ while 60-year-old Esther Salter told them she was ‘living on charity’,⁴⁹⁷ and 62-year-old Sarah Aldrich explained she was ‘living on children’s means’.⁴⁹⁸

Even younger widows who had thriving occupations seemed to rely on fostering as a means of additional income. Sarah Ann Graham was widowed in her mid 30s after the untimely death of her husband, and their only son had moved away. She ran a dressmaking business from her home in Toddington and signed her first undertaking with the Islington Poor Law union at the age of 37. Over the course of ten years she fostered six older girls from the Islington union in her four-bedroom house on the village high street.⁴⁹⁹ In 1894, she signed undertakings for sisters Nellie and Ada Barker who were aged 12 and eight. Nellie only stayed for two years because the Guardians arranged a service position for her when she turned 14. Sarah Ann agreed to foster 13-

⁴⁹⁴ See connection with the writings of Frost, “Your Mother Has Never Forgotten You” and Frost ‘The kindness of strangers revisited’.

⁴⁹⁵ PLBG; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁴⁹⁶ The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Class: RG12; Piece: 847; Folio: 56; Page: 8.

⁴⁹⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891: Class: RG12; Piece: 1670; Folio: 102; Page: 9; GSU Roll: 6096780.

⁴⁹⁸ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891: Class: RG12; Piece: 1260; Folio: 153; Page: 18; GSU Roll: 6096370.

⁴⁹⁹ PLBG; Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; Pages 27-28.

year-old Alice Ann Russell as soon as Nellie left.⁵⁰⁰ Alice and Ada lived with Sarah Ann for seven years before the Guardians arranged for both girls to be sent to service positions prompting Sarah Ann to sign an undertaking for the care of Dorothy Mascall, Ethel Fuller and Jessie Linay who were all ten years of age at the time.⁵⁰¹ By this time Sarah Ann was in her early 50s, and the records show that she requested permission from the Guardians to delay sending all three girls to service so she could keep them a bit longer.⁵⁰² The Guardians agreed to her request on the condition that Sarah Ann taught them dressmaking and accept a reduced rate of maintenance. Sarah Ann agreed and the girls remained in her home until they were 16 years old.

Those in need of additional income or domestic assistance were more likely to act as foster parents than the idealised rural citizens envisioned by child-welfare reformers because they often needed financial or physical assistance. Aspiration for industrious self-sufficient fosterers is yet another example of Victorian misunderstandings about the reality of poverty during this period. Young adults rarely offered to foster children, and those that did were usually occupied in agriculture and thus requested older boys approaching the end of their education. The law gave preference to those engaged in outdoor labour, but it was equally concerned about fosterers exploiting their charges as cheap labourers. The LGB instructed committee members very clearly to supervise placements closely to ensure this did not happen.⁵⁰³

The law was amended again in 1889 and required that foster children were not placed in homes with more than five children in total, or with those who had received parish relief in the previous 12 months.⁵⁰⁴ These changes were

⁵⁰⁰ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; Pages 27-28.

⁵⁰¹ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; Pages 81, 83 and 85.

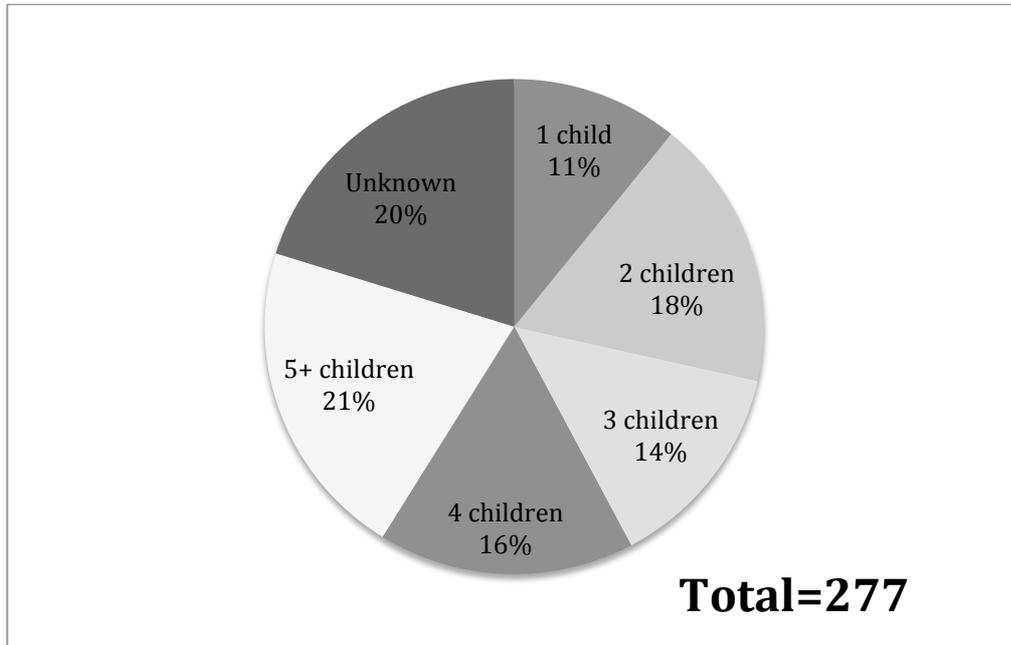
⁵⁰² PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; Pages 82 and 84.

⁵⁰³ LGB letter 1870 Page 13.

⁵⁰⁴ GO 1889 (Article VI No. 3 & No. 4).

intended to prevent families that reformers felt resembled the identities of the juvenile paupers' birth origins from acting as their foster carers, but yet again

Figure 4.10 Total number of children in foster households of sample two children



committee members were prepared to use their discretion widely (see figure 4.10).⁵⁰⁵ Over one fifth of the children from sample two were placed in homes with more than five children already present and relatively few were placed in small families as hoped. Lawmakers disdained overcrowded homes because they threatened spatial controls that were perceived to protect the morality and sexuality of respectable families.

Lawmakers also feared overcrowded homes could lead to a return to the 'farming out crisis' of the 1860s if fosterers were allowed to care for unlimited numbers of children.⁵⁰⁶ During the 1850s and 60s, numerous vulnerable mothers often gave up infants and young children to 'baby farmers' who permanently 'adopted' their children for a set fee. Unfortunately, in most cases

⁵⁰⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

⁵⁰⁶ LGB letter 1870 Page 9.

the children were left to starve or neglected to the point that they died. The most infamous of these was Margaret Waters who killed numerous children in her flat in Brixton and was brought to justice at the Old Bailey on 18th September 1870.⁵⁰⁷ Police found over a dozen starved and neglected children in her property along with two dead babies, leaving many sections of society shocked. This crisis was instrumental in the development of the Infant Life Preservation legislation throughout the 1870s and child welfare reformers were anxious that long-distance fostering should never provide a cover for similar activities.

When foster care was first established, some child-welfare reformers were more comfortable than others about foster parents being incentivised by money. One declared at the public meeting between reformers and law-makers cited above that ‘if a person has a room, and gives it to a lodger, it would not be thought wrong if she were to receive rent [...] so if she were to let it to a child, has she no right of remuneration?’⁵⁰⁸ But others insisted fosterers should only be motivated by moral compunction for their fellow working-class citizens [...]

‘This is no money speculation; this child has lost its parents; we give it to you, and ask you to treat it as one of your own children, and to remember that if you were taken away from your own children, they would have to go to the workhouse, of which you have such dread.’⁵⁰⁹

Given the sources used, I was unable to explore if committee members breached prohibitions on letting families who had received parish relief to the same extent as they ignored controls on large families or age restrictions. However, inferences can be drawn from their broadly unaccountable approach to administration that this was a distinct possibility.

⁵⁰⁷ Old Bailey: Deception: Fraud: 19th September 1870: Margaret Waters: Reference Number: t18700919-769.

⁵⁰⁸ ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Page 27.

⁵⁰⁹ ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Page 26.

The lack of any consequences for a breach of an undertaking played a pivotal role in committees' broad use of discretion. As parishes were forced to withdraw further support from those in need within their communities, mechanisms like foster care offered an alternative form of welfare provision. Although outdoor relief was starting to rise again by the late 1880s, it appears the rural working classes continued to pursue alternative means of income such as fostering pauper children from London. In 1876, the Speaker of the House of Commons warned Parliament 'the agricultural labourer has come to rely on out-relief as his pension in old age – a most evil habit, injurious alike to master and man. The effect of the system is to deter men from saving.'⁵¹⁰ This meant even those who managed to hold onto their land after the Corn Law repeals but were unable to farm it were also deemed undeserving of support, as in the case of Annie Marie Sawday.

Annie was a widow who ran a farm in Combe Raleigh just outside the village of Honiton. She had five children under the age of ten but managed to retain the family 168-acre farm, despite the changes in the law, by employing farmhands to help.⁵¹¹ As budgets grew tighter she reduced the number of farmhands but ultimately downsized to a smaller farm a mile down the road in the hamlet of Awliscombe.⁵¹² By this time, two of her children had completed school, but three of them remained in full-time education so Sarah Ann signed an undertaking to care for 13-year-old Henry Patey.⁵¹³

Henry had previously lived with an elderly farming couple in Honiton but had been forced to change homes following their deaths. At the age of 13, he was

⁵¹⁰ Kim Price, 'The crusade against out-relief: a nudge from history' (2011) 399 *The Lancet* 988.

⁵¹¹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 2131; Folio: 79; Page: 4; GSU roll: 1341514.

⁵¹² UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891: Class: RG12; Piece: 1670; Folio: 64; Page: 1; GSU roll: 6096780.

⁵¹³ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/305/01: Page 23.

technically too old to be in foster care because he should have been sent to work. However, the Honiton committee arranged for him to be sent to Annie Sawday because she wanted to foster an older male. Sarah Ann also fostered children from other Poor Law unions, all of which were older males as well. It appears she treated the foster care system as a method of agricultural assistance and described her charges as servants to census enumerators.⁵¹⁴ Most foster parents used terms such as ‘boarder’, ‘orphan’ or ‘adopted child’ to explain the presence of urban juvenile paupers in their households. It was definitely unusual for them to be openly described as servants.

The Honiton committee clearly defied the regulations on age and large families because Henry was over ten years old and sent to a home with more than five children present. Committee members promised the LGB they would ‘truly and faithfully observe the regulations which are prescribed in the orders of the Local Government Board’ but the evidence from this study suggests local volunteers were willing to ignore the law in order to facilitate placements that met with the needs of fosterers.⁵¹⁵ People like Annie Sawday would have been eligible for some form of outdoor relief before crusaders tightened access, but the burdens of widowhood, childcare, farm labour and school fees took its toll.

Annie’s case history shows that contrary to what lawmakers anticipated, even fosterers who were not overtly financially motivated were in need too. Just like the urban poor in the East End, the rural working classes had to approach their limited options with considerable agency to minimise the impact of changes in the law.⁵¹⁶ Parents like Annie Sawday used the foster care system as a useful source of labour whereas widows like Rhoda Poat and Sarah Ann Graham used it as a direct form of employment. They all derived personal benefits from the

⁵¹⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 2021; Folio: 8; Page: 7.

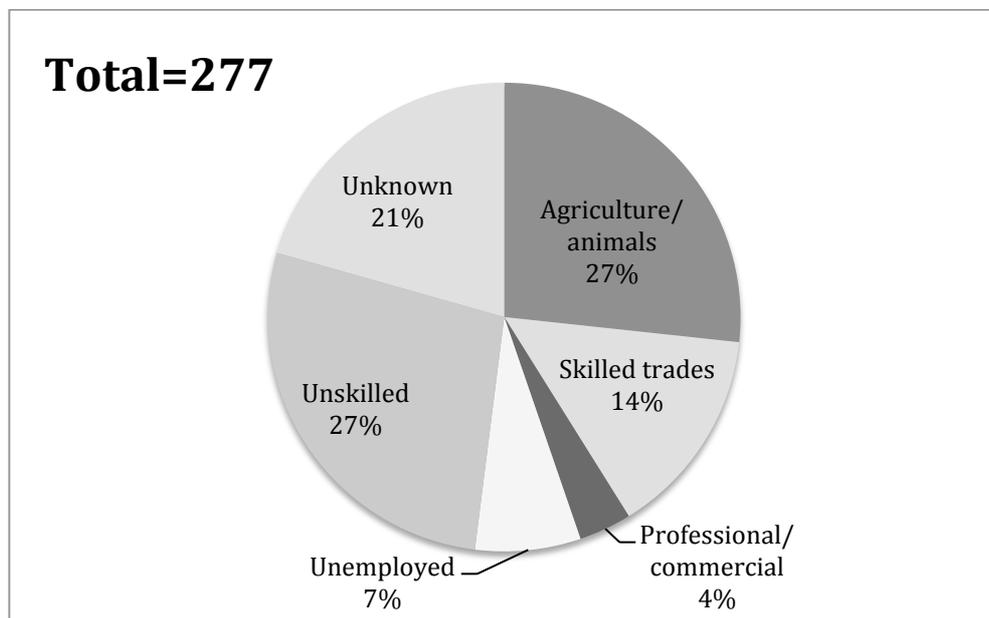
⁵¹⁵ See the wording of undertakings in Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 410.

⁵¹⁶ See figure 5.11 for information about the causes for Poor Law intervention within sample four.

system, which were officially not prohibited, because there was a fundamental lack of accountability built into the system.

Most foster parents thus fell foul of at least one provision of the law or policy guidance and many fell foul of all of them because they were single, had too many children, or were unskilled labourers. Arthur Peel's letter requested children never 'be boarded out in any home where the father is employed in night-work; and that in every case the foster-parents should be by preference

Figure 4.11 Occupational genres of foster parents of sample two children



persons engaged in outdoor, not sedentary labour'.⁵¹⁷ However, many foster-care committees authorised numerous placements with the unskilled or unemployed foster parents or those engaged in sedentary labour (see figure 4.11).⁵¹⁸ Twenty-seven per cent of the fosterer parents of children from sample two worked in agriculture, and a further 14 per cent worked in skilled trades like those taught in district schools, but just as many children were sent to households that were unskilled or unemployed. The LGB introduced

⁵¹⁷ LGB letter 1870 Page 13.

⁵¹⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891-1901.

occupational preferences because they wanted foster children to acquire similar skills in their domestic settings that they would have gained if they had stayed in district schools.

Davenport Hill explained ‘boys will profit by the status of their foster-father and be introduced as a son to his trade or calling, and [will] have picked up much experience in work by the time he reaches working age’.⁵¹⁹ However, seven per cent of foster parents were unemployed, widows or pensioners and four per cent worked in professional roles that offered no training benefits including teachers, parish relief officers and an inspector for the NSPCC.⁵²⁰ Arguably, these were respectable people to raise pauper children, but they failed to meet with reformers’ ambitions for outdoor labourers or skilled traders, which were critical features of the reformation project because most reformers believed the curriculum in national schools was insufficient to retrain the inherited habits of juvenile paupers.⁵²¹

The authorities responsible for shaping child-welfare policy during the late-nineteenth century were not attuned to the practical realities of the rural working classes as evidenced by the large number of unskilled foster parents working as general labourers, publicans, launderers, and engine drivers.⁵²² Just as the urban landscape shifted dramatically in response to social and industrial changes, so too did the landscape of the countryside.

Reformers envisioned village life as a pastoral ideal with clear class structures, where the working classes were tied to communal interests of land and trade.

⁵¹⁹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 200.

⁵²⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891-1901.

⁵²¹ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 90.

⁵²² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891-1901.

They failed to see many villages had lost such connections and instead were producing exactly the same sorts of class ties that the middle classes abhorred in the urban environment.⁵²³ Prioritisation of outdoor labourer and craftsmen was meant to serve a de-pauperising function similar to industrial training regimes in district schools ‘from a different direction’.⁵²⁴ But reformers overlooked the fact that manufacturing roles like shoemaking and dressmaking had declined throughout this period because automated factory processes had rapidly outstripped the productivity of independent workers. Lots of traditional crafts were unable to compete with industrialised output by the turn of the century and chapters 5 and 6 explore the consequences of this on the adult occupations of smaller cohorts of children from the SMSD and Islington records on foster care.

Reformers’ affection for village ideals were instrumental in long-distance fostering being introduced. However, these ideals ultimately had the largest impact on the development of cottage homes because long-distance fostering never became the majority option. Cottage homes had the benefits of being easier to supervise than long-distance foster care and cheaper to administer than district schools - plus they could accommodate all classifications of children.⁵²⁵ Although cottage homes were also under the control and management of the Poor Law authorities, they were much smaller than district schools and thus the dispute about best approaches remained focussed on the dichotomy of institutional versus family-based systems of public childcare.

Reformers on both sides of the debate wrongly assumed that the rural working classes were distinctly different than the urban poor because they were artisan - as contrasted to factory - labourers. They assumed foster parishes were pre-

⁵²³ See section 5.3 of this thesis for a discussion about the rise of trade union membership during this period and the opinions of child welfare reformers.

⁵²⁴ LGB letter 1870 Page 8.

⁵²⁵ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 205.

industrial havens and this prompted foster-care critics to focus their energies on the loss of direct supervision and the removal of the best children from district schools.⁵²⁶ Although long-distance foster care only accommodated just over 2,000 juveniles at its height it,⁵²⁷ the misplaced assumption that rural working classes were more able to preserve artisan trade practices than the urban working classes fuelled the desirability of the cottage home structure, which sought to replicate such ideals, but were largely untrue.

Statistics drawn from the 1881 census for England and Wales show most of the 13 foster communities that housed children from sample two had proportionately fewer artisan tradesmen than Islington. Most of the rural working classes in foster parishes were occupied in agricultural labour or unskilled work (see figure

Figure 4.12 Agricultural workers/skilled traders in foster parishes & Islington

Parish	Total workers	Agriculture	Artisan trades
Grafham	198	41 (21%)	28 (14%)
Croxton	152	39 (26%)	10 (7%)
Emberton	310	106 (34%)	61 (20%)
Denmead	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable
Steep	309	64 (21%)	29 (9%)
Hampton in Arden	363	77 (21%)	40 (11%)
Marston Moretaine	600	197 (33%)	266 (44%)
Flitwick	431	44 (10%)	162 (37%)

⁵²⁶ Tufnell, 'Education of Pauper Children'.

⁵²⁷ Macnamara, *A Report to the President* Page 7.

Henfield	939	218 (23%)	134 (14%)
Toddington	1,139	249 (23%)	473 (41%)
Honiton	1,754	115 (7%)	493 (28%)
Mildenhall	1,918	601 (31%)	206 (11%)
Ringwood	2,007	259 (13%)	425 (21%)
Islington	169,022	2,078 (1%)	45,091 (27%)

4.12).⁵²⁸ Twenty-seven per cent of Islington's labourers worked in skilled trades including books/prints, instruments/implements, furniture/decorations, carriages/harnesses, animal/vegetable/mineral substances or dress-related roles and unsurprisingly, only one per cent worked in agriculture.

As explained in chapter one, Humphries argues that poverty played a significant role in a person's life chances during this period because people born poor generally remained disadvantaged throughout their lives compared others.⁵²⁹ On the face of it, this particular finding supports her view because foster were raised in households from destitute than the other groups and thus had the worse outcomes. However, as the following two chapters will show, social mobility was possible during the late-nineteenth century depending on access to skills-based training during tertiary education. Only four of the foster parishes had proportionately more artisan traders than Islington including Marston Moretaine, Flitwick, Honiton and Toddington. However, these results were somewhat biased because the 24 occupational orders developed for the 1881 census report did not differentiate between dressmakers running businesses from home and those working as machinists in factories.⁵³⁰ This was

⁵²⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881; Occupational data based on the 24 orders used in the published reports of 1881.

⁵²⁹ Humphries, J., 'Memories of Pauperism' in Steven Kind and Anne Winter (eds) *Migration, Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500-1930s: Comparative Perspectives* (Berghahn Books 2013).

⁵³⁰ Occupational data based on the 24 orders used in the published reports of 1881.

a key distinction because home-based dressmaking was construed as an artisan trade that met with traditional ideals whereas factory-based sewing was the antithesis of reformation objectives. By comparison, Islington's artisans consistently met with ideals of traditional craftsmanship because most were occupied in hand-made furniture manufacture, hand-made decorations or purveying mineral and vegetable substances.

Ironically, traders within the community of Islington complied more closely with imagery of traditional crafts because they had more artisan traders than most foster parishes. To some extent this suggests foster care within Islington might have been a better option than long-distance fostering and the emphasis on small communities. However, rates of unskilled labour suggest the labouring classes in Islington had more in common with the labouring classes in the foster parishes than differences. Statistics from the 1881 report show substantial numbers in each community were either 'persons without specific occupations' or 'unknown occupations', which most likely meant they were unemployed or in casual work.⁵³¹

Assumptions about rural working-class identity are another example of child-welfare reformers misrepresenting the truth about the English poor during the late-nineteenth century. Rural families had to contend with the impact of welfare and educational reforms in the same way that urban families did, and contrary to the policy literature, they often led similarly unstable lives as the urban poor as seen with the experiences of the Silvester brothers. Following the death of their mother, Henry, Alfred and Frederick were admitted to the Liverpool Road workhouse in Islington on 17th February 1893 at the ages of eleven, nine, and seven respectively.⁵³² Their father was known to the *Guardians* but permanently abandoned them after his wife died. He relocated to

⁵³¹ Occupational data based on the 24 orders used in the published reports of 1881.

⁵³² London, England, Workhouse Admission and Discharge Records, 1659-1930; Islington, Reference Number: ISBG/284/10.

Portsmouth where he stayed until his death.⁵³³ This was one of the few examples where the Poor Law records showed the Guardians passed a resolution to acquire custody rights because their father was known to still be alive.⁵³⁴ The resolution made them eligible for foster care, and the following year they were sent to live with Jane Purser in a small cottage called The Grange in Toddington.⁵³⁵ Jane was another unemployed widow who had six children living at home. Her youngest four were still at school, while her eldest daughter worked as a bonnet-sewer and her eldest son worked as an agricultural labourer on a local farm.⁵³⁶ The family relied exclusively on the children's earnings and the money generated by Silvester boys' arrival.

Jane's approval as a suitable foster parent provides another illustration of the agency employed by the local committees because she had too many children in her house to comply with the general order of 1889. She was also unable to be self-supporting because she was out of work. A few years after the boys arrived, the rent on Jane's cottage was increased to two pounds and five shillings a month,⁵³⁷ which forced Jane to leave. Curiously, the care of the boys was transferred to the new tenants of The Grange named Job and Rebecca Archer.⁵³⁸ Job was in his sixties and had retired some years previously on a limited pension. Rebecca was unemployed, and the couple was solely dependent on Job's pension and the maintenance from the Guardians. Unfortunately, Job died two years after they became foster parents, and yet

⁵³³ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 978; Folio: 132; Page: 15.

⁵³⁴ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 44.

⁵³⁵ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 43.

⁵³⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891; Class: RG12; Piece: 1263; Folio: 39; Page: 1; GSU roll: 6096373.

⁵³⁷ Bedfordshire Archives and Records Service; Bedford, Bedfordshire, England; Bedfordshire Valuation Records; Reference Number: VLW1/13/1.

⁵³⁸ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Pages 43 and 72.

again, the incoming tenant of The Grange signed an undertaking for the boys' care.⁵³⁹

By this time Henry was 14, Alfred was 12 and Frederick was ten. Given their ages it would have been appropriate for the committee to return the boys to Islington and send them to a district school. Instead, they allowed 20-year-old Rebecca Buckingham to sign an undertaking for their care in 1899.⁵⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the *Guardians'* notes are too illegible to know what arrangements were made once the boys entered employment; but the turbulent experiences of the Silvester children shows how rural families could be just as destabilised as urban families by events such as spousal death, housing crises or employment problems.⁵⁴¹ All three sets of foster parents struggled to support themselves for different reasons that ultimately affected their ability to foster children. The combined pressures of childcare, rent increases and the loss of a spouse overburdened substitute families in similar ways that different pressures overburdened biological families. Both groups used public childcare systems to help them survive the consequences of such developments.

4.4. Concluding remarks

Child-welfare reformers from the late-nineteenth century shared numerous assumptions about the poor that can be shown to be misleading once more contextual information is unearthed. The reformers contributed to popular misconceptions about the types of people that sent their children to Poor Law authorities and inflated distinctions between urban and rural working-class identity. However, certain features of the law were complied with including the parentless status of foster children and the size of communities to which they were sent. Almost all of the children from sample two were orphans or deserted

⁵³⁹ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 90.

⁵⁴⁰ PLBG: Reference Number: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Pages 28-29.

⁵⁴¹ See figure 5.11 for information about the causes for Poor Law intervention within sample four.

and the few that were not still met with law as seen in the case of the Hollidge children. The Guardians followed regulations on classification and there is no evidence that suggests they abused the powers granted by the PLAs to convert ‘other’ children into members of the parentless classes to facilitate their disposal. Administrators also closely adhered to rules on village populations, which means most long-distance foster children were sent to small agricultural communities that were often severely hampered by legislative developments like the Corn Law repeals.

It is unsurprising that decisions made by Poor Law administrators were made in accordance with the law and the discretion afforded to foster-care committees was exercised more broadly. The Guardians were responsible for selecting children from their juvenile pauper populations that met with classification controls whereas the LGB were responsible for authorising the formation of the foster-care committees that complied with their rules on village populations. Both regulations were closely followed, whereas those left to committee members were applied with substantial discretion. Local actors might have been indifferent to government policy objectives or the system may have simply been badly supervised. However, the fact remains that only 42 foster parents of sample two children (15 per cent) were aged under the age of 40, married and occupied in skilled or agricultural trade. The other 85 per cent were either over 40, unskilled, unemployed or lone parents. These norms are entirely absent from the Victorian sources because they did not fit with moral reformation narratives (much like the truth about childhood institutionalisation did not fit within ambit of the ins and outs discourse). By not examining the reality of foster care, and the citizenship outcomes for the children, existing scholarship adheres to these ideals and misrepresents the whole foster care system.

Chapter 3 showed that most children in district schools were not parentless and this chapter suggests most children fostered under the Poor Law were not sent to the types of families requested by the law. A member of parliament

explained the goal of fostering as ‘we do not aim at putting them in a *better position* than they would be in if their parents were alive, but nearly as possible in the *same position*’.⁵⁴² However, it appears numerous children were sent to worse situations than that to which they were born. The next chapter looks at the backgrounds of control group children, who represented district school and foster care children, and concludes that many of them came from respectable working-class households with fathers in skilled positions before the crisis hit that forced the children into public childcare. If these findings are representative of the juvenile pauper population as a whole, potentially foster children were not put into the *same position* because the child-welfare framework was politically barred from engaging with the transitory reality of child poverty.

Victorian middle-class society made numerous unfounded assumptions about the nature of child poverty during the late-nineteenth century. The protection narrative that developed ignored the deliberate action taken by people in poor communities across urban and rural landscapes in response to austerity caused by changes in the law. The families that interacted with district schools and the foster care system are examples of makeshift economies being actively constructed in an effort to avoid the workhouse and secure the best outcome for the family as a whole.

⁵⁴² ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Page 27.

Chapter 5: From district schools to English citizens

5.1. Introduction

Sample one could not be used to explore questions about the adult lives of district school children because it was too large for the qualitative methods used for this study to be applied to questions of adult citizenship outcomes. To deal with this, sample three was assembled which was composed of 150 children admitted to the SMSD between the years of 1884-89.⁵⁴³ As explained in chapter 2, these records captured limited information including admissions, discharges, and personal information about all the children that were chargeable to the SMSD during this period.

Although the authorities closed SMSD in 1902 – fuelling the growth of increasingly popular systems such as cottage homes – district schools were still the preferred system of childcare in the 1880s despite the criticisms of Nassau Senior and her supporters. Sample three was composed of 52 females and 98 males who were all drawn from sample one and selected for sample three because they were traceable using genealogical triangulation methods and because they had siblings who did not experience public childcare. Such siblings formed the control group (sample four). Learning about the citizenship outcomes for children that experienced different forms of public childcare is important because it demonstrates the consequences of de-pauperisation efforts. This discussion is wholly absent from secondary historical accounts of this period.

The Victorian sources are too limited to assess key aspirations of child welfare reformers (e.g. whether district school children adopted habits of truth or obedience, etc.). However, certain features are measurable and will form the substance of the next two chapters in order to test whether the approach

⁵⁴³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

advocated by Tufnell or that proposed by Nassau Senior was better fitted to achieve their stated objectives. To this end, I will ask if district school children were: 1) able to establish independent households; 2) if they entered the types of occupations that reformers wanted; and 3) if they severed ties with their biological families. By ‘independent households’ I refer to people who were the head of their own households according to the 1911 census (or married to a head of household in the case of females) as contrasted to people who lived as adult lodgers or in institutional care. The latter arrangements were deemed another form of dependency.⁵⁴⁴

These questions are a measure of notions of self-sufficiency and skilled labour that were key features of successful de-pauperisation and believed to protect children from becoming adults that were dependent on the state. Arguably, beliefs in hereditary poverty were another example of Victorian politicians’ misguided understandings about the nature of poverty but it does not change the fact that preventing poverty was a key policy goal of public childcare in this period. Three questions will be applied to samples three (a cohort of 150 children admitted to the SDMS) and five (a cohort of 150 children that sent to foster care by Islington union) and the results will be compared to sample four (a cohort of 150 children who were the biological siblings of samples three and five but who did not enter the care of the Guardians).⁵⁴⁵ Sample four serves as a marker of what might have happened to children in samples three or five if they had not entered the care of the state. It is the best way to measure what might have happened if samples three and five had not gone into care and therefore it is the best way to measure the impact of different childcare systems on adult citizenship.

⁵⁴⁴ Tufnell, ‘Education of Pauper Children’ Page 149.

⁵⁴⁵ See section 2.3 of this thesis for an explanation about how sample four was assembled.

The bitter Tufnell-Nassau Senior debate centred around whether district schools or foster care was the optimal means for converting disadvantaged children into productive adults. Lawmakers' beliefs that the state could do a better job of parenting than biological parents was central to the erosion of parental rights and questions about which system was most effective remained unanswered by Victorian scholars because the law did not require the Guardians to supervise juvenile paupers beyond the age of 16. This meant minimal information was captured about their immediate aftercare, and *no information* was captured about their adult lives.⁵⁴⁶

While the work habits, work ethics and moral convictions of juvenile paupers were also areas that lawmakers wanted to influence but those areas are beyond the scope of this project. For those questions to be addressed sources such as diaries, letters or committee minutes would need to be available but unfortunately, very rarely exist for this particular section of the population at this time. Child-welfare reformers made no secret about their desire to promote values of self-sufficiency and pre-industrialism in district school curriculums irrespective of their suitability to post-Victorian life.⁵⁴⁷ The Victorian middle classes abhorred overcrowded living spaces and heavily associated such conditions with extreme poverty.⁵⁴⁸ Charles Booth shocked reformers and lawmakers when he published his detailed inquiry about London poverty and exposed the true extent of destitution and overcrowded unsanitary domestic living spaces in the East End.⁵⁴⁹ His report fuelled reformers' desires to liberate juvenile paupers from such conditions and to enable them to join the ranks of the 'respectable poor' who ran their own homes and produced their own goods. There is a strong argument that the 'respectable poor' as envisioned by reformers did not actually exist during the late-nineteenth century.

⁵⁴⁶ See PLA 1851 s. IV for controls on the supervision duties of the Guardians and section 3.3 of this thesis for a discussion about aftercare studies in the Victorian sources.

⁵⁴⁷ Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Pages 85-105.

⁵⁴⁸ Davin, *Growing Up Poor* Pages 45-57.

⁵⁴⁹ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour in London* (Macmillan 1889).

Reformers were particularly keen to ensure that district school children did not return to their parents' households because they believed their families were moral contaminants that posed a risk to their retraining.⁵⁵⁰ Their preference for artisan trades reflected their belief that such forms of labour would avoid contributing to the growing unrest and class conflicts that affected factory and dockworkers during this period.⁵⁵¹ Boys were sent to workshops taught by blacksmiths, shoemakers and carpenters, because the middle classes idealised independent trades that economically contributed to their communities. They were also exposed to considerable amounts of military training in the hopes that those unfit for skilled trade would make suitable soldiers for the Imperial Army.⁵⁵² In the aftermath of the Boer Wars the middle classes became increasingly anxious that patriotism was waning amongst the poor, and that this was contributing to the historically limited number of voluntary recruits. Military service became an essential feature of retraining efforts for boys because the Empire was at its height of economic strength but the state struggled to adequately resource the Imperial Army and Navy, which were vital resources for the defence of the realm.

By the 1880s the poor were not viewed as the architects of their misfortunes in the same way that they had been during the middle of the century when notions hereditary pauperism prevailed. Instead, they were increasingly viewed as a potential resource for the future of the nation. Victorian child-protection policy reflected this by emphasising skilled work or military service for boys. Domestic service was emphasised for girls in the hopes that such efforts would help address the shortage of 'acceptable indoor servants' emerging from

⁵⁵⁰ *The Local Government Board: Second Annual Report 1872-1873* (C (2nd series)) Page 84.

⁵⁵¹ East End Juvenile Mission, 'Something Attempted Something Done' Page 146.

⁵⁵² *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Pages 206-207.

workhouse schools.⁵⁵³ Peel's letter of policy guidance declared that it was 'most important on all grounds to avoid severing or weakening in any way the ties of family' yet we know that on-going parental relationships were the basis on which parental rights were eroded.⁵⁵⁴ This statement appears to be more of a red herring when it is contextualised within ins and outs discourses. For example, Tufnell told the LGB 'when pauper children have parents, those parents are often the children's greatest enemies, and the less they see of them the better'.⁵⁵⁵ Parliamentarian John Mundella published a report a few years later that said on-going contact 'between parents and Poor Law children deadened the parents' sense of responsibility' and was to be avoided at all costs.⁵⁵⁶ It seems lawmakers wanted to appear overtly supportive of the sanctity of the English family, irrespective of social class, but deep down they loathed the idea of poor parents raising their own children.

Child-protection narratives were scripted to support desires to reduce parental rights amongst the poor. As a result, the narratives excluded evidence that challenged the legitimacy of their objective - such as the poor's active attempts to maintain contact with their children or the role of material deprivation in the choice to give up a child. This chapter asks whether the criticisms leveraged by anti-district school activists like Nassau Senior or Davenport Hill against district schools were just as overstated as some of the claims from the ins and outs discourse. These women argued that girls suffered particularly badly in large institutions and that both genders were better off being raised in substitute families where they could attend national schools with non-pauper children. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests certain aspects of their predictions were misguided whereas others were fairly accurate. For example,

⁵⁵³ See Chance, *Children under the Poor Law* Page 71 for a discussion about the large number of girls from workhouse schools that were returned to the workhouse because they were deemed unsuitable for indoor service in middle-class households.

⁵⁵⁴ LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

⁵⁵⁵ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 207.

⁵⁵⁶ Mundella, *Report of the Departmental Committee* Page 73.

the data shows that parentless children from district schools secured higher levels of independence compared to children from the control group and that females from district schools were more likely to become indoor domestic servants in adulthood than females from the control group. These findings suggest that Tufnell's belief that parentless children in district schools were better candidates for reformation had some merit, whereas Nassau Senior's central conclusion that girls were adversely affected by district schooling was overemphasised.

This chapter will show that gender was a significant factor in predicting the outcomes of district school children because more females became indoor servants than homemakers. This affected the results for independent households because indoor domestic service jobs by their very nature prevented these women from establishing autonomous homes. Equally, males from district schools achieved the highest level of occupational skill within this study, which skewed the results for severing family ties because they often returned to the mother who had consciously institutionalised them. Unsurprisingly, children from the control group had different experiences from samples three or five because most of them were adults before the crisis occurred that launched their siblings into public childcare. They established more independent households than either of the groups that were sent into care but generally worked in unskilled labour roles and lived with biological family members in different circumstances than district school children. Control group males rarely lived with parents as adults, whereas females did in high numbers, either as a precursor to marriage or with their spouse. This was not a trend observed in the district school group.

5.2. Becoming independent householders

Victorian and modern commentators have reflected on the harsh realities of overcrowding within poor communities in late-nineteenth century London. Andrew Mearns compared the living conditions of the abject poor to that of a

slave ship,⁵⁵⁷ and Charles Booth showed that destitution was not only endemic but also far worse than the middle classes had previously appreciated.⁵⁵⁸ In 1891, over 112,000 families in London lived in one-room tenements of which 100,000 contained between two and six people. A further 1,000 contained seven inhabitants or more.⁵⁵⁹ Case histories like that of the Beilby family show how even unsuitable accommodations like these were often precarious and easily lost, which contributed to the hardships of those who sought parish assistance like the parents in this study.⁵⁶⁰ Jonathan Schneer described one the great ironies of imperial London at the turn of the century to be the hordes of men on the verge of destitution who queued up each morning at the docks to help unload the extravagant riches acquired from the outer reaches of the Empire.⁵⁶¹ These men were paid meagre daily wages that rarely allowed them to provide for their families. Over 65 per cent of inhabitants in boroughs on the border of the docks, such as Southwark and Bermondsey, lived in conditions that Booth described as ‘poor, very poor or members of the loafer and semi-criminal classes’.⁵⁶²

In contrast, the borough of Camberwell, from which this sample was drawn, was considerably more economically diverse despite its proximity to the river. Middle-class families and artisan labourers that would not typically be associated with the intervention of the Poor Law inhabited large sections of Camberwell. The most common occupations for men in the borough were skilled pre-industrial trades such as furniture makers, carpenters, butchers, printers or shipping clerks.⁵⁶³ Twenty-one per cent of the fathers of the sample

⁵⁵⁷ Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (James Clarke & Co. 1883) Page 7.

⁵⁵⁸ Booth, *Life and Labour*.

⁵⁵⁹ Census figures quoted in Booth, *Life and Labour* Pages 4-5.

⁵⁶⁰ See chapter 3 of this thesis for the Beilby family case history.

⁵⁶¹ Schneer, *London* Pages 44-50.

⁵⁶² Booth, *Life and Labour* Pages 21-30.

⁵⁶³ GB Historical GIS | University of Portsmouth, Camberwell CP/AP/Vest through time | Census tables with data for the Parish-level Unit, A Vision of Britain through Time.

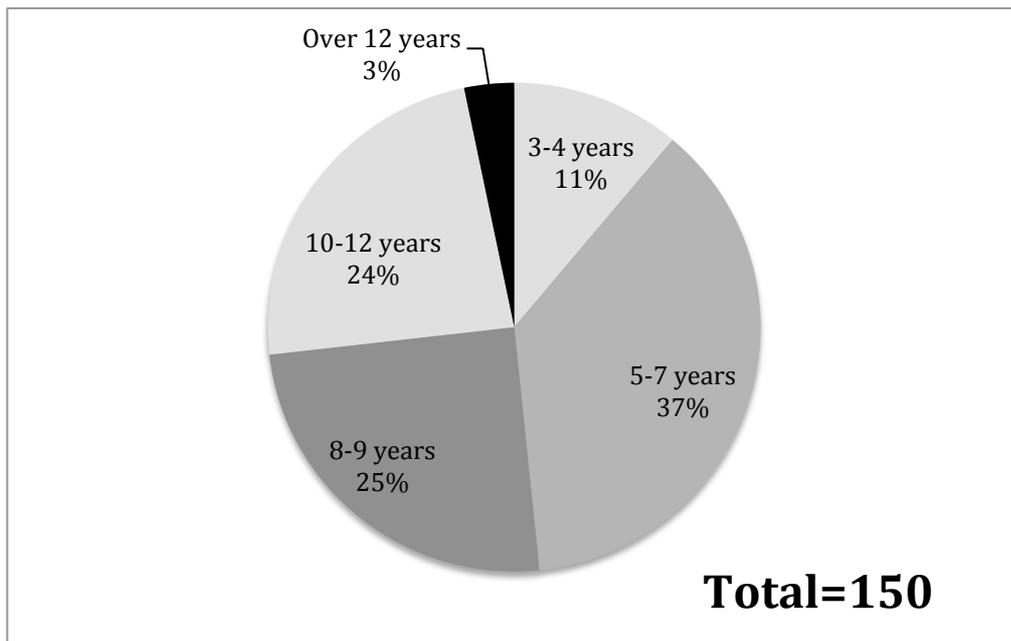
four children (the control sample) occupied these roles prior to their child entering public childcare.⁵⁶⁴ A further 20 per cent worked in traditional crafts such as blacksmiths, musicians, customs officers, surgical instrument makers and opticians. Only 11 per cent of the children from sample three had a father who worked on the docks or in low/unskilled positions such as bricklayers, general labourers, porters/hawkers or laundry services. If this information is representative of the parents of children in samples three and five, it appears there is yet another misplaced assumption about the nature of child poverty during this period. Inferences can be drawn that very few children from samples three and five came from families that were typically associated with welfare assistance. Most of them did not resemble Victorian notions of slum dwellers until *after* their children were institutionalised, as will be discussed more critically later in this chapter.

Most children were school-aged when they were sent to the authorities despite the fact the Guardians could send children to district schools even if they were outside the age of compulsory attendance just to get them out of the workhouse (see figure 5.1).⁵⁶⁵ Children were required to attend school between the ages of

⁵⁶⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1891.

⁵⁶⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

Figure 5.1 Ages of sample three children when admitted to the SMSD



five and 13 but remained chargeable as juveniles until the age of 16 when the Guardians' statutory obligations to supervise came to an end.⁵⁶⁶ A small number were admitted above or below the age of compulsory attendance but 86 per cent were school-aged when they arrived at SMSD schools.

The Guardians usually discharged children from schools at 13 or 14 years of age, which explains why there were very few teenagers found in sample three. However, it also shows that children of compulsory school age were more likely to be given up to the state than non-school aged children, which was most likely a strategic choice to avoid mandatory school fees. Overcrowded living conditions were associated with serious social problems like the spread of infectious diseases, and these were problems to which the workhouses were not immune. Nineteenth-century infant mortality rates reached their height during the 1890s and over half of them occurred in Poor Law institutions such

⁵⁶⁶ PLA 1851; Elementary Education Act 1870 Vict. 33 & 34 c.75 s.74. Note school attendance laws were only enforceable from 1880.

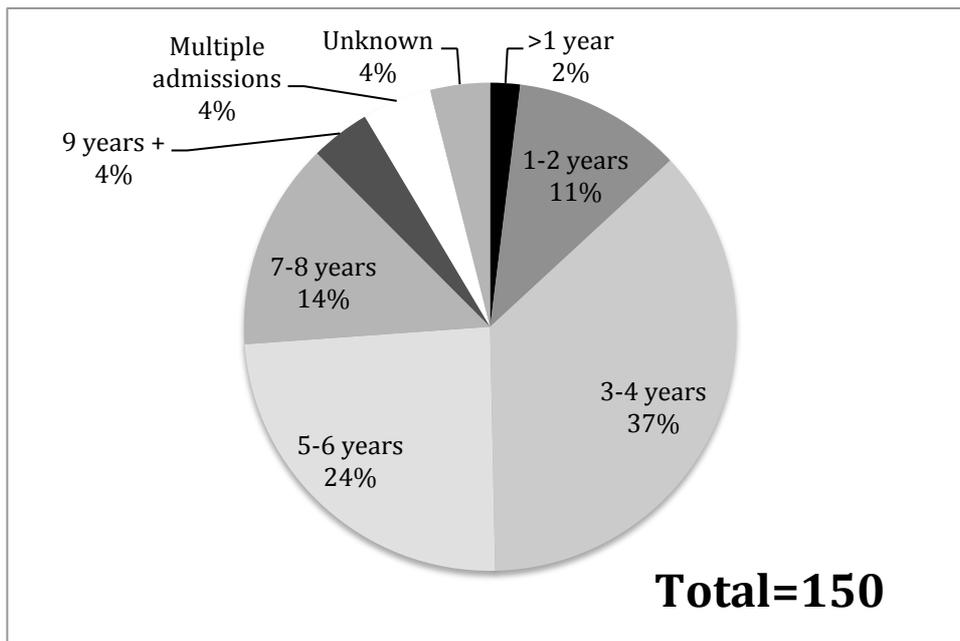
as workhouses or public infirmaries.⁵⁶⁷ Awareness of this issue would have deterred all but the most desperate parents from admitting their infants to the care of the Guardians, especially when institutionalising a school-aged child had such clear advantages.

When families were struck by personal crisis there were tactical reasons to send the school-aged children to public childcare and keep infants or teenagers at home. Older children could contribute to the domestic economy by working or caring for younger siblings. Plus, if parents sent their children to the Guardians for reasons that the Guardians deemed worthy they were often relieved from contribution requirements until they could afford to pay, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Further, the tactic kept infants away from the health risks posed by public childcare. This observation fits with the conclusions of other historians that the poor deployed a range of strategic actions to deal with their hardships and avoid things getting worse.⁵⁶⁸ Discharge records for sample three children (the district school sample) show most of them had lengthy stays at the SMSD

⁵⁶⁷ Naomi Williams and Graham Mooney, 'Infant mortality in an 'Age of Great Cities': London and the English provincial cities compared 1840-1910' (2009) 2 *Continuity and Change* 185.

⁵⁶⁸ King, *Poverty and Welfare in England*.

Figure 5.2 Duration of stay for sample three children in the SMSD



and were not routinely discharged (see figure 5.2).⁵⁶⁹ This finding further supports some of the arguments advanced in chapter 3 that school populations were in fact fairly stable.

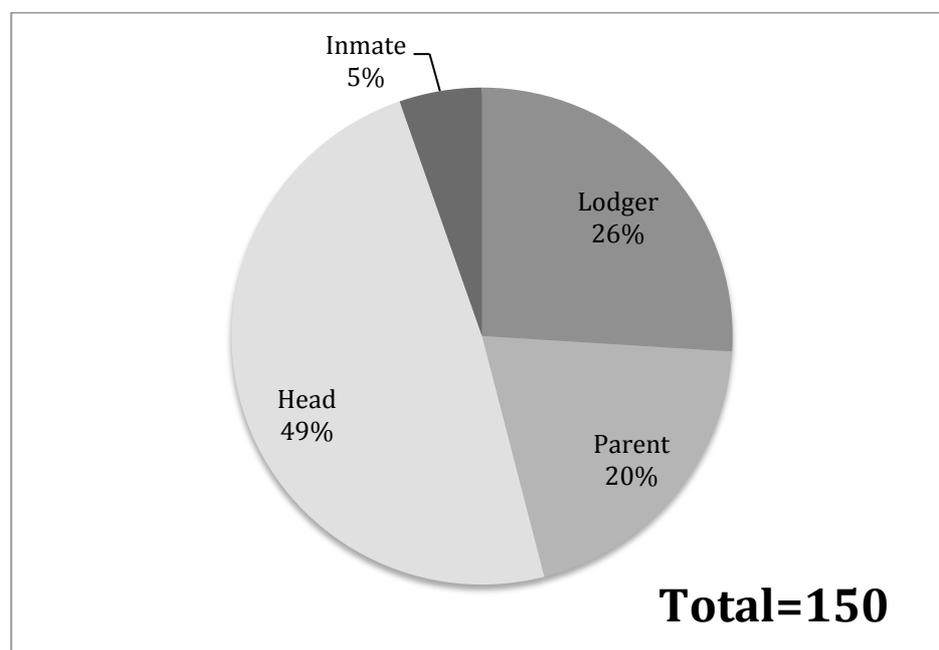
Children usually spent at least half their compulsory education in district schools and were therefore exposed to a considerable amount of industrial training and traditional education. Most of them were under seven years of age when they were admitted to the authorities, stayed between three and six years before they were discharged. On top of this, most of them were ultimately discharged to locations ranging from employment positions to training ships or transferred to another Poor Law institution as seen in the evidence presented in chapter 3.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

⁵⁷⁰ See figure 3.9 and figure 3.12 for information about the discharge destinations from the SMSD population between 1884-89.

Children in sample three were admitted between 1884-89 before the custody reforms were passed. The data about their household statuses and occupations as adults were drawn from the 1911 census because that was the last published census available and all of the children were well into adulthood by its publication. The median age for the sample was 36 in 1911, and the Office for National Statistics reported the average age of death that year to be 51 for a man and 55 for a woman.⁵⁷¹ Forty-nine per cent of the sample had established their own homes by that year, but 26 per cent lived as adult lodgers and 20 per cent lived with a biological parent as adults (see figure 5.3).⁵⁷² The methods used in this study did not allow for people whose household status changed after this point to be captured -- because the 1921 census has not yet been published -- but tentative conclusions can be drawn. When comparing sample three to sample four, the district school system appears to have struggled to achieve reformers' aspirations for household self-sufficiency or disrupted biological relationships.

Figure 5.3 Sample three household statuses during the 1911 census



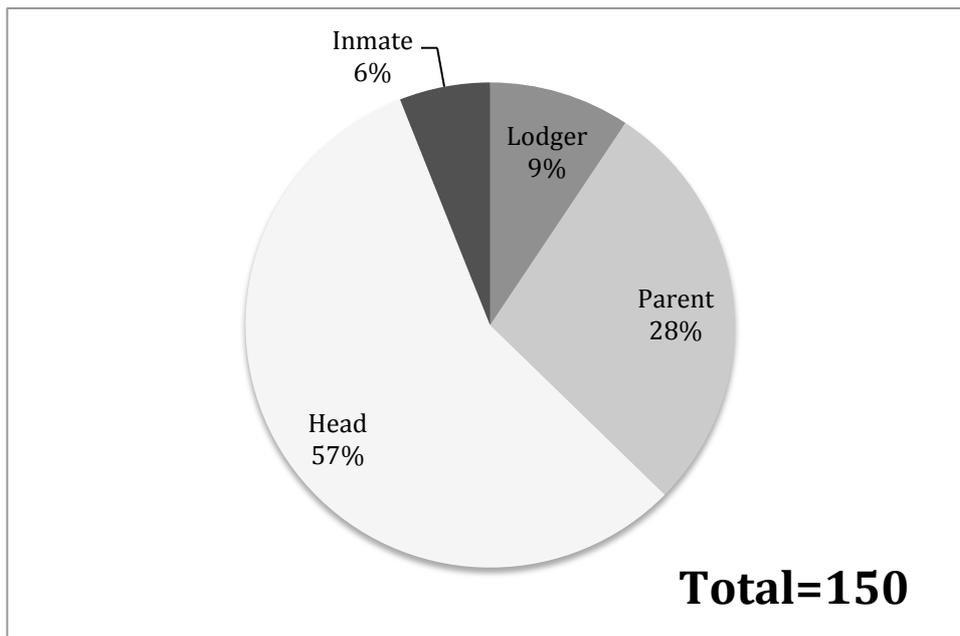
⁵⁷¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Office for National Statistics.

⁵⁷² PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

Sample four was composed of biological siblings of children who had entered public childcare but did not enter it themselves. Some of them were siblings of the sample three and some of them were siblings of sample five depending on the circumstances that led to the intervention of the authorities. Generally, if a child entered care because both parents had died they were in sample five. Where one parent survived and retained contact with the child they were in sample three because they were not eligible for foster care. Sample four was assembled because the absence of public law intervention meant they did not experience de-pauperisation efforts and therefore were the closest 'norm' to measure against. Most members of sample four were older siblings that had reached adulthood before the events that forced their siblings into care had eventuated. However, a select few were younger siblings that escaped institutionalisation because their family circumstances stabilised before they reached school age. However, the unifying characteristics of sample four were twofold: the same biological parents raised them as those children who were admitted to care in samples three and five, and crucially, they were not de-pauperised.

The results from the 1911 census show sample four experienced quite different outcomes from their district school siblings because eight per cent more

Figure 5.4 Sample four household statuses during the 1911 census



established independent households than sample three. Also, far fewer lived as adult lodgers because they were more likely to live with their parents (see figure 5.4).⁵⁷³ Innumerable factors beyond the scope of this study affected the results of both cohorts; however, the findings suggest that a correlation did exist between childhood institutionalisation and lower levels of household self-sufficiency in adulthood. District school children had fewer independent homes and higher rates of adult lodging than their non-institutional siblings, which suggests the norm for children from the latter background was either to establish their own homes or stay with their parents rather than rent accommodation. The results from this line of inquiry were affected by the high numbers of females from sample three that became indoor domestic servants in middle-class homes. Factors such as gender or classification status also affected these results as will be explained later in this chapter.

The higher rates of parent-child cohabitation in sample four was partly attributed to social norms but also inevitably affected by another unifying

⁵⁷³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

feature of their cohort: they directly experienced the family crises that forced their siblings to be institutionalised. Sample four children were not separated from their families as children, and consequently, they could pool resources more readily to navigate their misfortunes. For example, the Isted family were struck by considerable hardship when their father, Thomas, was admitted to the Gordon Road workhouse in Camberwell in the early 1880s. Thomas and his wife, Mary Senior, had six children between 1869-81 named Mary, Noah, Eleanor, Charles, Henry and Jessie. Both parents were described as hawkers in the 1881 census, which suggests they sold inexpensive goods in the streets but were not engaged in formal employment.⁵⁷⁴

Thomas's admission to Gordon Road in 1882 was the event that forced his five-year-old son Henry and his seven-year-old son Charles to be sent to the Camberwell Guardians.⁵⁷⁵ The boys were the youngest school-aged children in the family, and within a fortnight of admission they were transferred to Brighton Road to start their de-pauperisation training. After Thomas was admitted to the workhouse, their ten-year-old sister, Eleanor, was sent to her maternal grandparents in Wandsworth, while their teenage siblings and infant sister stayed with their mother in the family home.⁵⁷⁶

Thomas remained at Gordon Road for many years, but there is no evidence to suggest that he fluctuated in and out of the workhouse. Mary Senior managed to keep the family home and over the long term all of her children returned to her as adults with the exception of Eleanor who married a dock labourer at the age of 18.⁵⁷⁷ Henry and Charles first appeared in the family home in 1891 aged 13

⁵⁷⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 671; Folio: 115; Page: 81; GSU roll: 1341156.

⁵⁷⁵ PLBG: Reference Number: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 38.

⁵⁷⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 671; Folio: 115; Page: 81; GSU roll: 1341156; Class: RG11; Piece: 636; Folio: 7; Page: 7; GSU roll: 1341147.

⁵⁷⁷ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Church of England Parish Registers, 1754-1931; Reference Number: p95/pau1/009.

and 18.⁵⁷⁸ They had completed their compulsory education at Brighton Road and worked as bottle washers with their older brother while their sister Mary Junior worked alongside Mary Senior as a charwoman. They were all modest earners but their communal efforts allowed them to keep the family home and avoid joining Thomas in the workhouse. These arrangements continued in various forms over the following two censuses.

In 1901, Mary Senior lived with her daughters, Eleanor and Jessie who were both married.⁵⁷⁹ By 1911, Mary Senior lived with Jessie's family in an independent household.⁵⁸⁰ Thomas remained in the workhouse but Mary Senior continued to describe herself to the census enumerators as married despite the lengthy separation. Thomas died the following year and there is nothing to indicate that he was ever discharged from the workhouse prior to his death. By 1911, all of the Isted siblings who had not entered care (members of sample four) had independent homes in Wandsworth within a quarter of a mile of each other. By contrast, Charles and Henry (members of sample three) lived as lodgers.

Charles was a 35-year-old married man by this time and worked as a brewer's instrument maker. He rented rooms from another family in Camberwell because he was unable to establish a home for himself and his wife.⁵⁸¹ His brother Henry did the same and lived in a rented room in Camberwell with his wife.⁵⁸² Although all the Isted children worked together to avoid the workhouse, only the control group children were able to provide accommodation for other members of the family or set up family homes over

⁵⁷⁸ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891; Class: RG12; Piece: 443; Folio: 74; Page: 26; GSU roll: 6095553.

⁵⁷⁹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 467; Folio: 17; Page: 25.

⁵⁸⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2258.

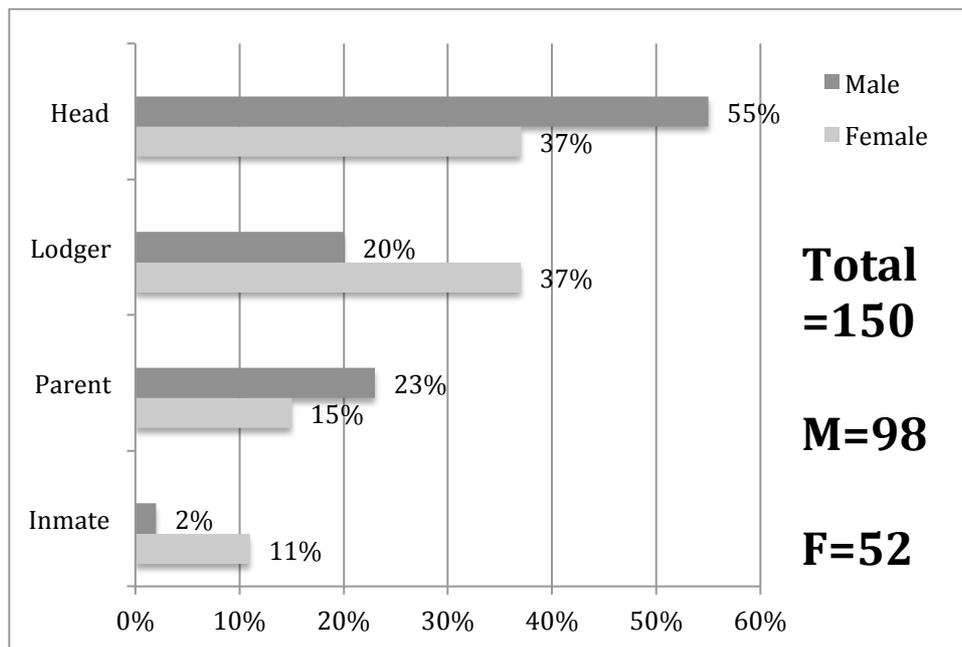
⁵⁸¹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2488.

⁵⁸² UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2525.

the long term. Their story illustrates some of the tactics employed by the poor to avoid institutionalisation including strategic decisions about which children to keep at home and the benefits of pooled resources.

There were strong gendered consequences within the findings on household statuses (see figure 5.5).⁵⁸³ Samples three and five were not equally divided between the sexes and that is why the data in figures 5.5 and 5.6 has been presented as proportions of each gender rather than proportions of each sample. District school females were much more likely to be adult lodgers compared to district school males and far less likely to live with a parent as adults. District school males were more likely to lead independent households or return to their parents. Nassau Senior predicted that the institutional setting of a district school would adversely impact females because it failed to provide the maternal

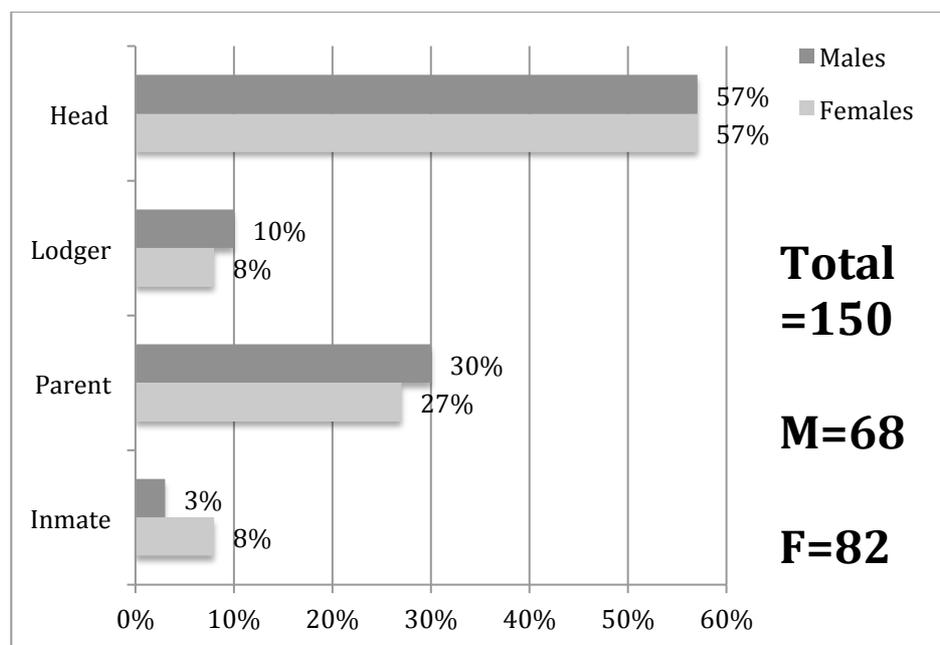
Figure 5.5 Sample three household statuses organised by gender



⁵⁸³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

influences that naturally imparted necessary skills such as ‘affection, ambition, a sense of responsibility, a sense of membership and presence of mind’.⁵⁸⁴ She concluded that institutionalised girls developed a hardness, which permanently differentiated them from girls who were raised in families, and that this rendered them unsuitable for marriage or indoor service positions. These arguments formed the cornerstone of her campaign to extend the foster care system. At first glance, the findings from figure 5.5 appear to support her view because they show institutional females struggled to become homemakers and often lived as lodgers; however, that interpretation fails to incorporate factors such as their propensity for indoor service roles that will be discussed below.

Figure 5.6 Sample four household statuses organised by gender



The gendered consequences of public childcare on household statuses are easier to appreciate when compared to an analysis of sample four because it provides gendered norms for children from similar backgrounds that did not enter care (see figure 5.6).⁵⁸⁵ More females were adult inmates in both samples, but far

⁵⁸⁴ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Page 93.

⁵⁸⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

more sample four women established independent homes or lived with parents than those from district schools. Control group women were also far more likely to get married. Sixty-three per cent of the control group women had married by the 1911 census compared to 40 per cent of the district school women. There was virtually no disparity in marriage rates between the males of both cohorts.

Nassau Senior's report was published three years after the law was changed to authorise long-distance fostering. She was extremely critical that it was restricted to orphan and deserted children because she felt England should have a system similar to the Scottish system that allowed children to be sent to foster families irrespective of their parents' enduring relationship or rights.⁵⁸⁶ Nassau Senior's critics argued such drastic changes would never succeed unless foster parents were paid considerably more than 4 shillings a week or given permission to exploit the children in their care for cheap labour because they insisted the rural working classes could only be motivated by the financial gain or servitude.⁵⁸⁷ Tufnell's supporters responded to Nassau Senior's suggestions by accusing the foster care scheme of being a false economy and an ineffective alternative that could facilitate a return to the 'farming out' crisis whilst draining public finances if maintenance rates were increased.⁵⁸⁸

District school supporters felt passionately that the permanent class were superior candidates for de-pauperisation and that 'other' children were a threat to their success. Such beliefs not only fuelled the erosion of parental rights but also provided reformers with a defence for unsatisfactory results derived from the limited contemporary aftercare studies because they allowed children with on-going family relationships to be blamed for poor outcomes. Tufnell quoted

⁵⁸⁶ See section 4.2 of this thesis for discussions about the Scottish foster care system.

⁵⁸⁷ *The Local Government Board: Fourth Annual Report 1874-1875* (C (2nd series)) Page 195.

⁵⁸⁸ See section 4.3 of this thesis for a discussion about the 'farming out' crisis in mid-nineteenth century England.

statistics from an unpublished report by an unnamed school chaplain in his main treatise about the aftercare of juvenile paupers.⁵⁸⁹ The chaplain reported that only four per cent of district school children were unable to establish themselves independently after leaving Guardianship care but asserted that ‘where failures do occur they are almost entirely among the non-orphan class, who are led astray by their own parents’.⁵⁹⁰ Tufnell’s disdain for poor children’s biological families was made clear in 1870 when he told the LGB that ‘other’ children were prone to criminality due to enduring contact with their families whereas ‘the orphan and deserted classes, having no such connexions, are preserved from this source of contamination’.⁵⁹¹

The findings from this study do not support Tufnell’s classification-based predictions (see figure 5.7).⁵⁹² Although more permanent children established more independent households than ‘other’ children, similar proportions lived as adult lodgers or with parents after leaving the SMSD. It is unsurprising that more ‘other’ children lived with parents than was the case for the orphan or deserted classes because the next-of-kin information discussed in chapter 3 showed they were more likely to have a known parent who refused to sever contact than the

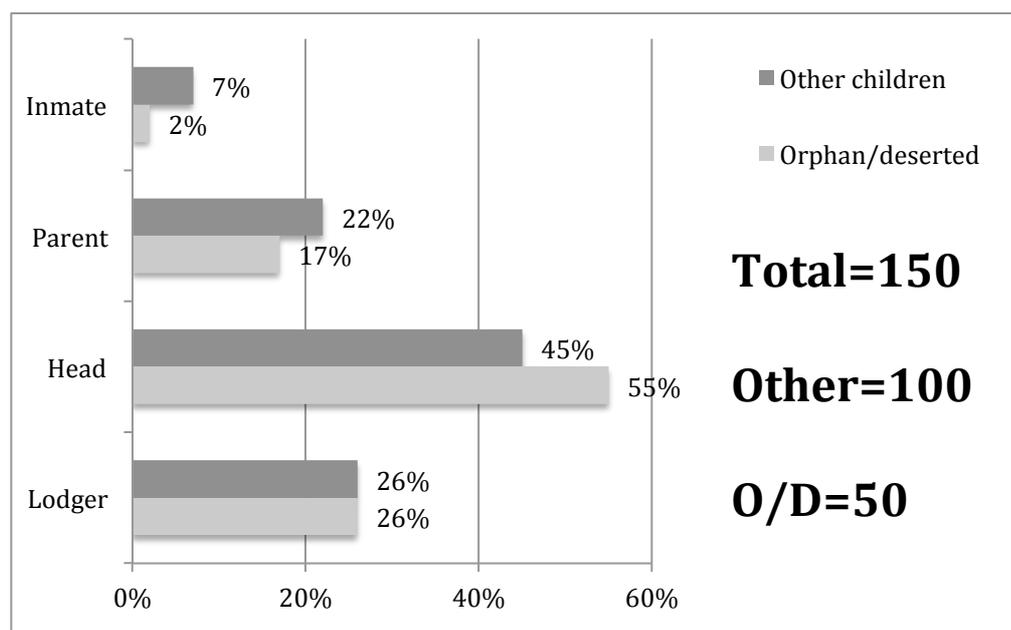
⁵⁸⁹ Tufnell, ‘Education of Pauper Children’.

⁵⁹⁰ Tufnell, ‘Education of Pauper Children’ Page 149.

⁵⁹¹ *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 207.

⁵⁹² PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

Figure 5.7 Sample three household statuses organised by class



permanent class.⁵⁹³ Tufnell's position appears over-simplified and (like many narratives surrounding Victorian child welfare) was designed to fit with his own agenda. Gender was a more significant factor than classification status in predicting the household statuses of district school children, something that Tufnell overlooked and Nassau Senior only considered with respect to girls' ability to become suitable wives or servants.

Although moderately more permanent children became independent householders than 'other' children, the same proportions became adult lodgers and broadly similar numbers lived with parents over the long term. It is clear Tufnell overstated the problems posed by 'other' children along with many other reformers from the period. But his claims also provide another illustration of how the lived experiences of the poor were obscured by political rhetoric because they imply permanent children lacked family ties when clearly they did not. Yet again we see how the tripartite system of classification was a blunt instrument on which to base the predictions of the adult outcomes of juvenile

⁵⁹³ See figures 3.3-3.8 for information about the next-of-kin information for the SDSM population between 1884-89.

paupers because it was based on inappropriate beliefs about the nature of child poverty during the late-nineteenth century.

The Victorians repeatedly cited a mixture of genetics and moral failure as the key features of child poverty for so long that these assumptions became unassailable. These assumptions concealed important features about the identity of Poor Law children including their on-going relationships with their parents and the absence of any evidence that such relationships were harmful. The tripartite system was a useless tool for predicting adult outcomes because it was premised on misinformation that contemporaries were unwilling to challenge.

5.3. Occupational improvements

The most important objective within the de-pauperisation framework was to improve the employment prospects of child inmates because skilled labour was considered synonymous with respectability, self-sufficiency and ultimately, with imperial strength.⁵⁹⁴ Given modern historians have shown that there was life-long cost associated with being born poor during this period,⁵⁹⁵ such ambitions were hardly misplaced. Both groups of child-welfare reformers agreed that the key to effective retraining was to teach the children to become economically valuable workers or members of Imperial forces. Their preferences for traditional crafts and military service, instead of the types of industrialised roles that were becoming increasingly popular, were embedded in class conflict. Unskilled industrialised roles were associated with casual work practices and the rise of trade unionism, which the middle classes disdained because it threatened their interests and was associated with civic unrest.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁴ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-second Annual Report 1869-70* (C (1st series)) Page 135.

⁵⁹⁵ Humphries, 'Care and Cruelty in the Workhouse'.

⁵⁹⁶ East End Juvenile Mission, 'Something Attempted Something Done' Page 146.

Historians have argued that a ‘labour aristocracy’ emerged during this period because those with higher skilled positions were perceived to be more respectable citizens than those with lower skilled or casual roles.⁵⁹⁷ Traditional crafts such as coach-makers, millwrights, shoemakers, book-printers and traders in luxury items such as jewellery, watches, decorations, engraved goods or fine foods were considered superior to the masses of workers that queued up each morning at the docks or factories. Reformers deemed the lowest forms of labour to be those conducted in the streets, such as hawking or peddling, because these jobs were associated with the underclasses and minor criminality. Nostalgia for traditional craftsmanship often meant reformers favoured occupations that were becoming increasingly obsolete now that machines were rapidly replacing independent manufacturers in areas such as tailoring and shoemaking. However, district school curriculums continued to emphasise these trades in workshops, irrespective of the developments in manufacturing, and it appears made a meaningful impact on the adult occupations of sample three.

Occupational ideals were shaped by reformers’ thinly veiled desire to reduce trade union activity amongst the labouring classes and improve military service numbers. Unionisation expanded dramatically in the late-nineteenth century as certain factions of the working class adapted their political behaviour in order to challenge the middle classes who defined their terms of employment. Strikes at the London docks and gasworks in 1889 were inspired by workers’ refusal to accept informal working hours and low rates of pay because it often trapped them in cycles of casual labour for nominal remuneration. Trade union membership soared from 750,000 in 1888 to over 6.5 million by 1914,⁵⁹⁸ and child welfare reformers were anxious that systems of public childcare not

⁵⁹⁷ John Breuilly, *Labour and liberalism in nineteenth-century Europe* (Manchester University Press 1992) Page 26.

⁵⁹⁸ Mary Davis, *Comrade or Brother? : The History of the British Labour Movement* (Pluto Press 2009) Page 115.

contribute to the rapid expansion of union activity by producing unskilled workers.

Most skilled tradesmen and soldiers described themselves as working ‘on their own account’ to the 1911 census enumerators, whereas low skilled or casual labourers described themselves as ‘workers’ when asked their occupational status. This was an important distinction because the term ‘worker’ not only defined a persons’ position in the ‘aristocracy of labour’ but it also signalled the possibility of trade union activity.⁵⁹⁹ Distinctions between workers and those occupied on their own account allowed the labour force to draw attention to differences in training to enable those without proper apprenticeships or guild privileges to be stigmatised.⁶⁰⁰

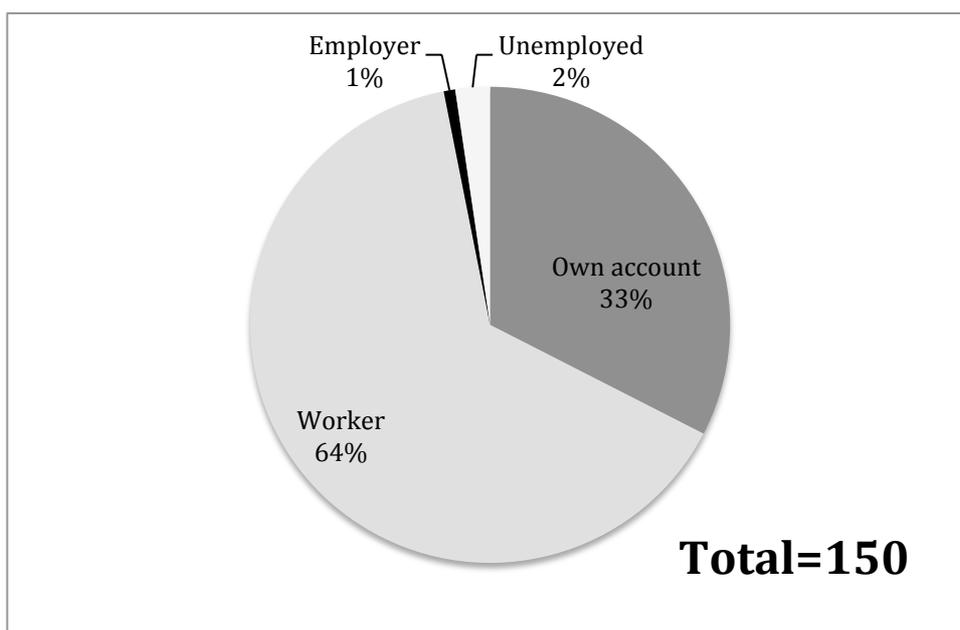
These labels empowered those with pre-industrial training because it indicated that they were suitably trained in traditional methods compared to those in contemporary manufacturing roles, who were not. All questions of occupational improvements were tested on the results of males and unmarried females because most women that married did not work outside the home and thus did not have occupations that could be analysed. The data suggests that industrial training methods positively impacted the adult occupations of district school children because a third of them worked on their own account by the 1911 census (see figure 5.8).⁶⁰¹ Eighteen were soldiers of varying rank in the Imperial Army or Navy, and 31 worked in skilled traditional crafts including bespoke tailoring, book printing, and various forms of luxury trading.

⁵⁹⁹ For Victorian sources on this point see *The Poor Law Board: Twentieth Annual Report 1867-68* (C (1st series)) Pages 140-141 and *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Pages 206-207. For modern sources on this point see Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 244-249.

⁶⁰⁰ Breuilly, *Labour and liberalism* Page 27.

⁶⁰¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

Figure 5.8 Sample three employment statuses during the 1911 census



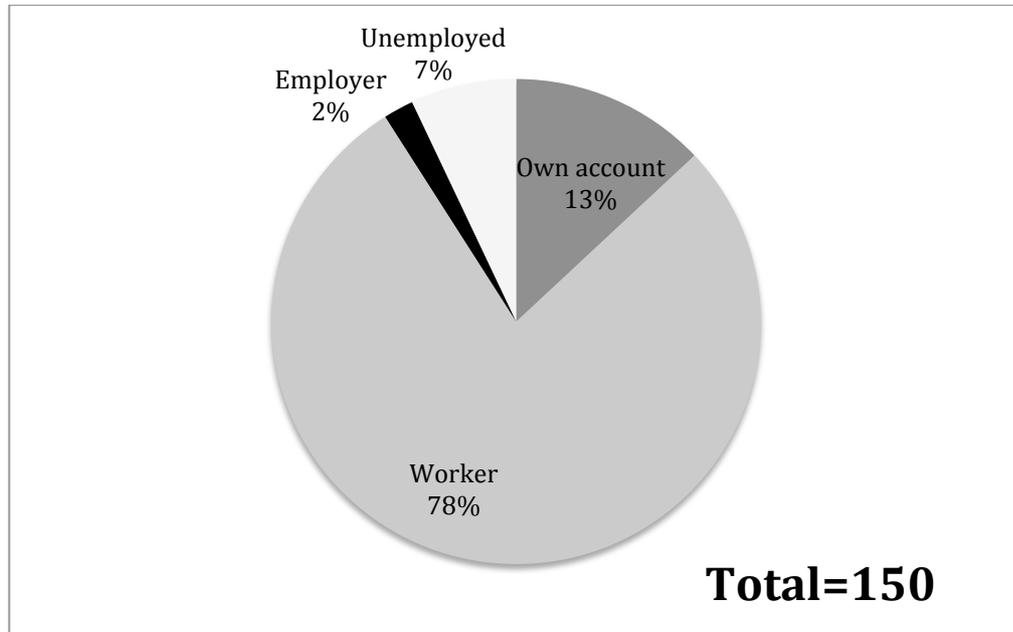
In the years before the outbreak of war, the Imperial Army and Navy struggled terribly to recruit new soldiers following the Boer Wars. Recruitment numbers were historically low throughout the first year of the First World War, which prompted the government to pass the Military Service Act in January of 1916 that forced unmarried men of certain ages to fight.⁶⁰² Interestingly, the men who worked as soldiers in the 1911 census were not the only males from the district school sample to enlist in the military after leaving the SMSD. Seven other men had also served in the Imperial forces during the 1890s and had subsequently been honourably discharged to pursue alternative careers before the 1911 census including two tailors, one theatre worker, one laundry porter, one church cleaner and two book-printers. In total, 25 per cent of males from sample three enlisted in military service after leaving the SMSD whereas only six per cent of males from sample four did the same.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰² Geo. 5 & 6 c.104.

⁶⁰³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

This was not the only area of correlation between district schools and occupational improvement. Sample four secured far fewer employment positions that allowed them to work on their own account compared to their siblings in

Figure 5.9 Sample four employment statuses during the 1911 census



sample three (see figure 5.9).⁶⁰⁴ Most of sample four was occupied in kitchens, factories or at the docks, whilst others were occupied as builders, bricklayers or general labourers.

Interestingly, those people that did work on their own account from sample four were also occupied in lower skilled trades than people from sample three who were predominantly traditional craftsmen or soldiers. The sample four children who worked on their own account included two hairdressers, one stone polisher, one stationary engine driver, two general dealers and one box maker. There was a noticeable absence of traditional craftsmanship that required apprenticeship or specialist training in the results for sample four. The limited exceptions to this were two book-printers, one artificial marble maker, one

⁶⁰⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

wheelwright and one brewer's instrument maker, all of which would have required some element of tutelage or specialist training.

The disparities between the two samples were undoubtedly affected by factors beyond the scope of this study. However, they do show that a correlation existed between industrial training techniques and occupational self-sufficiency. Sample four was not exposed to skills-based training like their institutional siblings from sample three and many of them received no formal education whatsoever because they were over the age of 13 before universal attendance became enforceable in 1880. Also, those who did go to school were only exposed to the national curriculum, which did not employ industrial training curriculums.

The Elementary Education Act 1870 (EEA) required that 'school boards may from time to time, with the approval of the Education Department, make byelaws [...] requiring the parents of children of such age, not less than five nor more than thirteen years [...] (unless there is some reasonable excuse) to attend school'.⁶⁰⁵ It also allowed boards to impose penalties when byelaws were breached, but crucially did not impose a duty on parents to ensure their children went to school until 1876. However, the duty only required that 'the parent of every child cause such child to receive efficient elementary instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic'.⁶⁰⁶ This requirement did not compel school boards to create byelaws that required attendance or enforced breach of parental duty until 1880.⁶⁰⁷

This meant a significant number of sample four might have escaped formal education entirely, which must be viewed as a potential bias when interpreting

⁶⁰⁵ EEA 1870 s.74.

⁶⁰⁶ EEA 1876 Vict. 39 & 40 c.79 s.4.

⁶⁰⁷ EEA 1880 s.2-4.

the disparities between the two groups. Parents were required to pay weekly school fees until 1891 but the Guardians were allowed to waive fees if ‘they were of the opinion that the parent of such child [was] unable from poverty to pay’ and if ‘such remission [was] not deemed to be parochial relief to such parent’.⁶⁰⁸ The development of moral idealism not only underpinned the development of the crusade against outdoor relief but also played a crucial role in the first laws to require universal education in England. Under the EEA 1870 parents were only allowed to request fee waivers if it did not bear the appearance of outdoor relief. The EEA 1876 relaxed controls on parental contributions, to allow parents more choice of schools for their children, but tied access to fee waivers to Longley’s narrow standards of deservedness.⁶⁰⁹ Parents continued to be subjected to means testing by the Poor Law authorities until 1891 when education became truly universal in England and parental contributions were lifted.⁶¹⁰ Unfortunately, by this time almost all of the children from sample four were over 13 years of age - therefore the extent of their tertiary education remains unknown.

Industrial training techniques invariably affected the disparity between sample three and sample four. But other things did too including their family circumstances before sample three entered care. Most of the parents of the district school cohort were hard working labourers in respectable occupations before the crisis occurred that triggered state intervention. The idea that parental indolence was the prime cause of child poverty, as alleged by Fawcett, was a baseless assumption that was highly prevalent amongst Victorians.⁶¹¹ Contemporary understandings about child poverty fused the identity of juvenile paupers so closely to those of the slum dwellers in the East End that it became

⁶⁰⁸ EEA 1870 s.17.

⁶⁰⁹ EEA 1876 s.10.

⁶¹⁰ Elementary Education Act 1891 Vict. 54 & 55 c.56 s.8.

⁶¹¹ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Pages 79-91.

impossible to have a genuine regard for the complex nature of child poverty. A London newspaper from 1896 reported:

‘It was shown that a shockingly large percentage of Poor Law school children of the East End of London and of other large centres of population were so weak minded and had such lax moral instincts that a special course of training had to be adopted. Even then it was found that the children grew up hopeless –the boys drifting into loafers and criminals for the most part, the girls, feeble giggling things, falling away naturally into the streets.’⁶¹²

No support was offered for these conclusions by way of empirical evidence or aftercare work because once again popular assumptions oversimplified the backgrounds of those who sought assistance from the Poor Law in late-Victorian London.

Forty-one per cent of children from sample four had fathers who were occupied in skilled trades. An additional 11 per cent had fathers that were occupied in respectable agricultural positions such as farming or animal management in the census prior to the intervention of the authorities.⁶¹³ There were seven picture-frame makers, five musical instrument makers, four mantle-piece makers and numerous other independent manufacturers including surgical instrument makers, leather setters, coach-makers and book-printers whose families all sought help from the Poor Law authorities for at least one of their children. Yet again disparities emerge between representations of the poor by child-welfare reformers and their actual lived experiences because the occupations of most fathers of sample four children did not conform to the images of slum dwellers advanced by Victorian commentators.

⁶¹² Reynolds Newspaper, ‘Blinding the Children’ *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900* 2399 (1896).

⁶¹³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

Such disparities are reminiscent of the gap between the parentless imagery advanced by child-rescue narratives and the empirical evidence drawn from the SMSD logbooks discussed in chapter 3.⁶¹⁴ Parents of ‘other’ children were depicted as casual paupers who earned what little money they had in the streets.⁶¹⁵ They were often presented as work-shy or semi-criminals, whereas this study shows the parents of sample four - many of whom were in fact parents of ‘other’ children - were not lacking habits of industry. Over half of the fathers of children from sample four worked as skilled traders or agricultural labourers, and thus were unlikely to be members of the underclass unless they became ill or injured and were rendered unable to work. It is of course possible that some of the unskilled fathers of sample four children may have resembled depictions of slum dwellers because a lot of them worked as hawkers, warehousemen and general labourers, which were casual forms of labour that were almost exclusively conducted in the street, but they were the minority.

The households that aligned most closely to the harsh descriptions of slum dwellers were those of lone mothers. Working-class women with school-aged children were often thrust into abject poverty following the loss of a spouse, which forced them into the bottom sections of the labour force in an effort to avoid destitution. There were 22 such households in sample four (15 per cent).⁶¹⁶ All the women had lost spouses to various causes and used the district school system as a way to navigate their extreme poverty and the burden of compulsory attendance and school fees. They worked in unskilled roles such as laundresses, clothes-ironers, factory machinists, charwomen, child-carers and

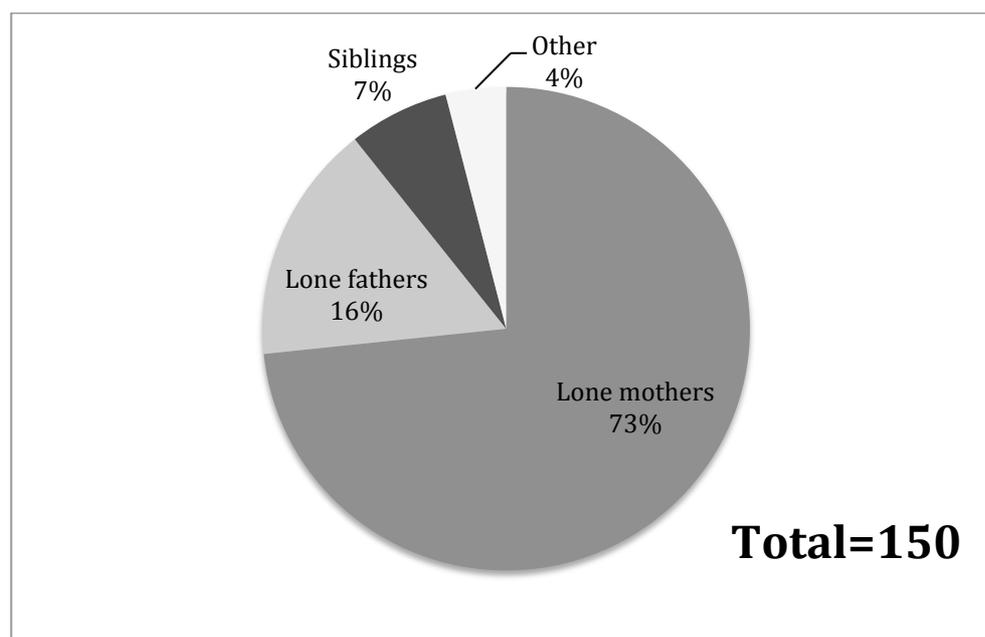
⁶¹⁴ See chapter 3 of this thesis for discussions about parentless imagery in rescue narratives and the presence of on-going parental relationships in the next-of-kin records for sample three.

⁶¹⁵ Liverpool Mercury, ‘The Slum Question v £21,000,000’ *British Library Newspapers, Part I: 1800-1900* 12877 (1889).

⁶¹⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881-1891.

bottle washers. It seems that the loss or desertion by a husband (or partner in the case of illegitimacy) was the most common reason mothers admitted their children to public childcare because the vast majority of sample three had lone mothers listed as their next of kin (see figure 5.10).⁶¹⁷ Only 4.4 per cent had two

Figure 5.10 Sample three next-of-kin relationships



parents listed or an extended relative and only 16 per cent had lone fathers listed. The chosen methods for this study only captured parents' occupations of parents from sample four before public interference because that is when biological parents were consistently found. However, inferences can be drawn from the 22 lone mothers who were already working *before* their children were institutionalised that the vast number of lone mothers who entered the labour force *after* their children were institutionalised also took up unskilled forms of labour despite the fact that a significant proportion of them had been married to skilled tradesmen.

⁶¹⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

This analysis suggests that many Poor Law families lived relatively comfortable lives until a crisis forced them into poverty at a time when provision of welfare for women and children was highly ineffective. Historians such as Kim Price have argued that many respectable wives from this period were forced into destitution following such events because the restrictions on outdoor relief were so tight.⁶¹⁸ The crusade against outdoor relief started in the early 1870s as rural populations experienced the consequences of the Corn Law repeals and urban populations experienced the consequences of industrialisation. More people started to look to the state for support as their living conditions deteriorated; at the same time parliament became increasingly anxious that dependency on the state was increasing rather decreasing.⁶¹⁹ In the early 70s some reformers still believed that widows and wives of the infirm deserved assistance so that they could maintain their family homes and avoid the workhouse.

But by the 80s (the key period of observation for this sample), political opinion had shifted toward policies that directed all able-bodied people in need of relief to the workhouse. Hard-liners argued widows and wives of the infirm should no longer be treated as exceptions to the prohibitions on parish funds because their husbands had failed to save on their behalf and were thus unworthy of help. Throughout the 1880s ratepayers warmed to such harsh moral ideals and lone mothers of any description were increasingly marginalised. The impact of those policies fuelled the hardship of the poor toward the end of the nineteenth century and played a pivotal role in the Liberal government's reform agenda throughout the early-twentieth century that was responsible for important predecessors to the welfare state such as the Old-Age Pensions Act 1908 and the National Insurance Act 1911.⁶²⁰

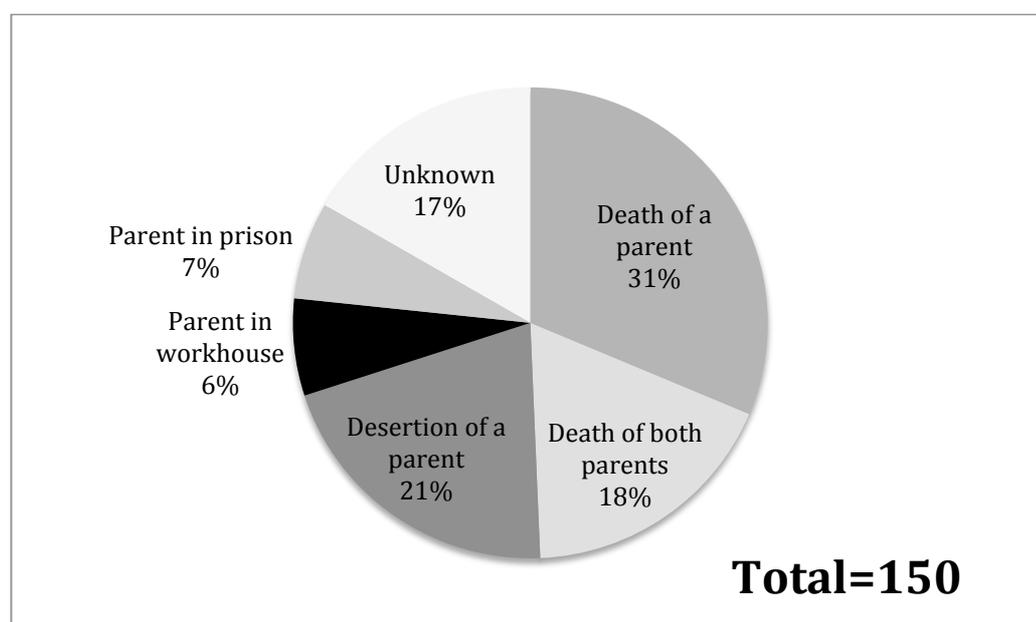
⁶¹⁸ Price, 'The crusade against out-relief'.

⁶¹⁹ Price, 'The crusade against out-relief'.

⁶²⁰ Edw. 7 c.40; Geo. 5 c.55.

By examining wider sources of evidence such as death indexes, workhouse admission records, baptismal records and criminal registers it becomes evident that most children from sample four saw their siblings sent to public childcare because a parent had died, deserted or been institutionalised as implied by the next-of-kin information (see figure 5.11).⁶²¹ Almost half of sample four had lost at least one parent in the period immediately before their siblings' admission and a gendered analysis shows that mothers were more likely to access parish relief than fathers. All the lone fathers were widowers, who were forced to admit their children to the care of the authorities because they themselves were being sent to

Figure 5.11 Causes of Poor Law intervention in sample four families



prison or the workhouse, which rendered their children without parental care. There were only four children from sample four (3 per cent) who had a lone father with a residential address known to the Guardians and their case will be explored below. By comparison, there were 67 children (45 per cent) who had lone mothers with residential addresses that were known to the Guardians. They

⁶²¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1891; England and Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915; Camberwell Poor Law Union Workhouse Admissions; Islington Poor Law Union Workhouse Admissions; London, Church of England Birth and Baptisms, 1813-1916; Criminal Registers 1791-1892.

too were usually widows who sought help within months of a spousal death, but notably a substantial number of them were able to maintain their homes, unlike fathers.

The disproportionate number of lone mothers living outside the workhouse with children in district schools suggests that the Camberwell Guardians did not apply Longley's recommendations on outdoor relief as harshly as other unions. Many Poor Law unions denied widows access to relief despite their previous status as worthy and forced them to submit to the workhouse irrespective of their circumstances. One such case attracted particular attention when the Isle of Wight union forced a widowed mother to submit her otherwise healthy adult son, who was labelled an idiot, to the workhouse instead of a more appropriate institution like an asylum or infirmary. Unfortunately, he died within a month due to severe starvation and the union was heavily criticised.⁶²²

It seems the Camberwell Guardians adopted a more moderate approach toward lone mothers, and allowed them to admit their children to public childcare without submitting to the workhouse. The SMSD records suggest warrants for parental contributions were rarely issued unless there was some form of serious misconduct such as desertion, imprisonment or instances where a husband allowed his wife and children to enter the workhouse without him.⁶²³ Warrants were intended to deter parents from evading their parental duties by exacting maintenance toward their children and the logbooks suggest there were no lone mothers with residential addresses who were pursued for contributions during the period of observation.

⁶²² Kim Price, 'Where is the Fault?': The Starvation of Edward Cooper at the Isle of Wight Workhouse in 1877 (2013) 26 *Social History of Medicine* 21.

⁶²³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002.

Gender clearly featured heavily throughout the findings of this inquiry. There were far fewer fathers in receipt of assistance from the Poor Law authorities than mothers and only one father was allowed to live outside the workhouse compared to 67 mothers with residential addresses. This discrepancy was partly attributable to a general disdain for male dependency, but also partly attributable to the reality that lone fatherhood did not generate the same degree of destitution as lone motherhood. For example, the father that was allowed assistance without entering the workhouse was a gardener named Francis Kibble. He was in his mid 60s when his much younger wife died and left him with the care of their seven children who were aged between four and 16 years.⁶²⁴ Within months of her death, Francis decided to send his three youngest children to the Guardians and keep those old enough to work at home.⁶²⁵

Francis told the authorities that the family lived in Peckham (and therefore had a traceable parent) but curiously; admission officials still classified them as deserted. The logbooks show he contributed financially to their education by regular maintenance payments and that the children were accommodated at Brighton Road until they reached the end of their compulsory education.⁶²⁶ Francis's circumstances were unique because he was an elderly father with a large family who was nonetheless able to contribute toward his children's upkeep, which men inside the workhouse and most lone mothers were unable to do. The Guardians' willingness to care for his children shows that the Poor Law authorities were willing to cooperate in certain circumstances, even with fathers, but cases like Francis Kibble were also highly unusual.

Parental deaths, desertions and institutionalisations were the main triggers for the intervention of the authorities into the private lives of poor families during

⁶²⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 688; Folio: 39; Page: 72; GSU roll: 1341160; England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915, vol 1d, page 569.

⁶²⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 39.

⁶²⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 65.

the late-nineteenth century. There were only 25 cases from sample four that could not be attributed to a single cause because there was either insufficient source data about the circumstances of the family at the time of admission or because the parents simply could not be traced. There were also two exceptions to the idea that child poverty was triggered by a crisis and they were siblings. The Egan brothers' parents were readily traced and neither had died, abandoned their spouse or entered the workhouse at the time their children were sent to the Brighton Road. This raises unanswered questions about why they were admitted to public childcare.

Twin brothers Charles and Henry Egan were aged five when they were sent to the Camberwell Guardians four days before Christmas in 1880.⁶²⁷ They were classified as deserted upon entry, but their mother Ellen provided her name and the address of the nursing institution that she attended to the Guardians. She was training to become a ladies nurse but still lived in the family home with her husband and other children. There was no mention of the husband in the Poor Law records. However, the census record after they were admitted confirms he lived in the family home in Lewisham and worked as a 'barrister at law, author, writer and publisher'.⁶²⁸ The family home was situated on a road that Booth described as 'middle class and well-to-do' and so yet again, the family appears very different from the images of slum dwellers and destitute parents presented by reformers.⁶²⁹

The boys were the middle children of the family and continued to be accommodated at Brighton Road until they were 17 years old when the Guardians discharged them. The authorities arranged for Henry to be sent to the military band of the Royal Highlanders in Scotland and for Charles to be sent to

⁶²⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 33.

⁶²⁸ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 732; Folio: 82; Page: 38; GSU roll: 1341170.

⁶²⁹ Booth, *Life and Labour in London; Maps of London Poverty*.

the Highland Army Regiment.⁶³⁰ Their discharge record explained the boys had been permitted to visit their mother at the nursing institute throughout their time at Brighton Road, and that Ellen had made irregular payments at a rate of four shillings and six pence per week toward their upkeep. Henry stayed with the Royal Highlanders until he was 35 then retired as a sergeant.⁶³¹ Charles ascended to the Royal Fusiliers where he served throughout the First World War and was awarded a victory medal upon its conclusion.⁶³² Ellen received a considerable sum of money after her husband died, but continued to work as nurse throughout later censuses.⁶³³

There is no evidence that she ever reunited with Henry or Charles after they left care, but her other children stayed in the family home well into adulthood. It is impossible to ascertain why Ellen institutionalised two children, but kept the others at home, especially given the apparent means of the family. The fact they were classified as deserted despite their on-going relationship with their mother establishes that they did not comply with the PLB's definition of deserted. But it also suggests that the Guardians felt confident they would not be discharged and therefore classified them as parentless. It is possible the boys had a different father, or presented other problems for the family, but their background hardly resembles the images advanced by contemporaries. Their case history suggests even middle-class children with enduring relationships could end up in public childcare during this period, even if the exact reasons for this remains unknown.

⁶³⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 32.

⁶³¹ Royal Hospital Chelsea: Length of Service Pensions, Admission Books; Class: WO 117; Piece Number: 76.

⁶³² The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; WWI Service Medal and Award Rolls; Class: WO 329; Piece Number: 1132.

⁶³³ England and Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1966, Principal Registry; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911: Class: RG14; Piece: 2441.

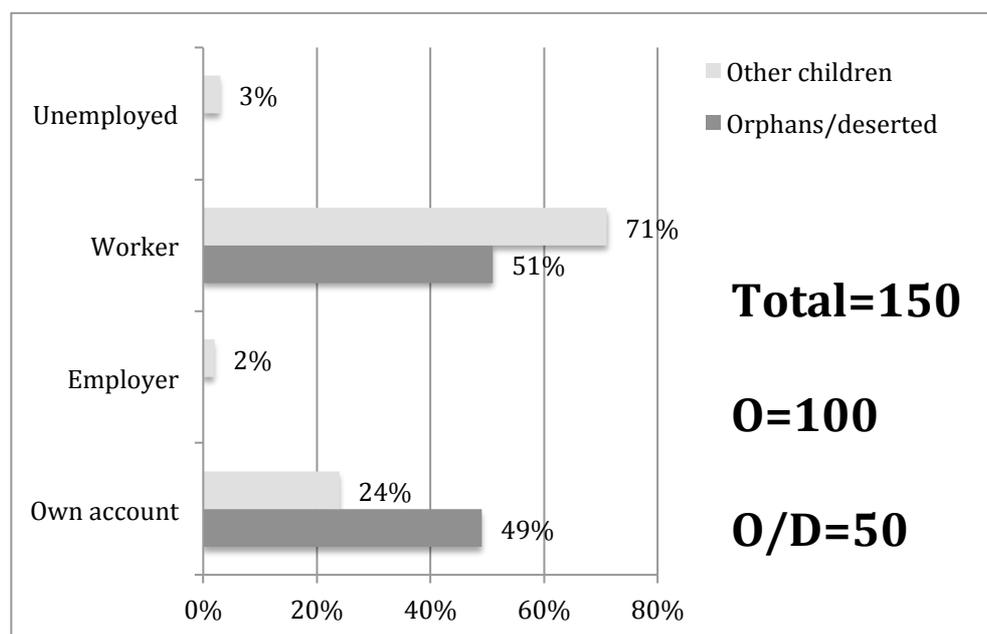
Inferences can be drawn from the large number of lone mothers in the sample that women were disproportionately affected by spousal deaths, desertions or institutionalisations, but that cases like Ellen Egan prove there were occasional exceptions to this rule. Fathers were meant to be self-supporting, and therefore not ever given the same level of support from the public purse as women. The crusade against outdoor relief was intended to restrict access for women, even for those who had previously been seen as deserving. The substantial number of widows and other types of lone motherhood evidenced from the logbooks suggest that the Camberwell authorities were prepared to be flexible with such policies.

The Egan children did not fit with the PLB's definition of deserted, because they had an on-going relationship with their mother that was apparently sanctioned by the Guardians. This meant they were not permanently abandoned as the PLB definition required. However, they were maintained financially by their mother and not reclaimed, which suggests the label of desertion might have been used to signal the loss of parental *care* rather the loss of *contact*. Chapter 3 showed us that the tripartite system was applied fairly consistently across vast numbers of children except for a limited number of deserted children and very limited number of orphans. Most likely, these were cases of administrative errors like the Belville children, however the Egan and Kibble case histories suggest administrators sometimes knowingly misapplied labels in certain instances. It appears the Guardians occasionally used their discretion to negotiate with parents in exceptional circumstances to soften the impact of harsh welfare restrictions because the tripartite system was unable to account for the complex nature of child poverty during this period.

Spatial controls were believed to be essential features of successful de-pauperisation because reformers believed children with enduring parental relationships posed a risk to parentless children even though accusations about

the dangers posed by ‘other’ children were overstated.⁶³⁴ However, as predicted by reformers it turns out that parentless children were more likely to be converted into the types of citizens that lawmakers desired than ‘other’ children because parentless children experienced more occupational improvements. The employment statuses of sample three shows the parentless classes achieved higher levels of occupational independence just as reformers predicted (see figure 5.12).⁶³⁵ The vast majority of children joined South Metropolitan schools

Figure 5.12 Sample three employment statuses organised by class



before they were nine years old and had at least four years of industrial training before they entered the labour force. The data drawn from the 1911 census shows 25 per cent more orphan and deserted children worked on their own account than ‘other’ children and 20 per cent fewer worked for trade employers.

Their occupational outcomes also transcended gender divisions unlike the findings on household statuses. Out of the 31 women from sample three who

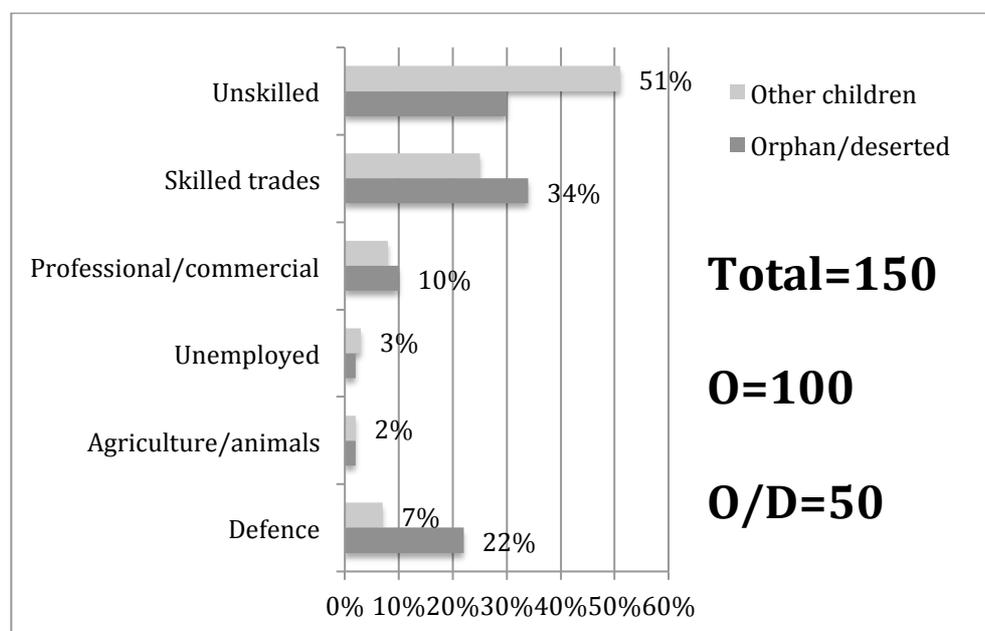
⁶³⁴ See chapter 3 of this thesis for this discussion.

⁶³⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

were unmarried when the 1911 census was taken, only four were classified as deserted as children but they all worked on their own accounts in positions including a confectioner, a housemother for a cottage home, a tailor and a writer. By comparison, the remaining 27 women were classified as ‘other’ and were all workers.⁶³⁶ Seventeen of them worked as indoor domestic servants; two as housekeepers and the remainder were dispersed in various unskilled roles such as charring or factory work.⁶³⁷

The results for sample three were bolstered by the contributions of the parentless children because they were more likely to become skilled traders or join the

Figure 5.13 Sample three occupational genres organised by class



military than those classified as ‘other’ (see figure 5.13).⁶³⁸ Reformers believed parentless children were better candidates for reformation because they were

⁶³⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁶³⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁶³⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

free from biological ties, which the reformers had assumed would make parentless children were naturally more independent. The LGB was hopeful the absence of parental connections would make them more receptive to careers that took them away from London like military service, farming or as travelling skilled artisans.⁶³⁹ One of Her Majesty's Poor Law School Inspectors, Mr H.G. Bowyer explained 'apart from questions of contamination, [the presence of parents] familiarise their minds with an idea of the place to which they can return whenever they find difficulty in getting their own living'.⁶⁴⁰ He explained parentless children were more likely to be self-sufficient adults than 'other' children because they would be naturally drawn to positions away from their birth communities such as 'farm service, the army, navy or mercantile marines, or in various kinds of travelling handicraft' and the evidence from this study suggests these assertions had merit because 'other' children did not enter those areas of employment with the same frequency.⁶⁴¹

Children from sample three were exposed to industrial training techniques, including trade workshops for boys and domestic services for girls, Those who had not been withdrawn by their parents would also have been offered further training such as apprenticeships, service positions, or a military training ship because the Guardians had a duty to supervise chargeable children until they were 16 years old.⁶⁴² Industrial training was delivered throughout district schools, irrespective of a child's classification, yet more 'other' children were unskilled labourers and more parentless children were soldiers or skilled traders.

This implies that skills-based tuition had a bigger impact on the occupations of children classified as orphans or deserted children than those with on-going

⁶³⁹ *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 207.

⁶⁴⁰ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-second Annual Report 1869-70* (C (1st series)) Page 135.

⁶⁴¹ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-second Annual Report 1869-70* (C (1st series)) Page 135.

⁶⁴² PLAA 1851 s.4.

parental relationships. Within the parentless faction of sample three there were six tailors, five boot-makers and a range of smiths along with two horse-keepers and a carter.⁶⁴³ Most of them worked on their own account in traditional crafts that served communal and national interests just as reformers had hoped. Eighteen were engaged in active military service during the 1911 census: eight army privates/infantry soldiers, one army sergeant, one Imperial marine, one Master at Arms for the Imperial Navy and a handful of military band musicians.⁶⁴⁴ A minority of sample three were engaged in professional work that was more varied including one optician, one accountant, one museum modeller, one medical dispenser, one police sergeant, an assortment of commercial clerks and two Poor Law officials.⁶⁴⁵

Child-welfare reformers liked the idea of previous inmates ascending into management roles within the Poor Law framework because it sent positive messages about possible attainment. For example, Annie Dunt was sent to Brighton Road in 1882 at the age of six after her parents abandoned her.⁶⁴⁶ She was an illegitimate child whose parents had tried to conceal her status by giving her a different surname and telling census enumerators she was a visitor rather than their daughter.⁶⁴⁷ Annie was found abandoned in the parish of Camberwell at the age of six and sent to Brighton Road where stayed until she was 15 years old, when the Guardians arranged a local service position for her.⁶⁴⁸ She worked in service for many years, but by the 1911 census had secured the job of a housemother in a cottage home run by Bermondsey Poor Law union.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁶⁴⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁶⁴⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁶⁴⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 28.

⁶⁴⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1881: Class: RG11; Piece: 699; Folio: 47; Page: 17; GSU roll: 1341163.

⁶⁴⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 28.

⁶⁴⁹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 3322.

This would have interpreted this as a highly successful case of de-pauperisation because Annie was self-sufficient and contributed toward the communal interests of Bermondsey by caring for juvenile paupers.

The case of William Frederick Darby was very similar. William worked as the master of Lewisham union's workhouse during the 1911 census.⁶⁵⁰ He and his brother were admitted to the Camberwell workhouse after their mother died and were classified as 'other' because their father was in the workhouse and had not relinquished contact with his sons. Unfortunately, he died shortly after they were admitted, and the children were relabelled as orphans.⁶⁵¹ William was discharged from Brighton Road at the age of 17, and the Guardians arranged an apprenticeship at the Greenwich union infirmary to train as a clerk.⁶⁵² He remained there for over 12 years and was eventually promoted to a steward and transferred to the Lewisham workhouse.⁶⁵³ William soon married a woman named Florence and by the 1911 census worked as the master of the Lewisham workhouse and died in 1935 leaving his wife £747, which was a successful outcome given his status as Poor Law orphan.⁶⁵⁴

Annie and William's case histories provide illustrations of the ways that juvenile paupers could satisfy reformers' aspirations of respectability, self-sufficiency and economic value without conforming to their nostalgic interest in pre-industrial ideals. Only five unskilled workers entered factory roles whereas over half entered reputable unskilled positions that served middle-class interests such as indoor domestic servants, chauffeurs, club attendants, and

⁶⁵⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2806.

⁶⁵¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 28.

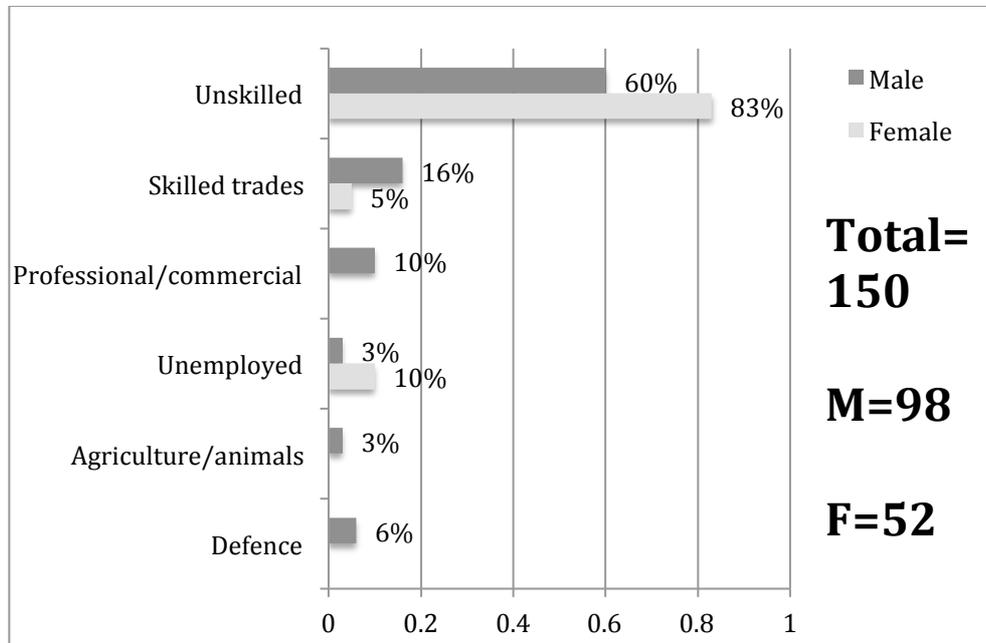
⁶⁵² PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 18.

⁶⁵³ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 550; Folio: 23; Page: 38.

⁶⁵⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2806; England and Wales, National Probate Calendar, 1858-1966; Probate date 10 Jul 1935, Kent.

hotel waiters.⁶⁵⁵ Although the parentless classes fared better than the rest of sample three, ‘other’ children still had better results than sample four overall (see figure 5.14).⁶⁵⁶ The

Figure 5.14 Sample four occupational genres organised by gender



two cohorts shared the same family backgrounds and crises that triggered state intervention, yet the data shows on-going relationships with biological parents did correlate with lower-skilled adult labour. Although similar numbers worked in agriculture, or were out of work as seen in sample three, only 16 children from sample four entered skilled trades or military service compared to 44 from sample three.

There were also disparities in the types of work they pursued. All the children from sample four that worked as professionals were clerks in different industries, but none of them became public servants within the Poor Law framework or police service and none of the skilled traders were artisan

⁶⁵⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁶⁵⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

craftsmen. There were two fishmongers, two hairdressers and two printers. The remainder were purveyors of foods - not traditional crafts.⁶⁵⁷ Most of sample four was occupied as unskilled labourers in noticeably lower skilled positions than their parents. Eight women worked as factory machinists, three as cooks and an additional eight as outdoor servants whereas the majority of men worked as porters, warehousemen, builders, house painters, general labourers or dockworkers.⁶⁵⁸

Industrial training methods definitely correlated with higher levels of occupational skill, just as reformers had anticipated. However, the term de-pauperised seems inappropriate given that none of sample four became adult paupers and thus where is the conversion? The terminology surrounding de-pauperisation was borne from a misguided belief amongst Victorian commentators that poverty was hereditary.⁶⁵⁹ The fact all of sample four were free from the workhouse during the 1911 census further highlights the system's inability to understand the nature of child poverty, but that misunderstanding does not change the fact that skills-based curriculums improved the economic value of juvenile paupers in adulthood.

Most females from sample three who did not marry, worked as servants in middle-class homes, whereas unmarried females from sample four were far more likely to work as outdoor servants or factory workers. Modern historians have argued that working-class women often described themselves as outdoor servants to census enumerators in order to avoid the appearance of unemployment,⁶⁶⁰ which provides for the possibility that some of these women

⁶⁵⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

⁶⁵⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

⁶⁵⁹ Fawcett, *Pauperism* Pages 79-91.

⁶⁶⁰ Edward Higgs, 'The tabulation of occupations in the nineteenth-century census, with special reference to domestic servants' (1982) 28 *Local Population Studies* 58 Page 62.

were actually out of work. Historians have shown it was common practice for a woman to describe herself as a ‘servant’ or ‘nurse’ in her own home to reflect her domestic contribution,⁶⁶¹ and the results from figure 5.14 should be interpreted with that in mind.

The inquiry into occupational improvements has shown that gender and classification were relevant factors in employment outcomes, and that district schools did positively impact adult citizenship outcome. They successfully trained girls to become indoor servants in middle-class homes and significant numbers of boys to become soldiers or traditional craftsmen. This study has also shown deserted children were not always parentless, but that their occupational outcomes still aligned more closely to those of orphans as contrasted to ‘other’ children. It appears enduring relationships between juvenile paupers and their parents did correlate with lesser-skilled work in adulthood as evidenced by the results of the ‘other’ children from sample three and whole of sample four. Both groups fared worse than the parentless classes.

The LGB warned Poor Law unions not to weaken or sever family ties by sending ‘other’ children to foster care, but happily fuelled the ins and outs discourse that so publicly shamed parents who sought relief for their children and contributed to the first restrictions on parental rights. The LGB’s apparent ‘respect’ for the biological relationships of juvenile paupers was a red herring because no child-welfare reformers promoted contact between child inmates and their parents. Instead this ‘respect’ was really directed at middle-class family units who reformers presumed would never require assistance from the authorities and thus parent-child relationships within the context of the poor had to be presented as harmful in order to justify public law interference. The final stage of this inquiry explores whether district schools deterred juvenile paupers from returning to their biological families as adults.

⁶⁶¹ Higgs, ‘The tabulation of occupations’ Page 62.

5.4. Severing biological relationships

The LGB admitted ‘it might be thought that some children would benefit from removal of their [parents] control’ but still officially discouraged such policies throughout the late-nineteenth century.⁶⁶² Some outspoken child-welfare reformers publicly contradicted the LGB’s position and actively championed the benefits of parental alienation for children in district schools. For example, in 1870 Tufnell told the LGB in no uncertain terms that poor parents were the greatest enemies of their children, and the less they saw of them the better.⁶⁶³ He strongly opposed Nassau Senior’s recommendations to expand the foster care system because he believed it removed the best inmates from the system and left the most difficult children behind. It was thirty years before the law incorporated notions of parental ‘unfitness’ as a legal basis to restrict parental rights and such changes paved the way for the broad powers of intervention that developed over the course of the twentieth century.⁶⁶⁴

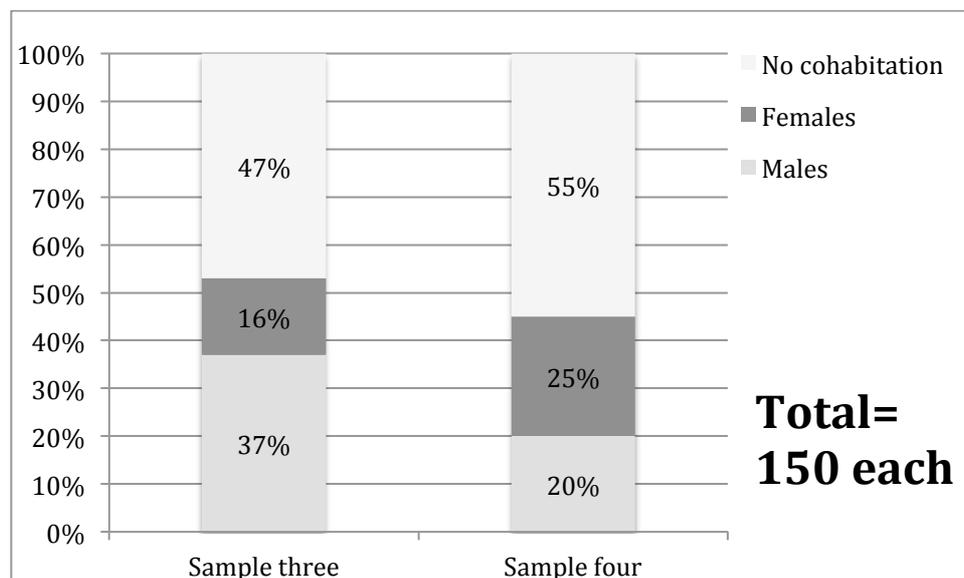
These interventionist powers are presented as measures of child protection, but their origins undoubtedly stem from moral idealism and nationalist sentiment rather than the welfare of the child. None of the children in sample three were

⁶⁶² LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

⁶⁶³ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 207.

⁶⁶⁴ Examples of expanded rights of custody transfer include the Adoption of Children Act 1926 Geo. 16 & 17 c.29, the Children Act 1948 Geo. 11 & 12 c.43 and the Children Act 1989 c.41.

Figure 5.15 Parent-child reunions for samples three and four during 1901 census



still chargeable by the time parental unfitness became a basis for removal because the vast majority were discharged before the first restrictions were passed in 1889. However, the 1901 census records show a significant number of children returned to their family home after leaving public childcare, especially males. Although more children from sample four lived with parents overall during the 1911 census, over half of sample three returned to a parent for some period after they were discharged from public childcare (see figure 5.15).⁶⁶⁵ Interestingly, 32 per cent of parent-child reunions from sample three occurred between sons and lone mothers, whereas only five per cent were between sons and lone fathers who had subsequently been discharged from workhouses or prisons. Daughters were also more likely to reunite with lone mothers, but only two per cent of parent-daughter reunions involved biological fathers.

It is unsurprising that more children returned to lone mothers because they were the most likely parents to institutionalise their children. District school females

⁶⁶⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

were the least likely candidates to reunite with a parent over either the short or the long term because they often were provided with accommodation as part of their employment.⁶⁶⁶ They had markedly different experiences after leaving public childcare compared to males, but in different ways than Nassau Senior had predicted. Very few of them returned to parents after leaving the SMSD because so many of them became indoor domestic servants in middle-class homes that housed the women as part of their employment. Nassau Senior anticipated that girls would struggle to acquire the necessary skills for service including obedience and the arts of thrift or good health.⁶⁶⁷ She argued that district schools were designed in such a way that they failed to give girls the same amount of responsibility as boys because garden maintenance, management of food messes, and that skill-based workshops were reserved for boys to enhance their life skills whilst girls were left with drudgery. She consulted prison wardens and matrons of women's institutions to obtain their opinions about the impact of institutionalisation on females, and most agreed that girls who were raised in workhouses or district schools were the worst type of adult inmate. These predictions were not particularly accurate over the long term.

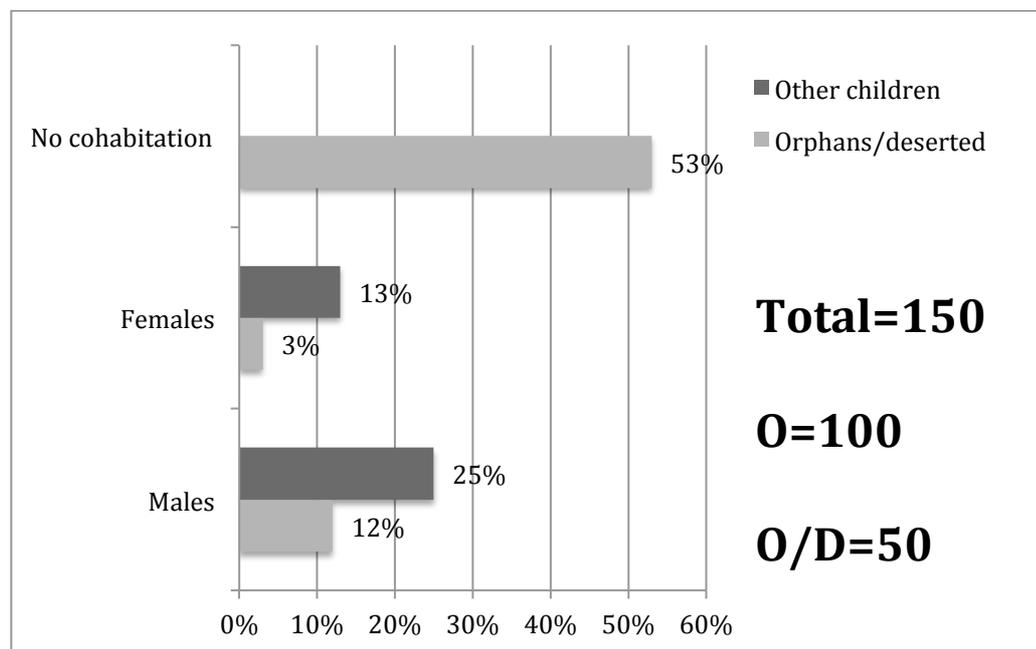
Broader questions about the nature of enduring parent-child relationships could not be studied due to limitations within the Victorian sources and the methods used for this project. These limitations are why reunions after care were investigated instead. It is impossible to know from the available sources whether district school females helped lone mothers in other ways but inferences can be drawn that district school males played a bigger role in family survival plans because significant numbers of them were admitted by destitute single mothers to whom they later returned as earners. Trends in parent-child reunions also show that sons were more likely than daughters to reunite with a

⁶⁶⁶ See figure 5.5 for information about the household statuses of sample three organised by gender.

⁶⁶⁷ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Pages 52-147.

parent irrespective of their classification (see figure 5.16).⁶⁶⁸ Twenty-five per cent of ‘other’ males

Figure 5.16 Parent-child reunions for sample three organised by class



lived with a parent between the 1891 and 1911 censuses compared to only 13 per cent of ‘other’ females. Most reunions were between unmarried sons and lone mothers, whereas within sample four they were usually between married daughters and two parents.

Parent-child cohabitation was common amongst the working classes and it makes sense that daughters would bring husbands into the family home to pool domestic resources.⁶⁶⁹ But reformers were extremely anxious that parents did not benefit from the gains their children acquired in district schools because they felt it effectively rewarded them for evading parental duty. Reformers argued that unscrupulous parents would discharge their children once they reached working age in order to profit from their enhanced earning potential,

⁶⁶⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1891-1901.

⁶⁶⁹ Davin, *Growing Up Poor* Pages 45-51.

and used these arguments to campaign for restrictions on parental rights.⁶⁷⁰ However, the evidence from this study lends support to more nuanced explanations like those advanced by modern historians.

Murdoch and Swain asserted that parents admitted children to philanthropists like Thomas Barnardo or religious emigration societies throughout this period as a conscious choice to improve the circumstances of their families.⁶⁷¹ I argue poor parents in the area of Camberwell used the SDSM in a similar way. Some parents used the school system as a short-term coping strategy as discussed in chapter 3, while others used it as a long-term form of childcare without any intention of relinquishing their relationship with their children. The evidence from this inquiry suggests the district school system functioned as a coping mechanism for those marginalised by the crusade against outdoor relief - rather than a system of childcare for parentless children - just as other historians have explored other acts of agency within poor communities.⁶⁷² Parents who consciously institutionalised their children, and the disproportionate number of adult sons that returned to lone mothers afterwards, can be interpreted as examples of this type of tactical decision-making.

The case history of the Elford family illustrates this in more detail. Richard and Jane Elford had three sons before Richard Senior died, named Henry, George and Richard Junior.⁶⁷³ Jane immediately sent them to the care of the Camberwell Guardians at the ages of four, six and eight respectively, and they were classified as deserted upon entry.⁶⁷⁴ Their admission record shows that Jane was named as their next of kin, but no address was recorded. This may

⁶⁷⁰ The York Herald, 'Yorkshire Poor Law Unions Conference at Harrogate' *British Library Newspapers Part II: 1800-1900* 11999 (1889) Page 6.

⁶⁷¹ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans*; Swain, 'Child Rescue'.

⁶⁷² Tompkins and King, *Poor in England 1700-1850*.

⁶⁷³ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1881; Class: RG11; Piece: 691; Folio: 158; Page: 69; GSU roll: 1341160.

⁶⁷⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 24.

have been because she refused to disclose any details about her circumstances or because she simply abandoned her sons at the workhouse without providing any information. The boys were quickly transferred to Brighton Road where they all stayed until they were 14 years old, at which time the Guardians arranged for them to be sent to the military training ships *Exmouth* and *Harriott*.

Their discharge records show that Jane returned to the Guardians within two years of admission to explain that she had been widowed but had since remarried and was able to contribute 15 shillings a month toward her children's maintenance.⁶⁷⁵ She had two further children with her second husband, but unfortunately he died at the same time that the Elford brothers completed their tuition on training ships.⁶⁷⁶ Richard and George then returned to Jane's home and started work. Richard as a leather setter, Jane as a charwoman, George as a hawker and their younger brother Joseph as a sawmill bench boy.⁶⁷⁷

Their case history illustrates the limited options faced by lone mothers with school-aged children if they lost spouses to illness, incarceration or death during this period. Without the help of family or community members, sometimes the only available option was to send children to public childcare or desert them entirely. Remarriage helped but was not always a given. Jane Elford's story also shows why gender was a more accurate predictor of parent-child reunion after care than classification because it shows the gender of the parent was often a more significant factor than the gender of the child inmate. Daughters from district schools were more likely to become indoor servants, and thus less able to support a lone parent in their own house, whereas sons

⁶⁷⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Page 32.

⁶⁷⁶ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 509; Folio: 93; Page: 35.

⁶⁷⁷ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 2562.

were more likely to become skilled labourers who could materially support their widowed mothers.

5.5. Concluding remarks

Certain claims advanced by child-welfare reformers were more accurate than others. For example, Nassau Senior's prediction that district schools would produce gendered consequences was fair, but her expectation that females would be unsuited to respectable indoor service positions was not. The evidence from this chapter has shown that although each gender experienced different outcomes in terms of getting married or establishing self-sufficient households, it was misguided to assume males were better candidates for reformation in district schools than females. Both genders fulfilled key aspirations set by reformers, and should in turn be regarded as broadly successful because large numbers of girls became the types of working-class women that middle-class activists desired. Equally, considerable numbers of boys entered the military or skilled trades as hoped. Females often lived as lodgers as a consequence of their service positions whereas males often lived with their mothers because such women were often still experiencing extreme hardship. Industrial training improved their economic value within the labour force, but did not disrupt their connections to their biological families, an outcome which would have been met with mixed responses by reformers.

Parents of district school children benefitted from the system despite reformers' fierce determination that they should not. Not only were they relieved of childcare responsibilities and mandatory school fees, they often gained a more highly skilled male earner if their sons returned home. Poor Law administrators feared parents would institutionalise their children in order to escape their responsibilities (as illustrated by the ins and outs discourse), but failed to understand that most parents needed help because of some form of family crisis. Instead, the administrators framed the presence of 'other' children in district schools as proof of the moral corruption of their parents and shaped de-

pauperisation objectives and reductions in parental rights on this misinformation.

Expectations that parentless children were superior candidates for reform were an ideal example of this. Orphan and deserted children achieved more independence in occupational and domestic settings than those with enduring parental relationships. Tufnell believed this was because parents corrupted their children through their indolent influence and vice, but most children in fact had lone mothers who were struggling in a landscape of diminishing welfare support. Boys educated in district schools became more economically valuable workers than their non-institutional siblings and their disproportionate presence in family homes as adults suggests they were active participants in the survival strategies of their families. By contrast, orphans and deserted children were naturally more independent because they had no one to support but this did not make them morally superior citizens to 'other' children.

District schools were heavily populated with children who were deliberately selected by a parent to help navigate their circumstances and far fewer inmates were orphans or casual paupers as characterised in the Victorian scholarship about juvenile de-pauperisation. Parents typically selected school-aged children, and kept infants and teenagers at home, such that the burdens of work and childcare could be shared and the pressures of school fees alleviated. The harsh rhetoric espoused by reformers like Tufnell hinted at an understanding of the lived experiences of these types of families because it acknowledged they had family relationships that were of value to them. However, it also inappropriately framed their motivation for seeking relief as moral corruption rather than personal misfortune; thereby implying their family affections were less authentic than the middle classes. Tufnell was right that district schools offered a superior standard of training from national schools, because sample three produced more skilled labourers irrespective of classification than samples four or five, which will be discussed further in chapter 6. However, he was wrong that classification labels were always capable of signalling the

reformation potential of a child because they could be accidentally or deliberately misapplied, as seen with the Egan and Kibble case histories.

Parentless children could be presented as superior candidates for reform because they fitted with reformers' beliefs of how the system should work but the evidence shows this did not make 'other' children inferior candidates for reform compared to their non-institutional siblings. 'Other' children also became respectable indoor servants, soldiers, and skilled traders whereas, as the next chapter will discuss, the parentless children who were sent to foster homes did not achieve similar levels of success. Fostered children often became lodgers or unskilled labourers as adults, and were the least skilled cohort from the study. By focussing on notions of parental status to predict future success reformers unfairly presented working-class parents as threats to their children whereas they were really conscious agents making the best of an ill equipped system of child welfare.

Chapter 6: From rural cottages to English citizens

6.1. Introduction

The citizenship aspirations assigned to foster children were broadly similar to those of district school inmates because reformers also wanted them to become self-sufficient adults who would serve the wider interests of society. The law sought to achieve this by prohibiting people who relied on parish relief, or had large families, from becoming foster parents and by promoting children under the age of five as the ideal candidates for foster care.⁶⁷⁸ The LGB also requested that priority be given to agricultural labourers, rather than those engaged in sedentary labour, and that populated areas were avoided at all costs in order to exclude certain types of families from raising pauper children.⁶⁷⁹

Chapter 4 showed how Poor Law administrators miscalculated both the reality of need in the countryside and the motivations of those people who were willing to open their homes to regular inspections on behalf of the middle classes. As a result, very few substitute families met with the political ideals that underpinned the scheme. Foster parents usually requested older children, rather than the under-fives, and were often elderly, widowed, or people running farms that needed cheap labour.⁶⁸⁰ In practice, they were rarely the outdoor self-sufficient labourers the LGB had in mind. Many of them were unskilled, or out of work completely, and most of the agricultural labourers who did offer to foster had too many children to comply with the law and used juvenile paupers as servants.

Poor Law administrators had far less little control over the administration of foster care compared to the district school system. The system relied on local

⁶⁷⁸ GO 1870 (Article V) and GO 1889 (Article VI).

⁶⁷⁹ LGB letter 1870 Pages 13-14.

⁶⁸⁰ See figure 4.9 and 4.11 for information about the ages and occupations of the foster parents of sample two.

volunteers for most decisions and chapter 4 showed these agents generally exercised their discretion very broadly. The law also failed to exact any punitive measures for committee members who breached their promises to the LGB, which left the system largely deregulated. However, the limited administrative choices within the remit of the Poor Law authorities were vigilantly complied with. The Guardians did not exploit the newly available resolution powers to convert ‘other’ children from school populations with known parents into the orphan or deserted classes for the purposes of foster care.

As discussed in chapter 4, only those children whose parental circumstances met with the legal criteria were made available for fostering.⁶⁸¹ The Guardians rigidly adhered to this rule and kept those whose circumstances fell outside the definition of parentless in the district school system.⁶⁸² But local committee members were not as scrupulous about complying with legal requirements and often ignored controls on the ages of children, the sizes of families, and the occupations of foster parents.⁶⁸³ The data presented in this chapter attempts to show some of the consequences of this capricious system of childcare, and I conclude that it was largely ineffective as a means of citizenship reform.

Sample five was composed of 150 children from the Islington Poor Law union that were sent to foster care between 1889-99 and was assembled for the purpose of exploring questions about citizenship reform.⁶⁸⁴ The sample was drawn from sample two and selection was based on the ability to trace them using genealogical triangulation methods. Remember that preference was

⁶⁸¹ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁶⁸² See section 4.2 of this thesis for a discussion about the Guardians’ adherence to the eligibility rules for foster care.

⁶⁸³ See section 4.3 of this thesis for a discussion about the use of discretion by committee members with respect to the rules on the ages of children, size of foster families and the occupations of foster parents.

⁶⁸⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02.

always given to those children who had siblings that did not experience public childcare for the purposes of assembling sample four, which meant children from large families were over represented in this data. This chapter will ask if foster children were: 1) able to establish independent households; 2) if they entered the types of occupations that reformers wanted, and 3) if they integrated into their foster communities over the long term. Chapter 4 confirmed that most foster children did not have enduring relationships with biological parents, and thus questions about parental reunions are not relevant to this inquiry. However, lawmakers did want foster children to assimilate into the countryside and resemble the idealised ‘rural cottagers’ described in the reform literature and that is why long-term integration is investigated in this chapter.⁶⁸⁵

My findings show sample five had more adult lodgers, fewer independent labourers and more unskilled workers than sample three by the time of the 1911 census. These findings suggests that Nassau Senior’s predictions were overly optimistic because, in many ways, the children in foster care experienced the worst outcomes of the three cohorts, even though advocates of the system anticipated they would fare better over the long run.⁶⁸⁶ Very few of them were skilled or professional labourers, and they had higher rates of unemployment than the other two cohorts from this study. It must be borne in mind that chapter 4 showed that foster care was not administered as the law intended. As a result, this might account for some of the disparities with the results from samples three and four. Critics of the foster care system argued its biggest defects were the shortage of suitable homes and the lack of effective supervision once children were placed in them.⁶⁸⁷ As one reformer explained ‘the principal weakness of the boarding out system lies in the fact that it is founded on two

⁶⁸⁵ ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’.

⁶⁸⁶ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 52-147.

⁶⁸⁷ ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Page 27.

opposite principles [...] the benevolence and honesty of human nature and the distrust of its selfishness and dishonesty'.⁶⁸⁸

Child-welfare reformers expected that foster parents might be motivated for the wrong reasons. They also feared that local volunteers might fail to detect or report problems such as abuse or exploitation.⁶⁸⁹ But the system's advocates countered such criticisms by arguing that the benefits of merging Poor Law children into the general population outweighed the risks because post-care assimilation was perceived as the biggest challenge facing children from district schools.⁶⁹⁰ They suggested that integration into foster parishes over the long term was just as important as becoming self-sufficient because it would prevent urban poor children from returning to their birth communities or workhouses, as evidenced by the Scottish foster system.⁶⁹¹ Building on the findings from chapter 5, it should be unsurprising that sample five did not achieve the same level of occupational success as sample three because Tufnell's expectation that national schools could not produce the same results as district schools was well founded.⁶⁹²

This chapter also presents a mixture of evidence that suggests that the objective of assimilation was largely successful, even if other reformation goals were not. Drawing on a wide range of sources, it appears that juvenile paupers from Islington Poor Law union integrated into small agricultural villages in a variety of ways over the long term. Some lived with their foster parents as adult lodgers or servants, others established their own households within the community or cited it as their domicile in military documentation. Notable

⁶⁸⁸ *The Local Government Board: Fourth Annual Report 1874-1875* (C (2nd series)) Page 195.

⁶⁸⁹ 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system' Page 27.

⁶⁹⁰ 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system' Page 25.

⁶⁹¹ 'Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system' Pages 4-6.

⁶⁹² *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 206. See figure 5.12 and figure 5.13 for information about the occupational improvements of sample three.

numbers were also buried in their foster parishes or commemorated on its war memorial.

Again, it must be reiterated that it is impossible to ascertain all the factors that contributed to these events from the available sources and chosen methods of this study. However, inferences can be drawn from these forms of evidence that long-term integration was not uncommon for foster children under the Poor Law, even if they did not achieve other ideals set by child-welfare reformers. It was arguably misguided for reformers to pitch such different systems of public childcare against one another throughout the ins and outs discourse, especially since district schools were fundamentally different environments from foster families. Yet, it would also be unfair to suggest that foster care failed to achieve any of its reformation objectives. Although foster children rarely became the types of adult citizens that the middle classes wanted them to be, they did not return to urban poverty or workhouses in significant numbers either.

The findings from this study indicate that foster children largely merged into their communities as intended and adopted the citizenship characteristics of the people who were already there. The problem was rather that lawmakers had miscalculated the nature of working-class life in the countryside at the close of the century. Chapter 4 showed us that most foster parents from this sample were experiencing similar levels of hardship as the urban poor because of various legislative changes. They were mostly unskilled, elderly, widowed, or suffering from housing problems, and certainly did not reflect the traditional ideals of craftsmanship that lawmakers envisioned. I have argued that most of the people who put themselves forward as foster parents were facing considerable adversity, and I further argue that this is why children in their care struggled to achieve the same results as children educated in district schools. Most of foster children successfully joined the ranks of the rural working classes as adults, which in many ways was a coup for the system, but failed to become the types of citizens desired by reformers because their aspirations were embedded in idealistic conceptions of the poor, not reality.

6.2. Becoming independent householders

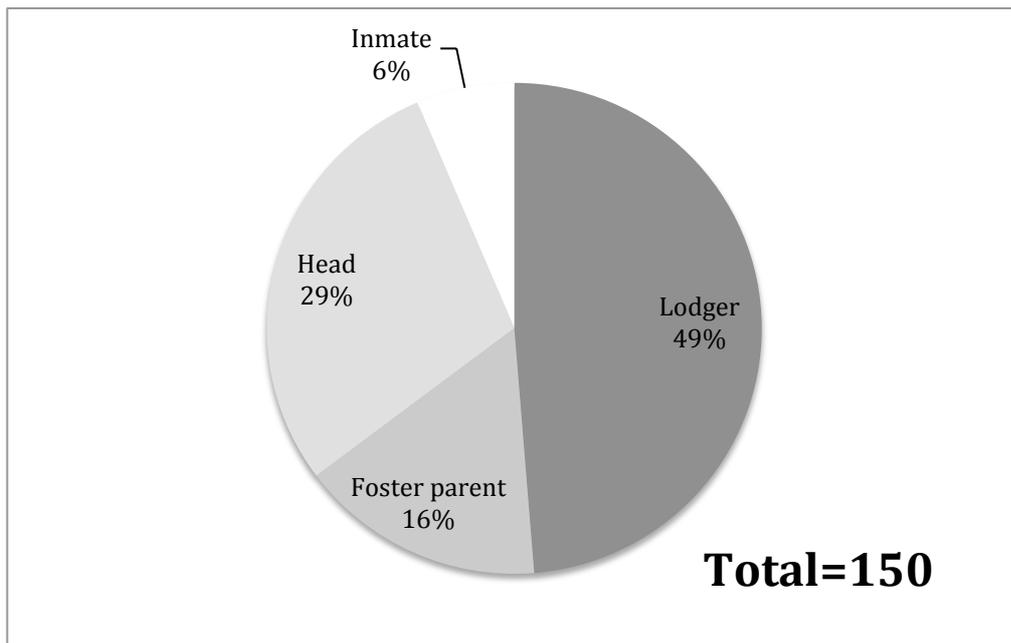
All the foster parents from this study maintained independent homes while they cared for children from Islington Poor Law union. However, there is ample evidence that suggests they also experienced the types of personal crises that often led urban parents to institutionalise their children.⁶⁹³ In many ways the childhoods of sample five children were less stable than those in sample three because they were affected by repeated crises that directly affected their accommodation. For example, the loss of biological parents forced these children into enter public childcare where they were soon relocated to fosterers who often died, had relationship breakdowns or housing crises. These events forced the children to be rehomed or returned to the Guardians if another placement could not be arranged.

Measured against these experiences, district schools were considerably more secure. This type of instability impacted the ability of foster children to establish independent households as adults (see figure 6.1).⁶⁹⁴ Almost half the sample lived as adult lodgers during the 1911 census and only 29 per cent had

⁶⁹³ See chapter 3 of this thesis for the case history of the Beilby family and chapter 4 of this thesis for the case history of the Silvester brothers.

⁶⁹⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

Figure 6.1 Sample five household statuses during the 1911 census



established their own homes. By contrast, 16 per cent remained with their foster parents and six per cent returned to institutions. These were the lowest rates of independent households and parent-child cohabitation from the entire study and these findings reflect the higher levels of volatility experienced by this group as children. Not only had they permanently lost their biological parents and been institutionalised, but their foster arrangements rarely aligned with the ideals envisioned by lawmakers.

Most of the children who lived as inmates during the 1911 census were over ten years of age when they entered foster care and all of them lived in London workhouses as contrasted to regional workhouses near their foster parishes.⁶⁹⁵ Some were in infirmaries; others were in workhouses or lunatic asylums, but none of them had entered regional institutions close to their foster parishes. One was male and nine were females. Yet again the gendered consequences of childhood poverty are exposed because, as will be discussed below, girls in

⁶⁹⁵ See the cases of Ada Randall, Andrew Larman, Charlotte Allen, Charlotte Holmes, Elizabeth Brodie, Ethel Poppelwell, Henrietta Stonehouse, Maud Denson, Sophia Felstead and Winnifred Cobbett from PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

foster care generally experienced worse outcomes than boys by adulthood - especially those born to single mothers. Such assertions run completely counter to Nassau Senior's central claim that girls would thrive under the foster care scheme because district schools were failing girls. She told the LGB [...]

'I am painfully unimpressed by the number reported to have fallen.

It will be said that my report is no proof; and positive evidence on this point is difficult to obtain. But when, after doing unsatisfactorily in service, a girl drops out of sight, it is difficult to avoid the inference that the report of her having gone wrong is not altogether without foundation.'⁶⁹⁶

Nassau Senior had very little empirical evidence to support her beliefs over the long run.⁶⁹⁷ The evidence from this study suggests that fostered girls did not achieve the same levels of stability in adulthood as girls from district school or boys from foster care. However, the reasons that fostered girls experienced such difficulty were inevitably more complex than the quality of education in national schools (as argued by Tufnell),⁶⁹⁸ or the inconsistent application of the law. This complexity can be seen by the case of Ethel Poppelwell.

Ethel was first admitted to the Islington workhouse at five months of age along with her mother Elizabeth who worked as casual cleaner.⁶⁹⁹ She was of illegitimate birth and stayed in the workhouse with her mother for seven years until Elizabeth eventually died, at which time Ethel was officially classed as an orphan.⁷⁰⁰ Within six months of her mother's death, Ethel was sent to the small village of Croxton in Cambridgeshire in late 1899. Croxton was the smallest

⁶⁹⁶ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Page 130.

⁶⁹⁷ See section 3.3 of this thesis for a discussion about the aftercare studies in the Victorian sources.

⁶⁹⁸ *The Poor Law Board Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 206.

⁶⁹⁹ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: ISBG/282/029.

⁷⁰⁰ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: ISBG/277/011.

foster parish in this study and had only 247 residents during the 1901 census.⁷⁰¹ Ethel was sent to the home of Robert and Susan Billings, who were over 70 years old when they signed their undertaking to look after her.⁷⁰² Neither foster parent was employed at the time but Robert was described as an agricultural labourer in previous censuses. Ethel was seven years old when she arrived and had no experience of a family home prior to her arrival because she had been in the workhouse all her life. Unfortunately, Robert died three years after she arrived and 74-year-old Susan decided to return Ethel to the Guardians and rent a room in a neighbour's home in Croxton instead of trying to maintain an independent household.⁷⁰³

The Guardians quickly arranged for Ethel to be sent to a new family. Unfortunately, they could not find a home for her in Croxton so she was sent to the much larger community of Honiton in Devon. Honiton had a population in excess of 3,000 by 1901, and ten-year-old Ethel was sent to the home of Tom Vergin along with another orphan from the Islington workhouse named Mary Joseph.⁷⁰⁴ Tom was a married tailor in his late 50s whose own children had grown up and moved away. Yet again, Ethel's life was destabilised shortly thereafter because two years later one of Tom's biological daughters returned to the family home with her infant child. Shortly after this event, Tom returned Ethel to the Guardians. By this time Ethel was 14 years old, and ready to start work, but the Honiton committee arranged one last foster placement for her at the home of Thomas Shepperd.⁷⁰⁵ Within less than one year Ethel returned to the care of the Islington Guardians for unknown reasons, and there are no records to indicate if the Guardians provided her with further training.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰¹ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901.

⁷⁰² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 20.

⁷⁰³ England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915; vol 3a; Page 247.

⁷⁰⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 43.

⁷⁰⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 72.

⁷⁰⁶ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; London Poor Law and Board of Guardian Registers; Reference: ISBG/315/08.

Ethel's childhood was characterised by instability starting with the absence of her father, to her early years in the workhouse and her mother's death, and subsequent foster-care experiences. She experienced repeated upheaval as a child and unfortunately ended up in the Marylebone workhouse by the age of 19 having lost her position as a domestic servant.⁷⁰⁷ In many ways the workhouse was the most stable home environment that Ethel had experienced in her turbulent childhood and later records suggest she never successfully shed her pauper identity. Sadly, she fluctuated in and out of workhouses throughout her 20s and 30s until she was eventually resettled in Hackney workhouse in 1922 where she died.⁷⁰⁸ Her case history illustrates some of the complexity behind the lives of juvenile paupers and why caution must be exercised when trying to make causal connections between systems of public childcare and adult outcomes.

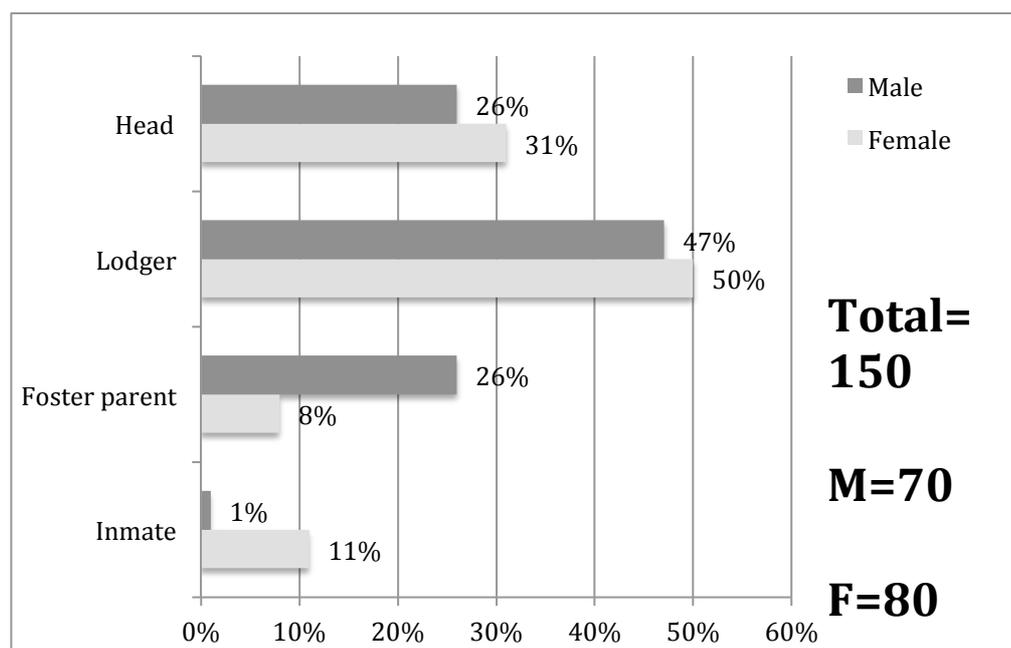
There were a multitude of factors that affected the life chances of every child inmate. However, the empirical evidence from this study suggests gender played a more determinative role than reformers anticipated. Girls were more likely become lodgers or inmates and they were less likely to live with their foster parents as adults (see figure 6.2).⁷⁰⁹ Nassau Senior said 'the educational advantages provided for boys in Metropolitan pauper schools are very great, and better than the education they would get in country day-schools [...] but, even

⁷⁰⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 551.

⁷⁰⁸ London, England, Selected Poor Law Removal and Settlement Records, 1698-1930; Reference Number: HABG/195/010.

⁷⁰⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

Figure 6.2 Sample five household statuses organised by gender



the very best separate and district schools, do not answer to the case for girls'.⁷¹⁰ This claim lacks empirical support because the girls from sample five experienced worse outcomes than boys even though more of them established independent homes than boys. There were still far fewer homemakers from this group than samples three or four, which suggests that both district schools and biological homes were better for girls than foster care.⁷¹¹

The disproportionate number of boys that lived with their foster parents in adulthood is another example of the gendered consequences of poverty from this period. Chapter 5 showed how most mothers who institutionalised their children were widowed or unmarried and I argued these mothers sent their sons to district schools instead of daughters as part of a conscious survival strategy.⁷¹² There were sound reasons behind such decisions because sons could attract higher rates of pay once they entered the workforce and daughters could

⁷¹⁰ Nassau Senior, 'Education of Girls in Pauper Schools' Page 128.

⁷¹¹ See figure 5.5 and figure 5.6 for information about the household statuses of samples three and four organised by gender.

⁷¹² See figure 5.11 for information about the causes for Poor Law intervention in sample four.

fulfil domestic duties such as cleaning or childcare so that mothers could enter the workforce. Although foster parents requested girls in broadly similar numbers to boys, far fewer of them stayed in their foster homes over the long term. Boys who were over ten years of age when they started their foster placement were the most likely candidates to stay with their fosterers as adults, which is interesting because it provides for the possibility that foster parents were equally strategic in their interactions with the Poor Law authorities.

The LGB was deeply concerned that rural cottagers might exploit the foster care scheme as a source of cheap labour.⁷¹³ However, they left judgments about the motivations of prospective fosterers with voluntary committee members in each parish who evidently exercised their discretion widely. Committees' broad use of discretion may have been born from a desire to help the poorest members of their communities without resorting to parish funds - and thus violating the principles of the crusade against outdoor relief. The LGB required due securities be taken to ensure 'the *respectability* and *disinterestedness* of such voluntary associations' and the 'regularity of their proceedings, for due observance on their part of the legal requirements attaching to the work which they undertake'.⁷¹⁴ However, the law did little to enforce these requests. All the findings from the foster-care sample must be interpreted in light of the possibility that committee members were not as impartial as lawmakers had hoped. There were relatively few controls of the formation of foster-care committees including: 1) every committee must have a minimum of three people; 2) one must be a lady, 3) one must act as secretary and correspond with the LGB, and 4) all members must sign an undertaking to observe the law.⁷¹⁵ These limited controls were designed to promote discretion, but the LGB made no secret about how the government wanted it applied in Arthur Peel's letter.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ LGB letter 1870 Pages 9-12.

⁷¹⁴ LGB letter 1870 Page 9.

⁷¹⁵ GO 1877 required the sex and occupation of each committee member to be disclosed at formation; GO 1870 (Article II).

⁷¹⁶ LGB letter 1870.

However, their recommendations failed to prevent local agents from administering the foster care system in a way that allowed some children to become servants in their foster homes, as seen with the case of foster parent Albert Truckle.

Albert was a dairy farmer in his early 40s who lived in Denmead in Hampshire.⁷¹⁷ He was married with three children: two sons and one daughter. His son had set up his own farm down the road, which left Albert without any help to work his land. Shortly after these events unfolded, Albert signed an undertaking to raise William Arthur Dickenson as his own.⁷¹⁸ William was ten years old when he started his placement and was yet another example of committee members ignoring controls on ages. Just like Ethel Poppelwell, the workhouse featured heavily in William's upbringing but unlike her, William was admitted and discharged in excess of ten times before he reached Denmead. The police usually admitted him with his sister Catherine, but there is no information about their parents in their records. The only record of a biological relationship, aside from his sister, was a discharge record from the workhouse when William was three years old to his grandfather.⁷¹⁹ Eventually the Guardians classified him as an orphan but it is unclear whether they passed a resolution in their favour or simply learned more information about his parental circumstances that made him eligible for fostering.

In many ways Albert was an ideal foster parent because he fit with lawmakers' ideals. He was occupied in outdoor labour, of working age and independent means, and did not have more than five children in his household. Unlike elderly fosterers like Robert Billings, Albert was in a position to provide skills-based training in his home because he ran his own farm. However, committee

⁷¹⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 1090; Folio: 56; Page: 6.

⁷¹⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 39.

⁷¹⁹ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: SOBG/106/78.

members were meant to supervise placements closely to ensure foster parents did not use the children as servants, or prepare them to be adult servants, in their homes.⁷²⁰ Reformers acknowledged there was fine line between training and exploitation,⁷²¹ but never clearly defined it in the law. By the 1911 census 22-year-old William lived with Albert and was classed as a servant of the household who worked on the farm.⁷²² Interestingly, there were also two other male juvenile paupers from Greenwich Poor Law union that were aged 12 and 14 and described as boarders instead of servants.

Inferences can be drawn from Albert's preference for older males and William's eventual servitude that he used the foster care system as a means of source cheap labour and that the Denmead committee was prepared to facilitate this. Although Albert's personal circumstances made him an ideal candidate to foster, his motives were even more averse to the policies of the LGB than those of lone mothers or elderly couples who were prompted by financial need. The Board was 'fully aware of the risks and abuses to which the system [was] exposed' and Poor Law inspector Hannah Mason went so far as to categorise the potential motivations of fosterers into an eight-tier system ranging from good to bad.⁷²³

- (1) Where persons have never had children of their own, or they had died or grown up
- (2) Real charity and pity for an orphan
- (3) Where, having their own children and have received foster children for the sake of the help of their payments toward housekeeping
- (4) Mixed motives, perhaps for company, errands, profit or use
- (5) Where children were intended to be trained as future servants

⁷²⁰ GO 1870 (Article VI).

⁷²¹ Miss Mason's Report, *The Local Government Board: Fifteenth Annual Report 1885-86* (C (2nd series)) Page 51.

⁷²² UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 6159; Schedule Number: 52.

⁷²³ LGB letter 1870 Page 8.

- (6) Where children were used in the place of servants (7) Whatever the reason the children were taken, they appeared to be neglected (8) Whatever the reason the children were taken, they appeared ill treated.⁷²⁴

Yet again, the available sources are unable to shed light on whether points seven or eight eventuated, but based on the evidence from this sample it appears points three to six were fairly commonplace.⁷²⁵

Child-welfare reformers agreed the best way to mitigate these risks was to closely supervise foster placements and to entrust the local committees to carry this out.⁷²⁶ Cases such as William Arthur Dickenson suggest some committee members were not as *disinterested* as lawmakers requested because they allowed the system to be repeatedly abused. Again, it is impossible to know exactly what incentivised volunteers to join a committee, but the evidence from this study implies a number of foster parents either were not supervised closely enough or committee members accepted undesirable motives because over half the children that continued to live with their foster parents as adults were described as servants of the household in later census records.⁷²⁷ It is fair to say that what can be observed about the motives of many foster parents did not align with Miss Mason's favoured criteria.

Sample five children lived with foster parents in much lower numbers than children from samples three or four. Biological children who returned to their family home after leaving district schools were consistently described to census

⁷²⁴ Miss Mason's Report, *The Local Government Board: Fifteenth Annual Report 1885-86* (C (2nd series)) Page 51.

⁷²⁵ For an example of a child being used in place of a servant see the case of Bertha Thomas in Honiton. Bertha worked as a domestic servant for her foster mother aged 12: UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901: Class: RG13; Piece: 2021; Folio: 60; Page: 6.

⁷²⁶ LGB letter 1870 Page 9-12.

⁷²⁷ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

enumerators as sons or daughters of the household, but never as lodgers or servants within the family home.⁷²⁸ Whereas foster children who lived with their foster parents as adults were usually described in very different terms, as will be explained later in this chapter. There is a small pool of evidence that implies a limited number of foster parents were motivated by altruism, as preferred by Miss Mason, because they described their foster children as ‘adopted’ to census enumerators; but none of these children lived with their foster parents by the 1911 because the foster parents had died by this time.⁷²⁹

I argue that foster care was not the panacea that Nassau Senior had hoped because she misunderstood what motivated the rural working classes to open up their homes for routine inspection by the middle classes. She also underestimated the experiences of juvenile paupers before they entered the foster care system, which invariably contributed to their struggle to become self-sufficient adults.

Because the Poor Law authorities scrupulously followed the restrictions on only fostering truly parentless children, most of sample five had extraordinarily disrupted childhoods. They had lost, or in some cases never known, their biological parents and usually lived in workhouses for considerable periods of time before they were sent to foster care. Chapter 5 concluded that parentless children from district schools were superior candidates for de-pauperisation because they demonstrated higher levels of independence in adulthood than ‘other’ children. However, this finding does not carry over into the context of foster care as demonstrated in the next section, which explores their occupational outcomes in adulthood.

⁷²⁸ See figure 5.5 and figure 5.6 for information about the household statuses of samples three and four organised by gender.

⁷²⁹ See the cases of Gertrude Pilkington, May Pilkington, Charlotte Stonehouse, James Mabe, Elizabeth Pratt, Rose Pratt Frederick Ethrington, Ellen Ethrington, Thomas Ripley and Frederick Ripley in PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1891.

A developing picture is emerging that being raised in a rural substitute family during the late-nineteenth century might have been worse than being raised in a biological household in the East End or a district school in terms of future citizenship. It only took a single incident of change for a child to be removed from a foster placement which often set in motion a series of destabilising events such as multiple foster placements, or worse, multiple foster parishes over the long term. Long-distance foster care was really the least stable option for Poor Law children.

6.3. Occupational improvements

Foster-care critics justified their preference for district schools over national schools on the basis that they were better funded, attracted more skilled teachers and incorporated industrial training systems into their curriculums.⁷³⁰ These offerings were not available in village schools where sample five was educated. Tufnell attacked Nassau Senior's recommendations for removing 'those pupils who would do the most credit to a school, whose superior conduct, intelligence, and consequent ready response to the efforts made to instruct them [which left behind] a caput mortuum of the most dull, the most irregular, and the most impracticable of pupils'.⁷³¹ Such statements reflect the moral ideals that underpinned child-welfare policy during this period but also contribute to the misleading assumption that 'other' children were the most disadvantaged children in the public childcare system. Although more parentless classes left district schools to enter military roles or skilled trades than 'other' children, it seems unlikely the authorities were aware of this at the time, given the limited scope of Victorian aftercare studies. Instead, their idealisation of parentless children was probably just another manifestation of their disdain for poor families that sought help from the state and their

⁷³⁰ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st^d series)) Page 206.

⁷³¹ *The Poor Law Board: Twenty-third Annual Report 1870-71* (C (1st series)) Page 208.

predictions for their superior outcomes were yet another aspiration borne of severe class conflict.

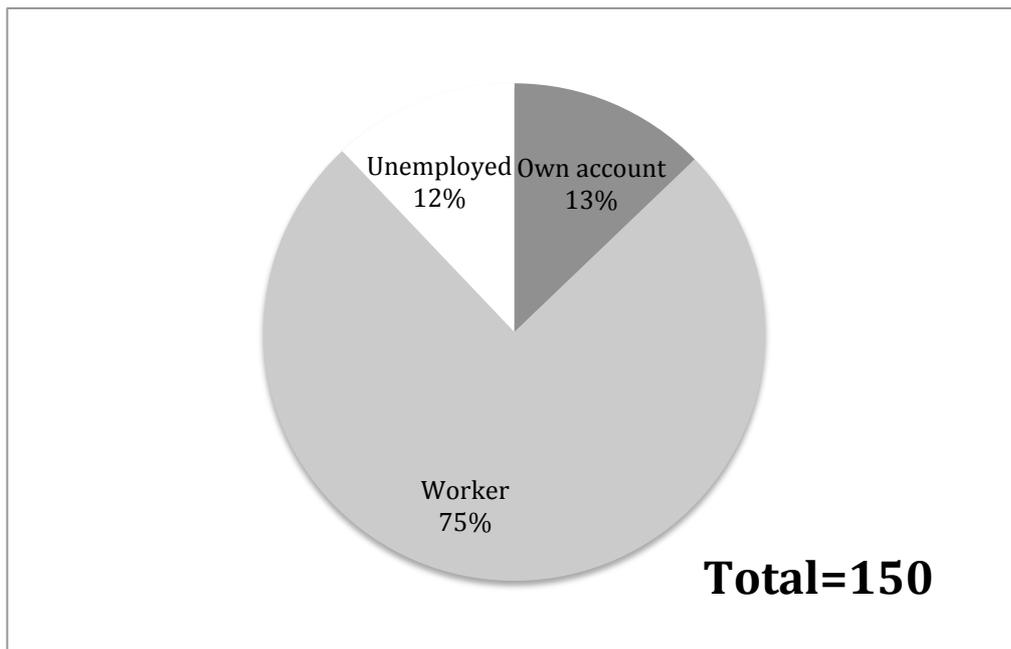
I argue that common assumptions made about parental classification were an inappropriate means of predicting adult outcomes because factors such as skills-based training, gender, and pre-care experiences were more relevant determinants of success. Sample five children struggled to establish independent occupations because they were not given the employable skills that sample three children were given and led more unstable lives than children from samples three and four (see figure 6.3).⁷³²

The data shows as many foster children worked on their own account during the 1911 census as the control group, but 20 per cent fewer than the district school group.⁷³³ Children from samples four and five were educated in inferior national schools. They were also raised in working-class households that had experienced

⁷³² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁷³³ See figure 5.8 and figure 5.9 for information about the employment statuses of samples three and four.

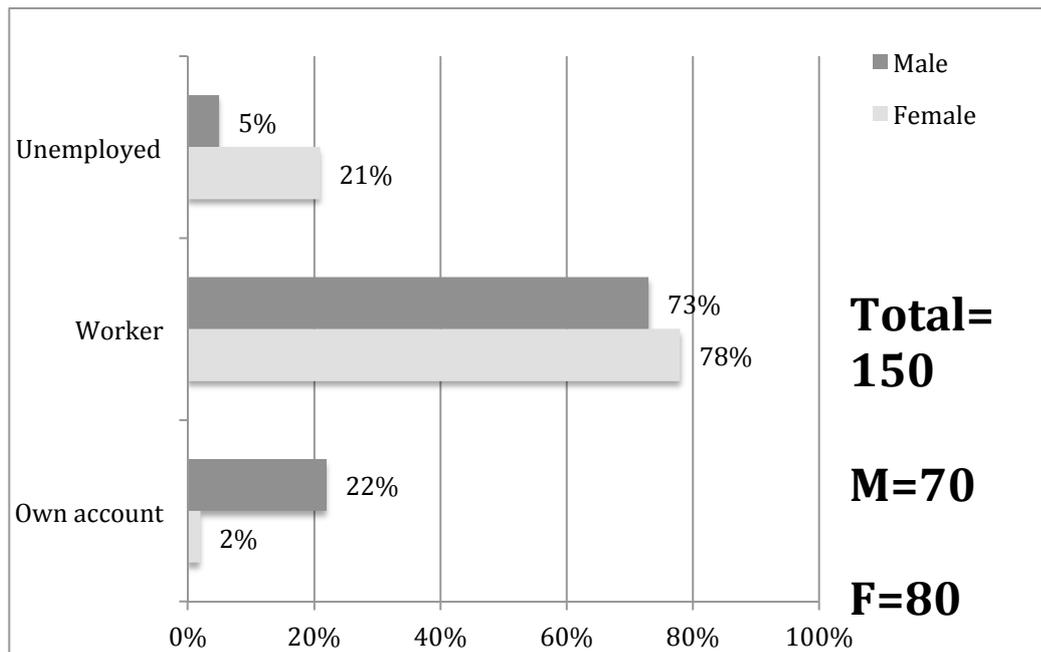
Figure 6.3 Employment statuses for sample five 1911 census



so much adversity that they required some support from the public childcare system. Whereas biological parents sent their children into public childcare to cope over the short or long term, foster parents opened up their homes for similar reasons. The main difference between the cohorts was that most sample four children were raised by their biological parents whereas most sample five children were orphaned at young ages and experienced a mixture of workhouses, children's institutions, and foster placements throughout their formative years.

Only two per cent of sample three was unemployed during the 1911 census compared to seven per cent of sample four and 12 per cent of sample five. Yet again, most of the unemployed were women and most of those that succeeded in

Figure 6.4 Sample five employment statuses organised by gender



working on their own account were men (see figure 6.4).⁷³⁴ Some of the unemployed women lived in institutions, while others lived without occupations as visitors or friends in other households. All the unemployed women returned to London, whereas the limited number of unemployed men all remained in their foster parishes.

Although most of those occupied in independent trades were men, just like samples three and four, this group was unusual because very few of them established independent households. Again, reality conflicted with reformers' idealised vision of country life because as Murdoch commented:

‘The artisan model for boys recalled the English pre-industrial past, just as the debates on architectural design of children’s institutions sought to recapture the social harmony of village life [...] the idealised artisan was understood to be a worker with clear vertical ties to the

⁷³⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

community – not the horizontal ones of class or unionism [...] he owned his tools and workshop space [...] unlike the casual and unemployed'.⁷³⁵

Chapter 4 showed there were considerably more unskilled foster parents than skilled foster parents, which suggests ideal foster homes were not the norm for most Poor Law children during the late-nineteenth century.

Twelve per cent of sample five males worked on their own account and lived as lodgers, but most had moved away from their foster parishes by the 1911 census. Foster-care children predominantly stayed in the countryside, a phenomenon that this chapter will explore in greater detail below, whereas the other two cohorts generally stayed in London. The data shows that low-skilled males tended to stay in their foster parishes over the long term whereas more highly skilled labourers migrated to other parts of the country as predicted by theories such as the 'labour aristocracy' and illustrated by the case of Victor Bearcock.⁷³⁶ Victor migrated to Yorkshire to work as a master tailor rather than stay in his foster parish because there were more opportunities to develop his skills in a city.

Victor had been admitted to the Islington workhouse with his mother when he was two years old and was quickly transferred to the infirmary due to illness.⁷³⁷ He was of illegitimate birth and lived in the workhouse as an infant like many other foster children. A year later he was discharged, but returned within months, because his mother permanently deserted him. This prompted the *Guardians* to arrange for him to be sent to a foster home.⁷³⁸ Initially he was sent to the home of Selina Slade in Toddington who was the youngest foster parent

⁷³⁵ Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans* Pages 244-245.

⁷³⁶ See Breuilly, *Labour and liberalism* for theories about the hierarchy of labour during this period and its affect on migration.

⁷³⁷ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: ISBG/284/09.

⁷³⁸ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; London Poor Law and Board of Guardian Registers; Reference: ISBG/315/02.

from the sample, aged just 16.⁷³⁹ It is unclear from the available records whether Selina had her own home when she signed her undertaking and what means of support she had at this time because by the following census she had left Toddington to become an indoor servant and Victor was rehomed to another family.⁷⁴⁰

Curiously, the law did not establish a minimum age to qualify as a foster parent but given that the LGB emphasised the importance of family so heavily, it is surprising that committees approved so many elderly lone parents. Victor's second foster home was with a 63-year-old widow named Mary Ann Hollett who was unemployed like so many lone foster mothers from this study.⁷⁴¹ The LGB had clearly warned committees five years earlier that [...]

‘The Board’s attention has been drawn to cases in which children have been boarded out with foster parents having no means of support apart from the allowances made by the Guardians for the benefit of the children boarded out. The Board cannot but consider that such a practice must be injurious to the best interests of the children, and they trust that in future no children will be placed with foster parents who have not some adequate means of support.’⁷⁴²

However, Toddington foster-care committee approved Mary Ann after this guidance was issued, highlighting yet further, the deregulated nature of the system. Mary Ann lacked independent means but was still given simultaneous care of four children from Islington despite legal restrictions that foster parents only care for two foster children at any given time.⁷⁴³ The committee’s breaches did not prevent Mary Ann from providing a secure home for her charges until she died a few years later, which forced Victor to be moved down

⁷³⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 28.

⁷⁴⁰ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901: Class: RG13; Piece: 128; Folio: 113; Page: 31.

⁷⁴¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 28.

⁷⁴² *The Local Government Board: Nineteenth Annual Report 1889-90* (C (2nd series)) Page 35.

⁷⁴³ GO 1870 (Article V).

the road to his final foster placement with a family whose father worked in a cement factory.⁷⁴⁴

Like most foster parishes from this sample, Toddington was highly agricultural at the end of the nineteenth century. The vast majority of employed males worked on farms and most employed women earned their livelihoods through dressmaking because tailoring had all but died out.⁷⁴⁵ However, the area of York that Victor settled in was much more diverse and had thousands of people working on their own account as tailors.⁷⁴⁶ His migration shows us how the labour market affected long-term integration because foster children were often sent to such small communities they were forced to leave if they did not work on farms. Toddington was one of the biggest parishes explored in this study and the limited number of male tailors emphasises how misguided lawmakers' nostalgia for pre-industrial life was. Although Victor did not assimilate into the countryside as an adult, or establish his own home, he was one of the few children from sample five to achieve the occupational aspirations set by child-welfare reformers.⁷⁴⁷

Although most of sample five was less skilled compared to sample three, there were exceptions like Victor, who achieved some of the de-pauperisation objectives in spite of fostering rather than because of it. The sample largely entered unskilled occupations or agricultural roles as adults because these were the forms of labour generally available in small rural communities at this time

⁷⁴⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 78.

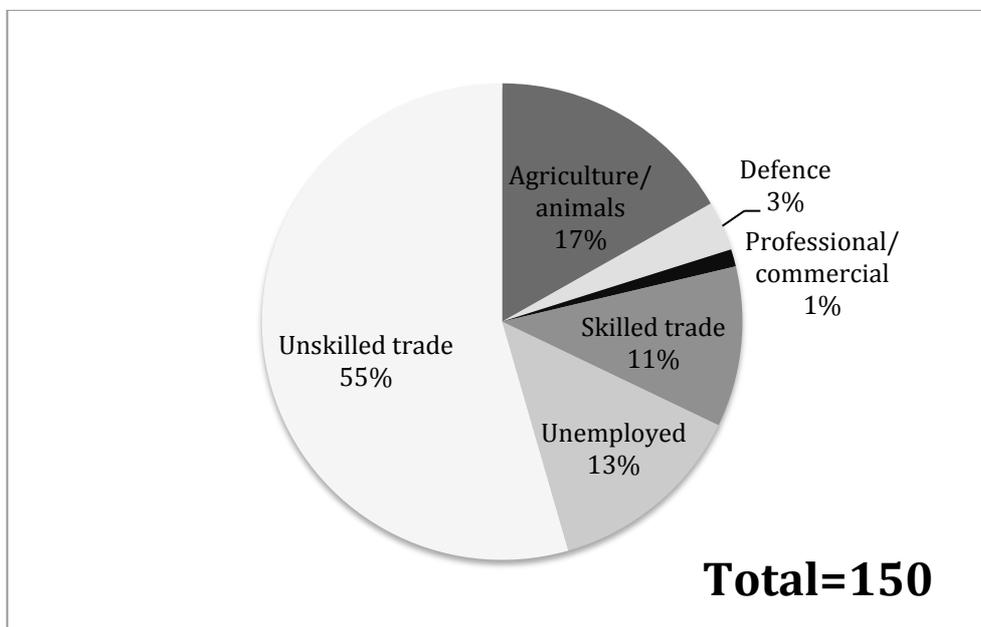
⁷⁴⁵ GB Historical GIS | University of Portsmouth, Toddington CP/AP through time | Industry Statistics | Occupational data classified into the 24 1881 Orders; Plus sex, A Vision of Britain through Time.

⁷⁴⁶ GB Historical GIS | University of Portsmouth, York PLU/Reg D through time | Industry Statistics | Occupational data classified into the 24 1881 Orders; Plus sex, A Vision of Britain through Time.

⁷⁴⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911: Class: RG14; Piece: 25961.

(see figure 6.5).⁷⁴⁸ Twenty-eight per cent of sample three established independent businesses that aligned with reformers' traditional ideals whereas only 11 per cent of sample five achieved this, Victor Bearcock being

Figure 6.5 Sample five occupational genres during the 1911 census



one of them. The correlation between industrial training methods and higher rates of traditional craftsmanship suggests the use of skills-based workshops positively impacted children in district schools, and that critics like Tufnell were right to express concerns over the suitability of national schools as a means of achieving reformation goals.

Sample five's occupational genres aligned far more closely to those of their foster parents than those from sample three because foster parents were predominantly unskilled labourers or agricultural workers.⁷⁴⁹ Although only seven per cent of foster parents had no financial means aside from the maintenance from the Guardians, substantial numbers described themselves in

⁷⁴⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁷⁴⁹ See figure 4.11 for information about the occupational genres of the foster parents at the census closest to their undertaking.

ambiguous terms such as ‘retired’ or ‘pensioner’ or ‘domestic work’. The law was designed to exclude the unemployed or unskilled and large families, because lawmakers believed these types of households fuelled future poverty. Yet, foster-care committee members routinely approved such households to raise juvenile paupers. Pro-foster-care reformers believed the family unit would compensate for inferior standards of education in national schools because carefully chosen foster parents would play a vital role in the retraining process of juvenile paupers. Davenport Hill commented [...]

‘A lad [...] profits from the status of his foster father by being introduced to his trade or calling, and will have already probably picked up much experience in his work [...] thus learning the duties of a responsible post as efficiently as if he were apprenticed to it’.⁷⁵⁰

They wanted boys to become ‘carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers, grocers, tailors and farm servants’ and girls to take up ‘house work or other respectable employ’ and stressed the importance of ‘careful selection’ to committees.⁷⁵¹ Reformers believed foster care would produce better results than parish apprenticeship schemes because apprentices were ‘forced on their master, and thus naturally regarded him with dislike because the relationship began after the apprentice had passed the time up to which a child excites parental feelings in those who have charge of him’.⁷⁵²

However, very few children from sample five were below five years of age when they started fostering and very few of their foster parents were in a position to impart the occupational ‘status’ suggested by Davenport Hill. Interestingly, sample five children had broadly similar occupational results to their carers even though their foster parents were not selected as carefully as the

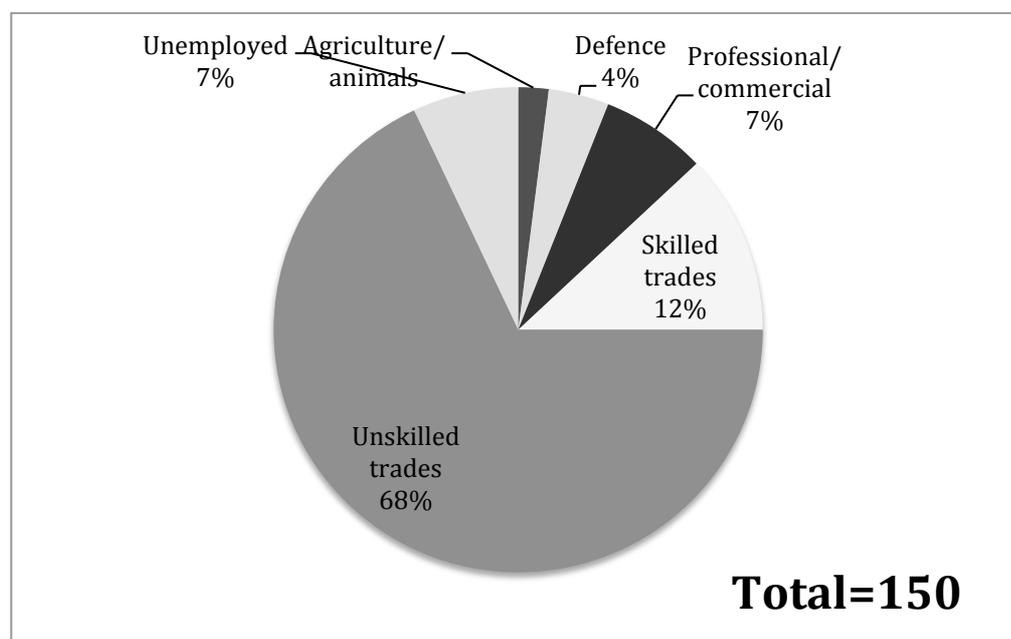
⁷⁵⁰ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 200.

⁷⁵¹ ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Page 9.

⁷⁵² ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Page 4.

LGB requested (see figure 6.6).⁷⁵³ Most children from sample five were older than they should have been when they started their placements, and most foster parents were struggling to make ends meet. They were placed with unskilled labourers or unemployed people, and it appears that many of the agricultural fosterers viewed foster children as future servants rather than occupational protégés. Yet again it appears that the experiences of the rural poor were not totally dissimilar to those

Figure 6.6 Sample four occupational genres during the 1911 census

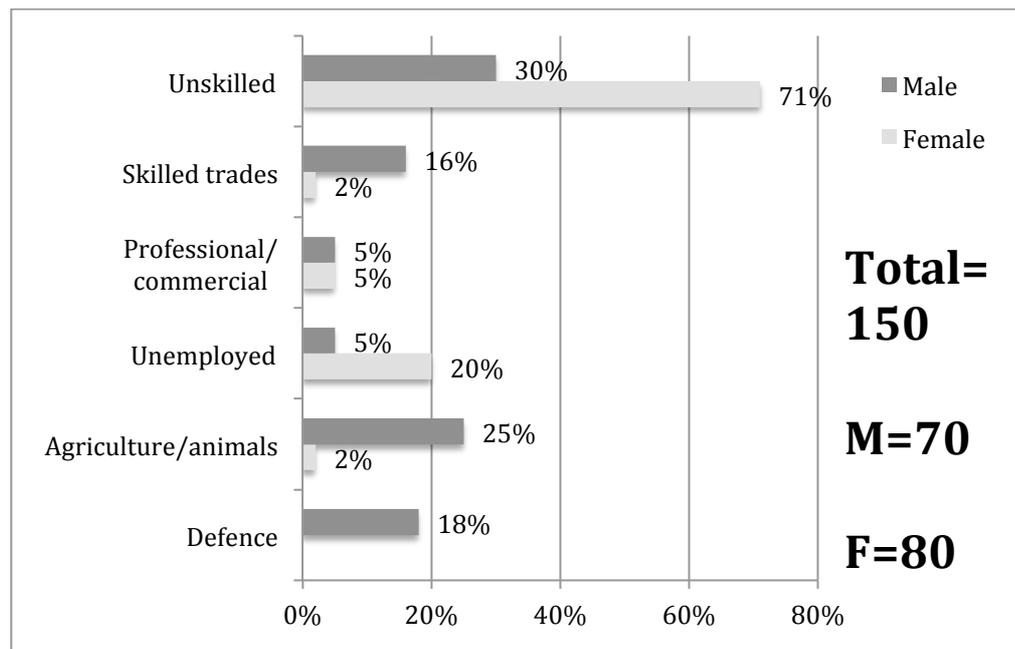


of the urban poor and may explain why sample five experienced similar occupational results to sample four (who were also raised in poor families). Foster care did successfully promote agricultural labour more so than district schools, which reformers approved of, but also produced large numbers of unskilled workers just like sample four. It appears children who were raised in working-class families, whether biological or substitute, were more prone to unskilled work or unemployment than children who were raised in district school where they pursued more skilled trades or defence roles.

⁷⁵³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

Agricultural work satisfied reformers' desires for horizontal connections, but unsurprisingly, led to most agricultural workers living as lodgers and not establishing their own homes as evidenced by 85 per cent of agricultural labourers from sample five who lived as lodgers or servants.⁷⁵⁴ The similarly small number of craftsmen and soldiers in samples four and five supports the argument that industrial training was effective because both groups of children who were educated in national schools did not enter the occupations preferred by district school curriculums. It seems fostered children were disadvantaged compared to their institutional and non-institutional siblings because they had lower-skilled jobs and struggled to establish independent households as adults.⁷⁵⁵

Figure 6.7 Sample five occupational genres organised by gender



Yet again females were the most adversely impacted because girls that did not marry were unskilled or unemployed adults whereas males experienced more

⁷⁵⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁷⁵⁵ See figure 5.3 for information about the household statuses of sample three.

diverse outcomes (see figure 6.7).⁷⁵⁶ This thesis has already discussed how poverty in the late-nineteenth century affected females of all ages differently than it affected males, yet the biggest finding from this set of data is that girls from sample five were more likely to be unemployed as adults than girls from sample four.⁷⁵⁷ Such findings further invalidate notions of ‘hereditary pauperism’ because they show that the children whose parents relied on public childcare to navigate their poverty did not become adult paupers, which again allows for more nuanced explanations about the nature of poverty to emerge. Nassau Senior claimed that female juvenile paupers were the ideal candidates for foster care because neither their biological parents nor district school officials were capable of protecting their moral wellbeing; however, the evidence from this study suggests this was yet another misguided prediction because sample five girls experienced the worse outcomes of any group from the study.

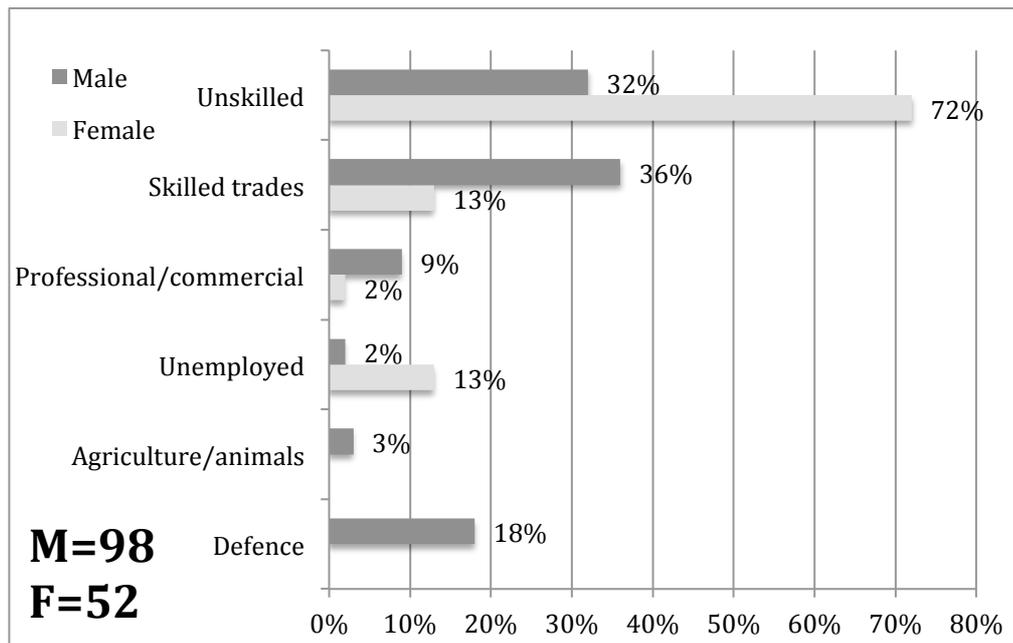
Given the central objective of child-welfare policy at this time was to improve the adult citizenship of children in public childcare, the disparity between samples three and five is particularly relevant (see figure 6.8).⁷⁵⁸ It seems Nassau Senior overestimated the positive benefits that substitute families would have on females and underestimated how many rural cottagers would treat the opportunity to foster a child as an alternative form of support. Davenport Hill’s vision of foster children profiting from their foster father’s status was overly idealistic, given that a substantial number of foster children did not have foster fathers, or if they did he was retired. The criticisms advanced by Nassau Senior against the district school system were specifically premised on the adverse

⁷⁵⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁷⁵⁷ See figure 5.6 for information about the household statuses of sample four organised by gender.

⁷⁵⁸ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911.

Figure 6.8 Sample three occupational genres organised by gender



impact such environments had on young females.⁷⁵⁹ However, the more we learn about what happened to these groups of children as adults it becomes apparent that girls educated in district schools were more likely to be employed than girls from foster homes, and some even became skilled labourers.

The law was designed to promote certain types of families because the LGB accepted the theories from reformers that implied that ideal foster parents would teach children employable skills within the home.⁷⁶⁰ Davenport Hill said the system effectively functioned as a superior version of the parish apprenticeship scheme with more robust controls to ensure children were not exploited as servants or labourers. She elaborated [...]

‘A lad on school holidays will accompany his foster father [...] thus learning the duties of a responsible post as efficiently as if he were apprenticed to it and [...] when helping the father, is fitting himself unconsciously to take as good a position in the world because [...]

⁷⁵⁹ Nassau Senior, ‘Education of Girls in Pauper Schools’ Pages 52-146.

⁷⁶⁰ ‘Report of a public meeting to promote the extension of this system’ Pages 26-27.

foster-fathers give a means of training which even pauper schools fail to afford'.⁷⁶¹

However, the evidence from this study shows that sample three had 18 per cent more craftsmen, nine per cent more soldiers, eight per cent more professionals, and 12 per cent fewer unemployed labourers.⁷⁶² These results were partly attributable to the positive impact of industrial training - especially the increases in skilled trade and defence roles - but the higher levels of unemployment and unskilled work from sample five was partly a consequence of the types of homes the children were sent to regardless of foster parents' efforts to retrain. It should also be borne in mind that the prevalence of fostered children who were described as servants in their homes, combined with the disproportionate number of boys who were over the age of ten and sent to farms, raises questions over whether this was training or something more akin to child labour as seen with the cases of foster parents Susan Whittington and Rebecca Silvester.

Susan was a widow in her 60s when she signed her first undertaking to raise 12-year-old Mabel Knight and two years later signed another undertaking to raise 12 year-year-old Florence Reesman.⁷⁶³ Both girls had originally been placed in the same home in Emberton when they were nine years old, but for unknown reasons were relocated to the Susan Whittington's home in Flitwick at different intervals. By the 1901 census, Susan was almost 70 years old and Florence was aged 18.⁷⁶⁴ Susan described herself as a washerwoman and Florence was two years past the age that Susan was eligible to collect maintenance from the Guardians. The LGB strongly encouraged foster parents to make suitable aftercare arrangements on their own if possible, but resumed custody if this was unachievable in order to prevent foster parents from keeping

⁷⁶¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 200-201.

⁷⁶² PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911.

⁷⁶³ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 37.

⁷⁶⁴ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Pages 199-200.

their children on as servants. Not only was Florence not in a local service placement, or returned to guardianship care, she was classed as a domestic servant in Susan's home in the presence of two other juvenile paupers from different Poor Law unions.⁷⁶⁵

The children who lived in Rebecca Silvester's home had similar experiences. The three Hull brothers were sent from the Islington workhouse to Denmead to live with Rebecca and her family.⁷⁶⁶ Her husband was an agricultural labourer and the brothers were aged between seven and 11 years old when Rebecca signed an undertaking for their care. Four years later, the census was taken and all three brothers were listed as agricultural servants between the ages of 11 and 15 in the Silvester household.⁷⁶⁷

While the Denmead committee no longer had a duty to supervise Florence because she was over 16 years of age; they were still obligated to supervise the youngest Hull brother because he was only 11 years old. This means they either breached their undertaking to the LGB by refusing to report the situation or by failing to notice in the first place. Cases like these, and that of William Arthur Dickenson or Bertha Thomas,⁷⁶⁸ show how some foster parents willingly used their foster children as child servants or prepared them for adult servitude for their own gains despite the law strictly prohibiting both practices. Although committee members had a duty to immediately remove children who were being prepared or treated in this way, it does not appear from case histories such as this that such action was always taken.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁵ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1901: Class: RG13; Piece: 1502; Folio: 103; Page: 28.

⁷⁶⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 39.

⁷⁶⁷ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1901: Class: RG13; Piece: 1091; Folio: 53; Page: 44.

⁷⁶⁸ Bertha Thomas was described as servant in her foster home at the age of 12 during the 1901 census. UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901: 1901c: Class: RG13; Piece: 2021; Folio: 60; Page: 6.

⁷⁶⁹ GO 1870 (Article VI).

These cases not only show how a de-regulated systems were capable of failing to protect children, but they also imply that local committee members were willing to facilitate such failures because all the foster parents of the aforementioned children received more foster children from other London Poor Law Unions later.⁷⁷⁰ The Flitwick, Denmead, and Honiton committees continued to organise new foster placements for these foster parents even though their treatment of children was in breach of the law in the most serious way. Child servitude would have added an additional level of difficulty to those who were subjected to it, which provides additional context for the inferior occupational results of sample five compared to sample three. The experience of childhood institutionalisation was undoubtedly difficult for juvenile paupers, as articulated by reformers like Nassau Senior and Davenport Hill, but I argue significant numbers of district school children benefitted from being part of a deliberate family survival strategy. Foster children had no such connections or plans in place and often experienced repeated hardships. It appears district schools were more stable environments than substitute families because they provided consistent accommodation (albeit in a public institution) whereas foster care under the New Poor Law was largely characterised by poverty, loss and relocation.

When the adult outcomes of sample five are framed within some of their lived experiences as children it is easier to see how reformers' assumptions were misleading. There was no evidence in the Victorian sources about long-distance foster care that indicated reformers were aware of how volatile foster placements often were or how few foster parents met legal requirements. The lack of aftercare information for this group left their reformation status unknown, but the evidence from this study shows they struggled more than

⁷⁷⁰ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911: Class: RG14; Piece: 6159; Schedule Number: 52; Class: RG14; Piece: 6159; Schedule Number: 50; Class: RG13; Piece: 1502; Folio: 103; Page: 27.

district school children or working-class children raised by their biological parents. Reformers anticipated that the inferior quality of education in rural England might affect their progress but also overestimated the altruistic motives of many foster parents. They were mostly elderly, unemployed or unskilled and often lived in overcrowded houses, and in the extreme, some of them used juvenile paupers as cheap labour or child servants.

It appears the long-distance foster care scheme was an inferior mechanism for de-pauperisation because it struggled to deliver on key policy objectives. However, because the LGB acknowledged the importance of social integration as a unique feature of the system, it was not a total failure. Secretary Peel explained how the scheme ‘tends to merge the pauper children to whom it is applied, in the general body of the population; and if this result can be achieved, no more powerful argument can be adduced in favour of the scheme’.⁷⁷¹ The final section of this chapter explores this question by looking at evidence that illustrates the different ways Islington’s juvenile paupers integrated into their foster parishes over the long term. I argue that assimilation was an essential feature of the moral reformation agenda for this group of children, and that it did succeed, but was largely over-looked by the system’s advocates like Nassau Senior and Davenport Hill.

6.4. Integrating into foster communities

As national sentiment and imperialist ambition reached its height toward the close of the nineteenth century, the middle classes started to adjust their opinions about the threats posed by working-class people. They were still attached to the value of adult self-sufficiency as a means of preventing state dependency, but were also interested in incorporating the working classes within the broader national image, because they did not want them to become estranged from the glory and ambition of the Empire. Nationalism was on the

⁷⁷¹ LGB letter 1870 Page 9.

rise by the turn of the century, as Britain reached its economic height, and its citizens were increasingly barraged with propaganda both overtly and covertly.⁷⁷² Messages of imperial strength and English identity pervaded everyday life through the mediums of theatre, music, exhibitions, advertisements, textbooks, maps, and even the organisation of public spaces. Child-welfare policy reflected these changes by emphasising the shared value of national inclusion, and English - versus colonial - linkages across *all* classes in an effort to move on from its previous emphasis on class divisions and moral idealism.⁷⁷³

Social integration was a distinct feature of the foster care scheme because it offered something district schools could not - the opportunity to grow up in English families and communities. As nationalism expanded, a more socially inclusive vision of society emerged whereby class divisions still existed, but no longer prioritised the threats posed by the poor, because all English citizens were perceived to play a valuable role just by maintaining their national identity.⁷⁷⁴ Prominent educational reformers like R.E. Hughes rejected the industrial training systems that underpinned the district school system in favour of a curriculum that would develop all children into loyal citizens. He argued that an inclusive national curriculum would help ‘heal the corrosive divisions’ created by earlier policies and create a unified ‘national life’ whereby children of all backgrounds were aware of the rights and responsibilities of being English.⁷⁷⁵

These changes to the national curriculum ultimately contributed to the demise of district schools and long-distance foster care as methods of public childcare. Cottage homes were cheaper to administer, but also returned control to the

⁷⁷² Schneer, *London* Pages 3-14.

⁷⁷³ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Pages 27-38.

⁷⁷⁴ Schneer, *London* Pages 93-119.

⁷⁷⁵ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Page 33.

Guardians, who could then promote the value of civic duty and national identity when educating children in their care. A key feature of being an English citizen during this period was the willingness to play one's part in communal and national life. This was reflected in proposals to introduce civics classes in national schools so that children could be taught the importance of serving their country by voting, working and where necessary, by fighting.⁷⁷⁶ The poorest classes benefitted from this new conception of inclusive citizenship because in return for their contributions they were afforded childhoods free of the constraints of labour, and adulthoods defined by their individualism rather than their pauper origins. Initiatives outside the Poor Law framework were established to improve the wellbeing of poor children such as health visitors, milk banks, school meal services, and compulsory medical inspections. Victorian commentators asserted that without more comprehensive child-welfare policies there would be a 'degeneration of the race' that justified even helping the children of the disreputably poor.⁷⁷⁷

Where previously the public interest in the state's management of the destitute had been served by policies of deterrence, it was now to be fulfilled by policies of inclusion, which is why lawmakers wanted sample five to socially integrate into their foster parishes over the long term. The LGB encouraged foster parents to make their own aftercare arrangements for children within their local communities wherever possible because they wanted them to develop familial bonds similar to those experienced in biological families. One reformer commented [...]

'The benefits of domestic influence on the children can go beyond the period when the Board has charge of them [...] if we get foster parents to find apprenticeships for the boys and service positions for the girls, as much as possible with employers in their own neighbourhoods, so that the children may have the opportunity of visiting on Saturday

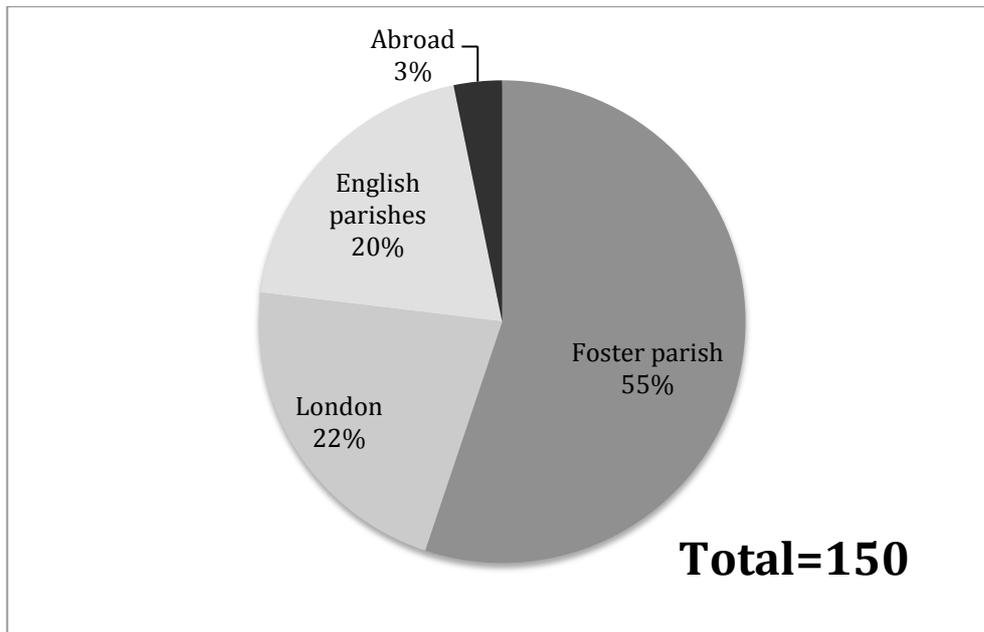
⁷⁷⁶ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race* Page 29.

⁷⁷⁷ Hugh Cunningham, *The Invention of Childhood* (BBC Books 2006) 184-197.

afternoons, or at other times of their liberty [...] as if it were their home.⁷⁷⁸

All of the children selected for sample five started their foster placements between 1889 and 1899 in order to ensure that they were all past the chargeable age of 16 by the 1911 census. In 1911 over half of them still lived in their foster parishes and less than a quarter had returned to London (see figure 6.9).⁷⁷⁹ Forty-

Figure 6.9 Sample five adult locations during the 1911 census



six per cent of those that stayed lived as adult lodgers, whereas 29 per cent lived with foster parents and 24 per cent had established independent homes. By comparison, those that lived in London were evenly divided between those that lived as lodgers, independent householders or workhouse inmates. Most of those that dispersed to other English parishes lived as lodgers like Victor Bearcock.

⁷⁷⁸ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 157.

⁷⁷⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911.

Although it seems that foster children struggled to establish self-sufficient homes in their foster communities, a significant number of them demonstrated alternative forms of integration. For example, Percy Haggar left his foster home in Steep in Hampshire before the 1911 census, but still cited it as his birthplace and permanent residence in his military documentation in 1914.⁷⁸⁰ He was five years old when he and his brother were sent to the Islington workhouse following their mother's death,⁷⁸¹ and resided in the Islington workhouse for two years before Thomas and Harriet Samways requested the boys move to Steep.⁷⁸²

Thomas was an agricultural labourer with four teenage children who was in his late forties when the Haggar brothers arrived in 1889. The available records imply the Samways marriage broke down some time between the 1891 and 1901 because Thomas no longer lived in the family home yet continued to live in the area for a further 23 years.⁷⁸³ Harriet described herself as a widow to the 1901 census enumerators, despite her husband being alive, and continued to live with one of her biological sons and Percy who was now 18.⁷⁸⁴ She described her occupation as 'light work in the garden' while Percy laboured as a carter on a local farm. The next records of Percy's life were his marriage record in 1910 in Medway Kent and the 1911 census, which showed that the couple had settled in Medway.⁷⁸⁵ Three years later Percy was given notice to enlist in the army, and he listed Steep as his birth location and permanent

⁷⁸⁰ British Army WW1 Service Records, 1914-1920, Territorial Force Attestation 1914; Percy Haggar; Regiment Number: 915234; Regiment Name: HO How.

⁷⁸¹ London Metropolitan Archives; London, England; Reference Number: ISBG/271/003.

⁷⁸² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 14.

⁷⁸³ The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Class: RG12; Piece: 946; Folio: 44; Page: 8; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1901: Class: RG13; Piece: 1092; Folio: 52; Page: 18; England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007; vol 2c; page 164.

⁷⁸⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 1092; Folio: 52; Page: 18.

⁷⁸⁵ England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index; vol 2a; page 1260; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 3942; Schedule Number: 315.

residence on his attestation records for the territorial forces in his own handwriting.⁷⁸⁶

In many respects Percy failed to transition into the type of adult citizen that reformers had hoped the foster care scheme would produce because he was unskilled, lived as a lodger with his wife, and had failed to assimilate into his foster parish as a long-term resident. But the broader evidence also proves he stayed in his foster home past the chargeable age of 16, even though he was not given an apprenticeship or service position like most others who stayed and, quite critically, he was not used as a servant by Harriet. Although she stopped receiving maintenance for Percy for several years before he moved out she continued to accommodate him like a biological child. Inferences can be drawn from the fact he stayed in Steep past chargeable age, and named it in his military documentation instead of Medway, that he had some level of attachment to his foster parish. Such forms of evidence cannot conclusively demonstrate whether Percy meaningfully assimilated into the communal life of Steep, but they imply that he at least viewed Steep as more of a home than Islington or Medway, which were other significant locations in his life.

Reformers wanted substitute families to forge similar connections to those experienced in biological families but the available sources do not allow for these types of questions to be investigated because first-hand narratives from Islington foster children and/or parents are not available. Clues can be gleaned from the decision of most foster parents to use the terms ‘boarder’ or ‘boarded out orphan’ or simply ‘orphan’ to explain the presence of Poor Law children in their homes, compared to the very limited number of fosterers that used terms such as ‘foster child’ or even more exceptionally ‘adopted child’ to describe juvenile paupers to census enumerators. However, such terms shed very little light on feelings of affection within substitute families because it is impossible

⁷⁸⁶ The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; Royal Hospital Chelsea: Soldiers Service Documents; Series: WO 97; Piece Number: 5014.

to know why different labels were applied in certain situations. That is why alternative forms of evidence, like those in Percy Haggard's case, are useful because they imply a degree of on-going attachment to the foster parish itself rather than the family unit.

Some sources provided ambiguous clues about familial integration including the two children that took their foster parents' surnames,⁷⁸⁷ one that married into their foster family,⁷⁸⁸ and one that cohabited with foster siblings as adults;⁷⁸⁹ but again, these sources are too limited to be able to draw meaningful conclusions about the realisation of reformers' aspirations.⁷⁹⁰ However, the data about the rates of adult cohabitation between children who were sent to district schools compared to foster care shows that district school children lived with biological parents in much higher numbers than fostered children lived with foster parents (see figure 6.10).⁷⁹¹ Fifty- three per cent of sample three lived in a

⁷⁸⁷ See the marriage certificate of Mary Strange (FP surname Jarratt): Marriage index, 3b, 1043; 1901 census for Elizabeth Pratt (FP surname Waldron) UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901: Class: RG13; Piece: 2801; Folio: 131; Page: 6.

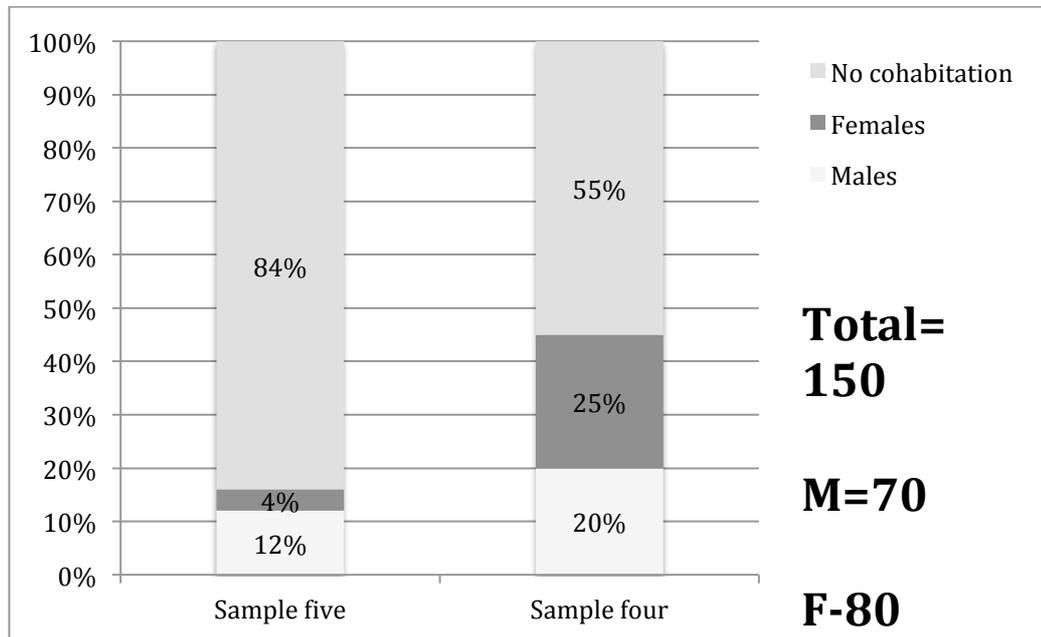
⁷⁸⁸ See Emily Dennis who married nephew of foster mother: England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915: vol 3b; page 1261.

⁷⁸⁹ See household of foster brothers Herbert Blissett and Walter Fritz: UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911: 1911c: Class: RG14; Piece: 10659; Schedule Number: 38; Class: RG12; Piece: 154; Folio: 38; Page: 11; GSU roll: 6095264.

⁷⁹⁰ See the cases of Mary Strange, Elizabeth Pratt and Joseph Nash in PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911.

⁷⁹¹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: CABG/202/001; CABG/202/002; Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1871-1911.

Figure 6.10 Parent-child cohabitation for samples four and five during 1911 census



parental household during the 1911 census, compared to 45 per cent of sample four and only 16 per cent of sample five.⁷⁹² However, higher rates of cohabitation in sample three might be attributable to the large number of biological sons who returned home to lone mothers that had strategically admitted them to navigate their misfortune.⁷⁹³

Biological parents used district schools as an alternative form of relief and the evidence of parental cohabitations within substitute families suggest foster parents exercised similar agency in the face of adversity. Twenty-five foster children continued to live with a foster parent by the 1911 census, 13 of which lived with foster parents, and the remainder lived with lone foster mothers.⁷⁹⁴ Six of the adult foster children that lived with two foster parents were described as servants of the household and had comparatively young foster parents,

⁷⁹² See figure 5.15 for information about parent-child cohabitation in adulthood for samples three and four.

⁷⁹³ See figure 5.11 for information about the causes for Poor Law intervention in sample four.

⁷⁹⁴ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

whereas the others were not described as servants, but lived with elderly foster parents over 70 years of age. Yet again, it seems the working classes had their own ideas of how welfare services should work for themselves and the children in their care. For example, Edwin White requested two Islington children come to live on his farm in Honiton and trained one of them to become an adult servant in his home.

Edwin and his wife were in their late 20s when they signed undertakings with the Islington Guardians, and they had two infant children of their own at the time. Like most farmers, Edwin requested older children and the Guardians arranged for siblings, Thomas aged 11 and Annie Warner aged nine, to be sent to Honiton shortly after their parents died.⁷⁹⁵ The children were aged 11 and 13 by the 1901 census and it is unclear whether they attended school or were put straight to work on the farm because no details were provided about their occupations.⁷⁹⁶ Most enumerators described school-aged children as either ‘scholar’ or ‘school child’ but this particular record is inconclusive; however, the 1911 census confirms that Annie was an indoor servant in another household in Honiton while Thomas was a farm servant in Edwin’s household.⁷⁹⁷

Edwin had five biological children living at home during this census. By comparison, his working-aged children were described as children of the household that worked on the farm while his school-aged children were described as scholars. There was also a juvenile pauper from another union present in the home who was also described as a farm servant. The LGB did not want the foster care scheme to function as a means of training adult servants because it undermined family ideals and resonated too closely with the

⁷⁹⁵ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 26.

⁷⁹⁶ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 2022; Folio: 73; Page: 5.

⁷⁹⁷ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 12558; Schedule Number: 19.

‘farming out’ scandal of the 1860s.⁷⁹⁸ Reformers aspired for genuine affection to develop in substitute families because they hoped it would help the children merge into their homes and communities,⁷⁹⁹ but sadly, this appears to be yet another miscalculation about the reality of working-class life during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Young farmers often needed help to work their land, but could not afford to hire help, just as the elderly often needed income because they were unable to work, but no longer qualified for outdoor relief under the new rules mandated by crusaders. The law required committee members to inspect foster homes every six weeks and write reports about their condition to prevent such misuses, but also allowed Poor Law inspectors to gain access and make inquiries at any given time.⁸⁰⁰ The reality of rural poverty was sufficiently demanding that thousands of working-class households opened their doors to middle-class inspectors like Nassau Senior, Hannah Mason, Florence Chapman and Margaret Pell who were employed by the LGB for this purpose, but strangely, it seems some abuses continued to escape their detection. Although national propaganda pervaded mainstream consciousness during the early-twentieth century, social divisions remained intact and reformers openly referred to themselves as ‘bettering influences’ and acknowledged that significant class conflicts existed between foster parents and Poor Law administrators.⁸⁰¹ The willingness of such families to be inspected by the authorities must be framed within the context of their adversity because it provides yet another example of how those in need responded to social welfare law and policy.

⁷⁹⁸ Miss Mason’s Report, *The Local Government Board: Fifteenth Annual Report 1885-86* (C (2nd series)) Page 51.

⁷⁹⁹ LGB letter 1870 Page 11.

⁸⁰⁰ GO 1970 (Article VI).

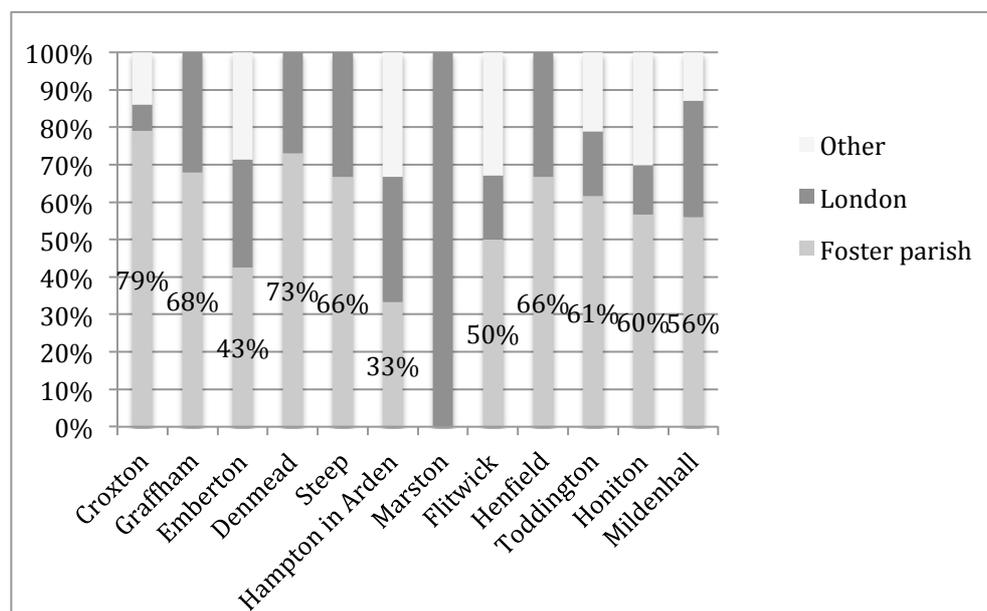
⁸⁰¹ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 195.

With such limited options for relief, it is unsurprising that the majority of foster parents were motivated by reasons other than ‘natural affection’ and in turn sought children that complemented their circumstances rather than those preferred by the law. Although the law was designed to exclude certain types of substitute families from forming, the lack of consequences for breaches of the regulations meant that the foster care system functioned quite capriciously. The only areas where the system consistently worked as predicted were in relation to the rules about parentless children and unpopulated areas, which were controlled by the Guardians who were part of the political framework in ways that the voluntary agents were not.

Population controls partly reflected administrators’ misguided belief that the rural working classes experienced poverty in different ways than the urban poor. However, they also were borne from hopes that smaller communities would make it easier for children to integrate over the long term. Evidence from the 1911 census confirms that this was a well-placed prediction because the smallest communities from this sample retained more foster children than the largest

Figure 6.11 Sample five adult locations organised by parish population 1911 census

communities (see figure 6.11).⁸⁰² Grafham, Denmead and Steep all had less



than 700 inhabitants during the 1901 census, yet retained more children than larger communities like Mildenhall, Toddington, and Honiton that had thousands of residents.⁸⁰³ The only parish that appears to have had disproportionate London returnees was Marston Moretaine but this is an anomaly because only one child from that parish was traced. Overall, most communities saw significant numbers of foster children stay, at least in the short term, irrespective of their population size. Only two villages retained less than half of those that were captured in this sample.

Broader sources of evidence confirm that many fosterers stayed in their parishes all their lives. They were buried in parish churchyards or commemorated on parish war memorials. Twenty-three per cent of sample five served in the British military during the 1911 census and more inevitably joined after conscription took hold in the forthcoming years.⁸⁰⁴ Surprisingly, only five per cent of them were reported to have died in the Western European War Theatre, and all of them were listed on the war memorial of their foster parish, rather than on the memorial in Islington or any other English parish.⁸⁰⁵ Cyril Perryman, Charles Wilkinson, Frederick Weed, William Webb, George Redman, Harry Long and John Tanner all died fighting in the First World War and their names were inscribed respectively on the Croxton, Grafham, Honiton and Ringwood war memorials.⁸⁰⁶ Some of the rolls of honour show that very little was known about their family backgrounds while others present some biological information, but tellingly, none of them reference foster parents.

For example, the Ringwood roll of honour simply states ‘no further information available’ about John Tanner whereas the Honiton roll of honour says ‘no

⁸⁰³ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901.

⁸⁰⁴ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1911.

⁸⁰⁵ England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-2007; War Memorials Trust, Roll of Honour 1914-1919.

⁸⁰⁶ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; War Memorials Trust, Roll of Honour 1914-1919.

family information confirmed but believed to have been born in Islington, age unknown' about Frederick Weed. The most detailed record on a roll of honour was Cyril Perryman which read 'son of Henry and Emily Perryman, born in Islington, London in 1899, died 7 September 1918 aged 19'.⁸⁰⁷ No other death records for the entire foster sample make reference to biological parentage including those that died later. Enlistment attestation papers and war gratuities were the main documents where soldiers disclosed information about their family members and permanent residences in their own handwriting. Most of these records provided information about biological siblings that they had fostered with, or the parishes where they grew up, but none referenced their foster parents. Frederick Weed, Charles Wilkinson, and Percy Haggard named their foster communities as their permanent residences, and also named their biological siblings as their legatees in the event of their deaths.⁸⁰⁸

Inferences can be drawn from these forms of evidence that biological ties remained important to sample five children and that it was easier to integrate into a community than into a substitute family. This can be observed in detail from the case histories of the Barr and Aylen siblings. Jessie and William Barr were sent to separate homes in Mildenhall Suffolk in 1898 at the ages of seven and two.⁸⁰⁹ They were both sent to childless couples that worked in agriculture, and both stayed in their foster parents' homes until they entered the workforce as teenagers. Compared to many foster children, the Barr siblings had fairly stable placements because they were not rehomed and were the only juvenile paupers in their households. However, by the 1911 census Jessie returned to

⁸⁰⁷ War Memorials Trust, Roll of Honour 1914-1919.

⁸⁰⁸ National Army Museum; Chelsea, London, England; Soldiers' Effects Records, 1901-60; NAM Accession Number: 1991-02-333; Record Number Ranges: 724001-725500; Reference: 434; National Army Museum; Chelsea, London, England; Soldiers' Effects Records, 1901-60; NAM Accession Number: 1991-02-333; Record Number Ranges: 457001-458500; Reference: 257; The National Archives of the UK; Kew, Surrey, England; Royal Hospital Chelsea: Soldiers Service Documents; Series: WO 97; Piece Number: 5014.

⁸⁰⁹ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 91.

London to work as a servant in Streatham Common,⁸¹⁰ but told census enumerators she was born in Mildenhall even though her census records during her foster placement confirmed she was born in Islington. This, along with the fact she died ten miles outside of Mildenhall implies some connection endured with her foster parish over the long term.

Jessie also left her entire estate to her brother by will, confirming that their relationship endured over the course of her life, just like the soldiers that named biological siblings as their legatees in their war gratuity paperwork.⁸¹¹ Charles and Archibald Ayles had experiences similar to the Barr children. The boys were admitted to the Liverpool Road workhouse in 1888 after their mother deserted them, and they stayed there for two years before Frederick Taylor requested for them to live with his home in Flitwick Bedfordshire.⁸¹² The Taylors also never had their own children, and the Ayles brothers lived with them during the 1901 census, by which time they were both employed.⁸¹³ By 1911, Charles returned to London, but Archibald stayed in Flitwick.⁸¹⁴ Birth records of Charles' children show that he returned to Flitwick a few years later, and electoral registers confirm the brothers lived within two miles of each until they both died many years later.⁸¹⁵

Only five children from sample five lived with biological family members during the 1911 census, but substantial numbers of them have records such as

⁸¹⁰ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911; Class RG14; Piece: 2337.

⁸¹¹ England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1858-1966, Registry Ipswich, 23 April 1959.

⁸¹² PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 52.

⁸¹³ UK Census Collection for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 1502; Folio: 94; Page: 9.

⁸¹⁴ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 1722.

⁸¹⁵ England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1916-2005, vol 3b, p 563 & 500; Bedfordshire, England, Electoral Registers, 1832-1986, Mid-Bedfordshire; England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007, vol 4a, page 30; Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007, vol 4a, page 10.

wills, war gratuities, or being neighbours that show a biological-sibling relationship endured over the course of a lifetime. The foster care system was not meant to disrupt the sibling relationships of juvenile paupers because reformers wanted children to have a sense of family identity within their foster homes. Reformer Davenport Hill wrote ‘family life – of which habits of observation and self-government are the natural result, and where the child learns to bear and forebear, to seek help and to give it, to suffer and to enjoy, and out of many failures how to act’.⁸¹⁶

Yet the law placed limited emphasis on keeping biological siblings together (or even in the same parish) aside from allowing multiple siblings to exceed the limit of two children in one household.⁸¹⁷ This lack of particular attention suggests that child-welfare reformers did not prioritise the sibling relationships of juvenile paupers even though the evidence from this study suggests they were extremely robust. It cannot be concluded from the available sources that foster relationships were inherently inferior, or that fostered children were not accepted as legitimate members of their substitute families. But it can be argued that the working classes valued their biological ties as much as the middle classes and committee members often underestimated this important feature of their identity. Contemporary commentators often depicted such ties as flimsy at best, or in some cases downright immoral, like when Mearns asserted ‘incest is common’ or that where poor families were separated ‘they do not hesitate to form similar companionships immediately’.⁸¹⁸

Although questions of genuine affection cannot be measured from the available sources, questions about community integration are more tangible because more evidence is available of sample five maintaining connections with their

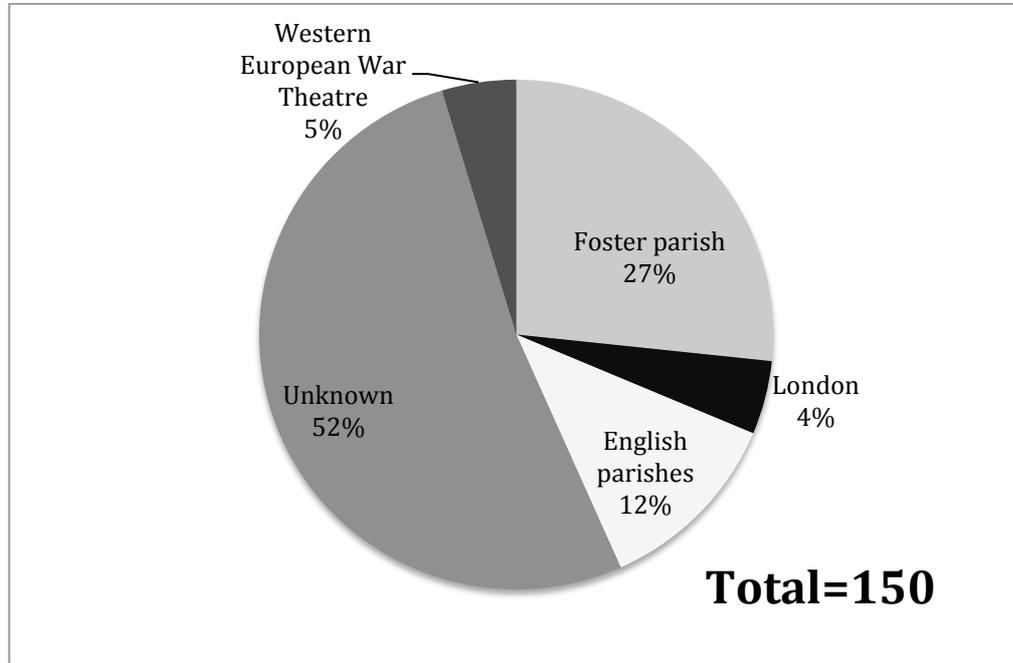
⁸¹⁶ Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* Page 209.

⁸¹⁷ GO 1870 (Article V).

⁸¹⁸ Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* Page 12.

foster parishes over the long term rather than with their foster families. It has already

Figure 6.12 Sample five burial locations



been shown that substantial numbers of them lived in their foster parishes in 1911; whilst others told census enumerators they were born there or named it as their permanent residence in military paperwork. These sources imply that children from sample five achieved some degree of integration even if such choices were partly motivated by unknown factors. Although a large proportion of the sample could not be verified in death records, of those that could be found, a significant number died in their foster parish (see figure 6.12).⁸¹⁹

Yet again, wider sources of evidence help shed light on the lived experiences of fostered children because half of those that stayed as young adults also stayed over the course of their lives. For example, Charlotte Maud Staddon had a series of major life events after the 1911 census in Honiton, which suggest it had become her permanent home. She was sent to Honiton after her mother was

⁸¹⁹ England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007; England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrators) 1858-1966.

permanently admitted to the workhouse in 1896 when Charlotte was eight years old.⁸²⁰ By 1901 she was 14, and her foster parents arranged for her start her first service position near the foster home. By 1911 she had returned to her foster parents' home and was described to enumerators as a 'friend/visitor' without an occupation.⁸²¹ Charlotte married four years later on the outskirts of Honiton and three years later gave birth to her only child, and electoral registers confirm the couple stayed in Honiton until they died in 1963 and 1943 respectively.⁸²² It is impossible to exclude the possibility that children such as Charlotte returned to London between records or were ambivalent about their role in their community. However, tentative inferences can be extracted from these forms of evidence that fostered children often assimilated over the long term and did not return to their birth communities, just as reformers had hoped. On average, children who stayed in their foster parishes were aged 9.5 years old when they started fostering, which was exceptionally close to the ten-year age limit, and means that lessons drawn from the Scottish system were not directly applicable to the English system.

6.5. Concluding remarks

Sample five did not achieve most of the key objectives of the citizenship reformation agenda compared to sample three. They had fewer independent households, more adult lodgers, fewer independent labourers and more unskilled workers than those educated in district schools. Taken at face value, these conclusions imply that reformers such as Nassau Senior and Davenport Hill unwittingly misled the LGB by advocating the benefits of a system that was unable to deliver on primary objectives. However, when they are

⁸²⁰ PLBG: Reference Numbers: ISBG/306/01; ISBG/306/02; Page 26.

⁸²¹ UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1901; Class: RG13; Piece: 2024; Folio: 28; Page: 12; UK Census Collections for England and Wales 1911; Class: RG14; Piece: 12536; Schedule Number: 192.

⁸²² England & Wales, Civil Registration Marriage Index, 1837-1915; vol 5b; page 129; General Register Office; United Kingdom; Birth Register Indexes; Reference: Volume 5b, Page 50; England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915; vol 7a; page 310; England & Wales, Civil Registration Death Index, 1837-1915; vol 5b; page 56.

contextualised within the broader administration of the system, they adopt a different meaning. The law on foster care was highly deregulated and there were no penalties attached to breaching the limited controls that did exist. Committee members had substantial discretion that they willingly used to create substitute families that the law was designed to exclude.

Lawmakers wanted to see hard-working self-sufficient families of modest size be paired with infant or toddler children in the hopes of establishing strong substitute families that were ‘better’ than the institutional environments available under the Poor Law and ‘better’ than the biological environments of working-class people. But this study has shown most foster parents were either elderly, without obvious means, unskilled, or oversized, and worse yet, that a selection of them exploited their foster children as servants. Most foster children were older than the law required, and often experienced multiple placements, because they were sent to unstable homes that were also battling the effects of poverty. The inconsistent application of the law meant that the system did not function as intended, a reality that must be considered relevant when analysing the adult citizenship of this sample. Some critics predicted that there would be a shortage of suitable homes in the countryside and that supervision would be problematic but none of them anticipated that committee members would exercise their discretion so broadly.

Instead the system’s critics rightly predicted that foster parents would have inappropriate motivations for fostering, but trusted the voluntary agents that signed undertakings with the LGB to either reject them from the outset or remove any children if subsequent problems were discovered. However, almost all the elderly fosterers without independent means received multiple children over lengthy periods, and numerous foster parents that used children as servants received children from other unions.

These facts suggest that such committee members were complicit on some level with disobeying the law. It is impossible to know why local volunteers breached their undertakings so regularly or if this problem was prevalent throughout England; but it is significant that their decisions were made against a backdrop of severely restricted provision of welfare. We know that parish officials were told to deny people that had previously been considered worthy of public assistance such as widows, agricultural pensioners, single mothers, or the infirm. It is therefore equally significant these were the groups most commonly offering to become foster parents. Modern historians have argued that despite the fact that most unions in England refused to implement extreme measures, they were nonetheless influenced by severe policy considerations.⁸²³ The cost of outdoor relief was slashed between 1870-1890 and political attitudes toward the poor were changing between 1890-1900 (when the foster parents from this study signed undertakings). Expenditure on outdoor relief never returned to previous levels but I argue the poor found other ways of coping with the political landscape of the time. District schools and foster care are two examples this.

Alternatives such as medical clubs, friendly societies and charitable institutions filled some of the void left by spending cuts, but it also appears that public childcare systems including district schools and foster care functioned as alternative forms of support for those in need. A significant number of foster parents were in positions of hardship, and local volunteers used the discretion awarded by the LGB to help ameliorate such problems irrespective of the law. The consequences of this were that many children were sent to the types of homes prohibited by law and reformation objectives were often unmet. The only goal of the foster care system that was somewhat successful was the LGB's desire to sever the links between juvenile paupers and their birth

⁸²³ Kim Price, *Medical Negligence in Victorian Britain: The Crisis of Care under the English Poor Law, 1834-1900* (Bloomsbury 2015) Page 104.

communities in order that new connections with the countryside were facilitated. Most foster children stayed in their foster parishes as adults or moved to other parts of England, but very few returned to London, and even fewer returned to Islington specifically. Moreover, even those that left sometimes returned to their foster parish later or retained some affiliation as they aged. The scheme may not have produced the types of citizens the LGB desired, but in many ways it fulfilled its promise to retrain Poor Law children to replicate the habits of their foster parents - the problem was the de-regulated system allowed for the wrong types of people to care for vulnerable children.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

The original impetus for this study was the absence of any scholarship about the administration of Victorian public childcare and its efficiency as mechanism of citizenship reform. This thesis set out to understand if either district schools or foster care were effective means of conversion and in the process delivered a more nuanced account of the reasons parents gave up their children to the authorities during this period. Misconceptions surrounding the nature of child poverty during this period have been exposed, and in turn, the legitimacy of initial public law interference within the family has been challenged. Lawmakers introduced restrictions on parental rights in England on the basis that parents who needed access to welfare were unfit to raise their children and expanded interventionist power on these terms for many years. Inappropriate notions of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor defined who had access to relief, whilst misguided understandings of hereditary poverty shaped child protection discourses throughout the late-nineteenth century. The ins and outs discourse was crucial in developing consensus of the twin ideals that relationships between poor parents and children were harmful and that parental rights could be legitimacy curtailed to protect the child.

The large-scale empirical evidence presented in this study has shown that neither district schools nor foster care functioned as lawmakers had hoped. Chapters three and four highlighted that, in reality, district schools were full of children that had on-going relationships with at least one parent and that the types of working-class families who reformers envisioned as ideal fosterers rarely opened their homes to children in need. As a result of these findings it should be unsurprising that chapters five and six revealed that neither system delivered consistently on reformation objectives because practical administration differed so widely from how these systems were conceived. However, it is relevant that a system more heavily regulated by the state produced better results overall than a de-regulated system because it shows that increased regulation of the child correlated with better outcomes over the long

term. Children in district schools were targeted with tailored curriculums that emphasised skilled labour and, contrary to the assertions of Tufnell and Nassau Senior, had quite stable lives once they were institutionalised. By comparison, fostered children were exposed to national curriculums that made no provision for employment training and, contrary to the expectations of Nassau Senior and Davenport Hill, were seldom afforded a stable family environment after entering care.

This is the first after-care study to explore the consequences of Victorian public childcare on the adult lives of its participants. It has established that the normative justifications for the erosion of parental rights during the late-nineteenth century lacked empirical backing and that although some citizenship objectives were fulfilled others were often not. There is little evidence to suggest that the Poor Law Guardians used the powers granted by the PLA 1889 to extinguish parental rights regularly, which suggests these powers may have been unnecessary to improve the lives of poor children. Instead it appears other forms of interference, such as tailored curriculums and supervised domestic spaces (e.g. district schools), were the types of intervention that really correlated with better adult lives.

Conversely, foster care, which lacked these types of interference, correlated with lower skilled employment and more dependency over the long term. However, a key distinction must also be borne in mind when interpreting these results: most children in district schools were part of a conscious survival strategy initiated by a living parent and most children in foster care had no parental connections. I argue that this distinction shows a family support structure correlated with higher levels of occupational attainment and that this is highly relevant given such structures were the basis for eroding parental rights in England. Biological relationships were probably more helpful than harmful but the Victorians refused to accept this because it did not fit with their understandings about the nature of child poverty.

This is the first study to investigate the consequences of public law interference within the context of the Victorian family. The findings are particularly significant because they raise important questions about the legitimacy of the origins of state intervention and they highlight the relationship between understandings of poverty and state interference. The last thirty years of the nineteenth century was a period of severe austerity that saw dramatic curtailment in the provision of social welfare throughout England. It was a unique period in history because the government sought to correct increasing levels of poverty by targeting specific sections of the poor population with adapted policies designed to reduce their reliance on the state.⁸²⁴ Restrictions on outdoor relief, and attempts to shame poor parents for institutionalising their children through the ins and outs discourse, were only two examples of the ways that Victorian lawmakers sought to discourage the poor from seeking assistance. Other examples include Hurren's analysis of 'welfare-to-work' schemes and how such schemes were meant to penalise the poor and deter requests for help.⁸²⁵ Or Lees's account of the ways that Poor Law officials used 'therapeutic interventions' in an attempt to cure social diseases such as infirmity or old age. However, I firmly agree with Lees' apt conclusion that 'the reformatory effect on state aid was probably short lived'.⁸²⁶ The poor simply found other ways of making ends meet and the public childcare system was just one more example of this survivalist behaviour.

⁸²⁴ Williams, *From Pauperism* Page 65.

⁸²⁵ Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism* Pages 128-158.

⁸²⁶ Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers* Pages 281-287.

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