

INTRODUCTION: THE CHILD AT RISK IN MODERN BRITAIN

Daniel J.R. Grey¹

Guest Editor

On 20 April 2017, the British tabloid newspaper *The Sun* published an article regarding a video that had been secretly recorded of the disgraced 29-year-old former footballer Adam Johnson, who is currently serving a six-year prison sentence for the sexual abuse of a 15-year-old female fan.² Having originally pleaded guilty to one count of sexual activity with a child under section 9 Sexual Offences Act 2003 and one count of grooming contrary to section 15 of the Act on 10 February 2016, Johnson was convicted of a third offence of sexual activity with a child in March the same year by a jury at Bradford Crown Court.³ Filmed using a mobile phone illegally smuggled into HMP Moorland, the footage shows Johnson laughing with other inmates, mocking his victim, and complaining bitterly about how unfair he perceives his treatment by the criminal justice system to have been.⁴ Contrasting starkly with the remorse that he had claimed to feel at his trial, Johnson's remarks in the video explicitly blame his victim for her own abuse and he further alleged that criminal charges would never have been brought were it not for the fact he had been a Premier-League footballer.⁵ He also claimed that the recent failure of both his attempts to appeal against his conviction, and an additional attempt to reduce the length of his sentence, were likewise the result of an unfair focus on his position, wealth, and fame, arguing that other men in a similar position would have been successful in either securing the quashing of the conviction or having their sentence substantially reduced.⁶ Perhaps most shockingly, when asked by one of the other men about whether or not he had raped the girl, he replied that

¹ Daniel J.R. Grey is Lecturer in World History since 1800, University of Plymouth daniel.grey@plymouth.ac.uk. My thanks go to the contributors for this special issue, the anonymous reviewers, and colleagues at *Law, Crime and History* for all their help and support.

² Paul Sims, Tom Wells and Robin Perrie, "I WISH I'D RAPED HER' : Adam Johnson caught bragging to prison inmates about schoolgirl he sexually abused in shocking secret video', *The Sun*, 20 April 2017 <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/3377212/adam-johnson-caught-bragging-to-prison-inmates-about-schoolgirl-he-sexually-abused-in-shocking-secret-video/> [Accessed 23 April 2017].

³ Hugo Gye and Craig Hope, 'England star Adam Johnson faces jail after he admits kissing and touching 15-year-old girl and grooming', *Daily Mail*, 10 February 2016; Josh Halliday, 'Adam Johnson jailed for six years for sexual activity with schoolgirl', *The Guardian*, 24 March 2016.

⁴ Sims, Wells and Perrie, "I WISH I'D RAPED HER".

⁵ Stephen Jones, 'What Adam Johnson REALLY thought of 15-year-old victim exposed in prison rant - compared to what he told court', *The Mirror*, 21 April 2017.

⁶ Sam Christie, 'FOOTIE PERV APPEAL FAIL: Adam Johnson LOSES appeal bid against conviction for sexual activity with a teenage fan', *The Sun*, 16 March 2017.

given the length of his sentence, 'No I wish I f***ing did for six year'.⁷ He also complained in regard to rape cases more generally that British men were now unfairly treated by the courts: 'You can't do nothing now, birds can say anything'.⁸ Unsurprisingly, the leaked video received a good deal of public and social media attention and the story was promptly followed up by other newspapers.⁹ Shortly after the story broke, Johnson's younger sister Faye, who has campaigned vociferously since his conviction for her brother's release on the grounds of its supposed injustice, made an Instagram post that was interpreted by the *Daily Mail* as a show of continued support despite these comments.¹⁰

That despite any earlier claims to feel remorse for his crimes, Johnson and his supporters continue to blame others – and in particular, to blame his victim – for what they perceive as the unfairness of his conviction and harshness of his prison sentence is deeply unpleasant, but hardly a surprise. There remains a widespread perception with deep historical roots that false allegations of sexual violence (whether against adults or children, men or women) and supposedly made out of malice, regret at a consensual sexual encounter, or a warped desire for attention, are relatively common. In fact such false reports are agreed by researchers to be minimal: the question of witness credibility therefore remains a significant and distressing challenge for all complainants to face.¹¹ As his victim recounted in a public statement following Johnson's conviction, 'It's been the hardest year of my life and I've had to face so

⁷ Sims, Wells and Perrie, "I WISH I'D RAPED HER".

⁸ Jones, 'What Adam Johnson REALLY thought'.

⁹ 'Adam Johnson filmed laughing in jail over sex conviction', *The Telegraph*, 21 April 2017; Josh Halliday, 'Adam Johnson video prompts Prison Service investigation', *The Guardian*, 21 April 2017; Harley Tamplin, 'Full Adam Johnson prison video shows paedo footballer mocking victim', *Metro*, 21 April 2017; Natalie Evans and Stephen Jones, 'Adam Johnson prison video investigation launched as officials warn rule-breakers "will be punished and could face extra jail time"', *The Mirror*, 21 April 2017.

¹⁰ Alex Matthews and Richard Spillett, 'Jailed paedophile Adam Johnson's sister posts defiant photo of youngster in number 11 shirt as prison service investigates video of him bragging that he "should have raped" schoolgirl', *Daily Mail*, 21 April 2017.

¹¹ Kim Stevenson, 'Competency and Credibility: The Evidence of Children in Cases of Child Sexual Abuse', unpublished PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 1995; Louise Jackson, 'The child's word in court: cases of sexual abuse in London, 1870-1914', in Margaret L. Arnot and Cornelia Osborne (eds.) *Gender and Crime in Modern Europe* (London, 1999) pp.222-237; Nicola Gavey and Virginia Gow, "'Cry Wolf", Cried the Wolf: Constructing the Issue of False Rape Allegations in New Zealand Media Texts', *Feminism & Psychology*, 11 (2001) 341-360; Jan Jordan, "True "Lies" and False "Truths": Women, Rape and the Police', unpublished PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2001; Philip Rumney, 'False Allegations of Rape', *Cambridge Law Journal*, 65 (2006) 128-158; Liz Kelly, 'The (In)credible Words of Women: False Allegations in European Rape Research', *Violence Against Women*, 16 (2010) 1345-1355; Candida L. Saunders, 'The Truth, The Half-Truth, and Nothing Like the Truth: Reconceptualizing False Allegations of Rape', *British Journal of Criminology*, 52 (2012) 1152-1171; Clare Gunby, Anna Carline and Caryl Beynon, 'Regretting it After? Focus Group Perspectives on Alcohol Consumption, Nonconsensual Sex and False Allegations of Rape', *Social & Legal Studies*, 22 (2012) 87-106; Jacqueline M. Wheatcroft and Sandra Walklate, 'Thinking Differently about "False Allegations" in Cases of Rape: The Search for Truth', *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 3 (2014), 239-248.

much abuse after he claimed his innocence'.¹² Initially, Johnson had denied all charges, and only entered a guilty plea on the charge of grooming and one count of sexual activity with a child at the last minute.¹³ Despite his guilty pleas, Faye Johnson rapidly launched a controversial social media campaign for her brother's release following his conviction.¹⁴ Although all victims of sexual offences in the United Kingdom have the right to lifelong anonymity under section one of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992, Adam Johnson's victim received sustained and vitriolic abuse before and after the trial, including both rape threats and death threats after her identity was revealed online by those who felt that he had been maliciously accused and unfairly treated.¹⁵ It is also worth noting that sections of the British media's understanding of this statutory guarantee of anonymity was sufficiently poor that the former editor of *The Sun*, David Dinsmore, was himself later convicted for breach of the 1992 Act through having published a pixelated photo of the victim.¹⁶ In November 2016, Faye Johnson's ex-partner Steven Knox was jailed for 16 weeks after posting photos of the girl Adam Johnson had abused on Facebook, accusing her of being a liar and a gold-digger, claiming her behaviour did not fit with that of a 'real' sexual abuse victim, and encouraging his friends to share and then immediately delete the pictures as a way of spreading the message.¹⁷ Persistent and damaging myths about sexual violence, perpetrators, and how 'real' victims should or do act in the wake of their abuse therefore formed a key element in shaping public responses to the Adam Johnson case, just as they almost invariably do in many others.¹⁸

¹² Anthony Boyd, 'Read Adam Johnson's teenage victim's statement in full after today's guilty verdict', *The Mirror*, 2 March 2016; Samuel Osborne, 'Adam Johnson victim's statement: 15-year-old says guilty verdict 'shows everyone I was telling the truth'' *The Independent*, 2 March 2016.

¹³ 'Allardyce: Adam Johnson guilty pleas came as a "massive shock"', *ITV News*, 3 March 2016.

¹⁴ Josh Halliday, 'Adam Johnson's sister launches campaign to support footballer's appeal', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2016..

¹⁵ Abi Wilkinson, 'Adam Johnson's prison comments were predictably abhorrent – but so was the media's reporting of them' *The Independent*, 22 April 2017.

¹⁶ Frances Perraudin, 'Former *Sun* editor convicted over Adam Johnson victim picture', *The Guardian*, 7 March 2016. On mainstream British and American media coverage of rape, victim anonymity, and how this subject is influenced by technology and the Internet, see Helen Boyle, 'Rape and the Media: Victim's Rights to Anonymity and Effects of Technology on the Standard of Rape Coverage', *European Journal of Law and Technology*, 3 (2012) <http://ejlt.org/article/view/172>

¹⁷ Jenny Awford, "I don't care if I get locked up": Ex-boyfriend of Adam Johnson's sister is jailed for 16 weeks after he posted pictures of the footballer's schoolgirl sex abuse victim on Facebook', *Daily Mail*, 8 November 2016.

¹⁸ On the nature and impact of myths surrounding sexual violence, see Kim Stevenson, 'Unequivocal Victims: The Historical Mystification of the Female Complainant in Rape Cases', *Feminist Legal Studies*, 8 (2000) 346-366; Michelle Davies and Samantha McCartney, 'Effects of gender and sexuality on judgements of victim blame and rape myth acceptance in a depicted male rape', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 13 (2003) 391-398; Joanna Bourke, *Rape: A History from 1860 to the Present Day* (Virago, 2007) pp.21-49; Michelle Davies and Paul Rogers, 'Perceptions of Blame and Credibility Toward Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Differences Across Victim Age, Victim-Perpetrator Relationship, and Respondent Gender in a Depicted Case', *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 18 (2009) 78-92; Lisa DeMarni Cromer and Rachel E. Goldsmith, 'Child Sexual Abuse

In a number of ways, then, the trial of Adam Johnson and its aftermath throws into stark relief a number of issues in relation to the prosecution of child sexual assaults and their ongoing consequences. In particular, how contemporary British society understands – or conversely fails to understand – the interlinked and interdependent issues of child abuse and child protection, despite the fact that this subject has been a regular feature of public concern since the 1980s and the revelations that led to the establishment in 2014 of The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.¹⁹ Peter Wanless, CEO of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) wrote an open letter to the Football Association in March 2016 arguing that the case and how it was initially handled by Johnson's club suggested there was a worrying blind spot in contemporary football culture regarding child protection issues and the potential wider vulnerability of children and young people who engage in a range of sports.²⁰ This now seems disturbingly prescient as a warning of what dangers such a blind spot may have previously concealed.²¹

Myths: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Individual Differences', *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 19 (2010) 618-647; Katie M. Edwards et.al., 'Rape Myths: History, Individual and Institutional-Level Presence, and Implications for Change', *Sex Roles*, 65 (2011) 761-773; Guy A. Norfolk, 'Leda and the Swan – And other myths about rape', *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, 18 (2011) 225-232; Shannon O'Hara, 'Monsters, playboys, virgins and whores: Rape myths in the news media's coverage of sexual violence', *Language and Literature*, 21 (2012) 247-259; Garthine Walker, 'Everyman or a Monster? The Rapist in Early Modern England, c.1600-1750', *History Workshop Journal*, 76 (2013) 5-31; Catherine Esnard and Rafaele Dumas, 'Perceptions of male victim blame in a child sexual abuse case: effects of gender, age and need for closure', *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 13 (2013) 817-844; Elaine J. Rahm, 'Misconceptions Surrounding Child Sexual Abuse in Durban', unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Zululand, 2014; Aliraza Javaid, 'Male Rape Myths: Understanding and Explaining Social Attitudes Surrounding Male Rape', *Masculinities and Social Change*, 4 (2015) 270-297; Olivia Smith and Tina Skinner, 'How Rape Myths Are Used and Challenged in Rape and Sexual Assault Trials', *Social & Legal Studies* (2017) Online First DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663916680130>.

¹⁹ For key context see Steven Angelides, 'The emergence of the paedophile in the late twentieth century', *Australian Historical Studies* 36 (2005) 272-95 and Jenny Kitzinger, *Framing Abuse: Media Influence and Public Understanding of Sexual Violence against Children* (Pluto Press, 2004). On the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, see <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/> [Accessed 9 July 2017].

²⁰ Peter Wanless, 'An open letter to the Football Association', 24 March 2016 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/nspcc-letter-to-fa-adam-johnson/> [Accessed 23 April 2017].

²¹ On the issue of child sexual abuse perpetrated within contemporary sport and enacting policies to try and prevent this, see especially Celia H. Brackenridge, *Spoilsports: Understanding and preventing sexual exploitation in sport* (Routledge, 2001); Trisha Leahy, Grace Pretty and Gershom Tenenbaum, 'Prevalence of sexual abuse in organised competitive sport in Australia', *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 8 (2002) 16-36; Jenny Myers and Barbara Barrett, *In at the Deep End: A New Insight for All Sports from Analysis of Child Abuse within Swimming* (NSPCC, 2002); Mike Hartill, 'Sport and the sexually abused male child', *Sport, Education and Society*, 10 (2005) 287-304; Mike Hartill, 'The sexual abuse of boys in organized sports', *Men and Masculinities*, 12 (2009) 225-49; Sylvie Parent, 'Disclosure of Sexual Abuse in Sport Organizations: A Case Study', *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 20 (2011) 322-337; Sylvie Parent and Guylaine Demers, 'Sexual abuse in sport: a model to prevent and protect athletes', *Child Abuse Review*, 20 (2011) 120-133; Sylvie Parent and Joëlle Bannon, 'Sexual abuse in sport: What about boys?', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34 (2012) 354-359; Mike Hartill, 'Concealment of Child Sexual Abuse in Sports', *Quest*, 65 (2013) 241-254; Celia H. Brackenridge and Daniel Rhind, 'Child Protection in Sport: Reflections on Thirty Years of Science and Activism', *Social*

In November 2016, Andy Woodward, who had been a player for the Cheshire club Crewe Alexandra during the 1980s, waived his right to anonymity to disclose that he had been sexually abused by his coach. Other former players also came forward to disclose that they too had been victims of sexual abuse during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, sparking a formal investigation by the Football Association into crimes against children and young people committed before 2005 together with a major ongoing police inquiry: Operation Hydrant.²² Police investigations into these offences are still continuing, but as of March 2017, 560 victims had been identified, mainly but not exclusively relating to the abuse of young football players.²³ As the journalist Daniel Taylor has recently noted in an article for *The Guardian*, the most recent evidence compiled by these inquiries suggests that there is also a pressing need to

...dismantle the theory everything goes back to the era – the 1970s and 1980s, predominantly – relating to the majority of the victims, now in their 40s and 50s, who have felt emboldened enough to talk publicly about their ordeals. Instead, it turns out there have been 187 reported incidents of sexual assaults on junior footballers from the 20-year period beginning in 1996. Twenty-three relate to the years from 2011 onwards and, as if that is not alarming enough, it is also worth keeping in mind the true figure will be considerably higher.²⁴

Crimes against children are not, of course, an invention of late modernity. The phenomenon is not something that would have been unrecognisable to people in the medieval or early modern periods, even if the vocabulary and ideas used to describe such cases may

Sciences, 3 (2014) 326-340; Mike Hartill and Melanie Lang, “I Know People Think I’m a Complete Pain in the Neck”: An Examination of the Introduction of Child Protection and “Safeguarding” in English Sport from the Perspective of National Governing Body Safeguarding Lead Officers’, *Social Sciences*, 3 (2014) 606-627; Daniel Rhind, Jamie McDermott, Emma Lambert and Irina Koleva, ‘A Review of Safeguarding Cases in Sport’, *Child Abuse Review*, 24 (2015) 418-426.

²² Daniel Taylor, ‘Andy Woodward: “It was the softer, weaker boys he targeted”’, *The Guardian*, 16 November 2016; Martin Fricker, ‘Coach who sexually abused me was part of football paedophile ring: Andy Woodward says other ex-professionals were targeted too’, *The Mirror*, 17 November 2016; Daniel Taylor, ‘Six come forward after Andy Woodward’s story of abuse at Crewe’, *The Guardian*, 21 November 2016; ‘Paul Stewart: I was sexually abused by my football coach for four years’, *The Guardian*, 22 November 2016; ‘Football sex abuse claims: David White latest ex-player to come forward’, *BBC News*, 23 November 2016; ‘Football Abuse: Andy Woodward Interview’, *Channel 4 News*, 24 November 2016; Nazia Parveen, ‘Former Northern Ireland player Mark Williams was “victim of sexual abuse”’, *The Guardian*, 29 November 2016; ‘Football sex abuse scandal: Andy Woodward suffered from more than one abuser as he waits for police interview’ *The Independent*, 22 December 2016; ‘Football child sex abuse claims: What has happened so far?’ *BBC News*, 22 December 2016; ‘Football child abuse scandal: Number of claims tops 1,000’, *BBC News*, 18 January 2017; Daniel Taylor, ‘The football child abuse scandal just keeps on growing’, *The Guardian*, 2 April 2017.

²³ ‘National statistics on allegations of non-recent child sexual abuse in football: Up to and including 31/03/17’,

<http://www.npcc.police.uk/NPCCBusinessAreas/OtherWorkAreas/OpHydrant/FootballAbuseStats.aspx> [Accessed 23 April 2017].

²⁴ Taylor, ‘The football child abuse scandal just keeps on growing’.

sometimes have been very different.²⁵ As the criminologist Michael Salter has observed, ‘The figure of the child at risk is a potent one in Western culture, and the sexual abuse and exploitation of children has long been a focal point of social anxiety’.²⁶ Such risks and their representation were not simply confined to fears that children (and especially illegitimate children) were potentially in grave danger of suffering abandonment, neglect, or sexual violence and homicide from the ignorant, uncaring, or outright malevolent.²⁷ They could and did also encompass a variety of concerns about what were the best approaches in healthcare, education, or appropriate parenting models.²⁸ Efforts to provide for abandoned

²⁵ On histories of child sexual abuse in the medieval and early modern world, see variously Julie Gammon, ‘“A Denial of Innocence”: female juvenile victims of rape and the English legal system in the eighteenth century,’ in A. Fletcher and S. Husseys, (eds.) *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State* (Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.74-95; John Lascaros and Effie Poukalou-Rebelakou, ‘Child sexual abuse: historical cases in the Byzantine Empire (324–1453 A.D.)’, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24 (2000) 1085-1090; Martin Ingram, ‘Child Sexual Abuse in Early Modern England’, in Michael Braddick and John Walter (eds.) *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.63-84; Harold Johnson, ‘A Pedophile in the Palace, or The Sexual Abuse of King Sebastian of Portugal (1554-1578) and Its Consequences’ in Harold Johnson and Francis A. Dutra (eds.) *Pelo Vaso Traseiro: Sodomy and Sodomites in Luso-Brazilian History* (Fenestra Books, 2007) pp.195-229; Jeremy Goldberg, *Communal Discord, Child Abduction and Rape in Late Medieval England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Sarah Toulalan, ‘“Unripe” bodies: children and sex in early modern England’, in Sarah Toulalan and Kate Fisher (eds.) *Bodies, sex and desire from the Renaissance to the Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) pp.131-150; Larry Wolff, *Paolina’s Innocence: Child Abuse in Casanova’s Venice* (Stanford University Press, 2012); Aparna Gollapudi, ‘The Disordered Fundament: Sexual Violence on Boys and Sodomy Trial Narratives in the *Old Bailey Proceedings*’ in Anne Greenfield (ed.) *Interpreting Sexual Violence 1660-1800* (Pickering & Chatto, 2013) pp.45-56; Garthine Walker, ‘Rape, Acquittal and Culpability in Popular Crime Reports in England, c.1670–c.1750’, *Past & Present*, 220 (2013) 115-142 (see especially 125-135); Sarah Toulalan, ‘Child Sexual Abuse in Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century London: Rape, Sexual Assault and the Denial of Agency’ in Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (eds.) *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency, 1750-1914* (Ashgate, 2013) pp.23-44; Sarah Toulalan, ‘Is he a licentious lewd Sort of a Person? Constructing the child rapist in early modern England’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 23 (2014) 21-52; Satu Lidman, ‘Intersections of rape crime and child protection in early modern courts’ in Marita Husso, Tuija Virkki, Marianne Notko, Helena Hirvonen and Jari Eilola (eds.) *Interpersonal Violence: Differences and Connections* (Routledge, 2017) pp.17-32; Sarah Toulalan, ‘Child victims of rape and sexual assault: compromised chastity, marginalised lives?’ in Andrew Spicer and Jane L. Stevens Crawshaw (eds.) *The Place of the Social Margins, 1350-1750* (Routledge, 2017) pp.181-202; Sarah Toulalan, ‘Newspaper reporting of sexual crimes against children in seventeenth and eighteenth-century England’, unpublished conference paper, IAMHIST 2017 conference, Paris, 13 July 2017.

²⁶ Michael Salter, *Organised Child Sexual Abuse* (Routledge, 2013) p.9.

²⁷ On the particular cultural and legal status of illegitimate children in the period covered by this special issue, see Ginger S. Frost, *Illegitimacy in English Law and Society, 1860-1930* (Manchester University Press, 2016).

²⁸ For some key examples of these issues and debates about children’s experiences before 1800 see Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1983); Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Employment and Unemployment of Children in England c.1680-1851’, *Past & Present*, 126 (1990) 115-150; Avner Giladi, *Children of Islam: Concepts of Childhood in Medieval Muslim Society* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1992); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (Yale University Press, 1994); Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, ‘Reciprocal Bonding: Parents and their Children in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Family History*, 25 (2000) 291-312; Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (Yale University Press, 2001); Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500*, 2nd ed. (Longman, 2005); Anthony Fletcher, *Growing Up in England: The Experience of Childhood 1600-1914* (Yale University

children, for example, led to the establishment of Foundling Hospitals in a number of different European countries from the thirteenth century onwards.²⁹ That said, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed profound developments in Britain regarding the social and cultural construction of childhood and ideas about how children should best be 'dealt with' and 'managed'. This produced a shift in perceptions that then helped to generate significant further social, cultural, and political changes and reforms in Britain and elsewhere.³⁰

Hugh Cunningham has suggested that during the years between 1830 and 1920, philanthropic reformers from across Europe and North America increasingly found that their ideas about what constituted an 'appropriate' experience of childhood were 'lifted clear of their old moorings'.³¹ New directions in child welfare were correspondingly charted, including the development of restrictions on child labour, mandatory infant smallpox vaccination and other public health measures, the introduction and extension of compulsory education, and a renewed and increasingly demanding emphasis on the importance of parents from all backgrounds providing what was perceived as 'normal' family life. Such changes in attitudes

Press, 2008); Patricia Crawford, *Parents of Poor Children in England, 1580-1800* (Oxford University Press, 2009); Sara H. Mendelson, 'Child Rearing in Theory and Practice: the letters of John Locke and Mary Clarke', *Women's History Review*, 19 (2010) 231-243; Ashley Mathisen, 'Treating the Children of the Poor: Institutions and the Construction of Medical Authority in Eighteenth-Century London', unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2011; Patrick Wallis and Cliff Webb, 'The education and training of gentry sons in early modern England', *Social History*, 36 (2011) 36-53; Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England, 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity and Generation* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Hannah Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580-1720* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Alys Levene, *The Childhood of the Poor: Welfare in Eighteenth-Century London* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Tali Berner, 'Childhood and Rituals in Early Modern Ashkenaz', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 7 (2014) 65-86; Katharine Hodgkin, 'Childhood and Loss in Early Modern Life Writing', *Parergon*, 33 (2016) 115-134 and the collected essays in Katie Barclay, Kimberley Reynolds and Ciara Rawnsley (eds.) *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

²⁹ David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton University Press, 1988); Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410-1536* (University of Michigan Press, 1991); Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, 'Circulation of children in eighteenth-century Portugal' in Catherine Panter-Brick and Malcolm T. Smith (eds.) *Abandoned Children* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 27-40; Alys Levene, *Childcare, health and mortality at the London Foundling Hospital, 1741-1800* (Manchester University Press, 2007); Joel F. Harrington, *The Unwanted Child: The Fate of Foundlings, Orphans and Juvenile Criminals in Early Modern Germany* (University of Chicago Press, 2009); Mathisen, 'Treating the Children of the Poor'.

³⁰ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare, England 1872-1989* (Routledge, 1994); Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority, 1780-1930* (Harvard University Press, 1995); George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and Its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford University Press, 1998); Mathew Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford University Press, 2013); Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (Bloomsbury, 2014); Louise A. Jackson with Angela Bartie, *Policing Youth: Britain 1945-70* (Manchester University Press, 2014). For key comparative perspectives see also the collected essays in both Siân Pooley and Kaveri Qureshi (eds.) *Parenthood between Generations: Transforming Reproductive Cultures* (Berghahn Books, 2016), and Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht (eds.) *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe 1870-1950: Raising the Nation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

³¹ Cunningham, *Children and Childhood*, p.137.

could themselves then spark additional further developments, such as the creation of the NSPCC by philanthropists in 1889 in partial response to concerns that child abuse and neglect was not sufficiently recognised and punished by the existing policy and judicial framework.³²

These changes also shaped – and were shaped in turn – by responses to the ebb and flow of sensationalised moral panics from the 1840s onwards relating to a perceived epidemic of crimes committed against children and young people in nineteenth-century Britain. At different historical moments these included fears of widespread infanticide, concerns that vulnerable family members (especially children) would be poisoned or starved by murderous relatives to collect life insurance premiums, the spectre of ‘baby-farming’ (a catch-all and frequently pejorative term used to cover a wide range of different subjects, but often referring to the idea that some paid childminders or foster parents would deliberately neglect or murder their charges), child cruelty, abandonment or neglect, and outrage at instances of sexual abuse.³³ In the latter case, scandals relating to specific allegations of commercial

³² On the foundation of the NSPCC and its influence see George K. Behlmer, *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870-1908* (Stanford University Press, 1982) and Monica Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation and the NSPCC* (Ashgate, 2009).

³³ The literature on each of these separate issues is substantial, but for essential context see variously Behlmer, *Child Abuse*; Margaret L. Arnot, ‘Infant death, child care and the State: the baby – farming scandal and the first Infant Life Protection legislation of 1872’, *Continuity & Change*, 9 (1994) 271-311; Margaret L. Arnot, ‘Gender in Focus: Infanticide in England, 1840-1880’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1994; Lynn Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland’s Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1998) pp.198-245; Tony Ward, ‘The Sad Subject of Infanticide: Law, Medicine and Child Murder, 1860-1938’, *Social & Legal Studies* 8 (1999) 163-80; Louise A. Jackson, *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England* (Routledge, 2000); Ruth Ellen Homrighaus, ‘Wolves in Women’s Clothing: Baby-Farming and the British Medical Journal, 1860-1872,’ *Journal of Family History*, 26 (2001) 350-72; Ruth E. Homrighaus, ‘Baby Farming: The Care of Illegitimate Children in England, 1860-1943’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2003; Katherine Watson, *Poisoned Lives: English Poisoners and their Victims* (Hambledon & London, 2004), pp. 77–96; Tom Dunning, ‘Narrow Nowhere Universes, Child Rape and Convict Transportation in Scotland and Van Diemen’s Land, 1839-1853’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 86 (2007) 113-25; Daniel J.R. Grey, ‘Discourses of Infanticide in England, 1880-1922’, unpublished PhD thesis, Roehampton University, 2008; Daniel Grey, ‘“More Ignorant and Stupid than Wilfully Cruel”: Homicide Trials and “Baby-Farming” in England and Wales in the Wake of the Children Act 1908,’ *Crimes and Misdemeanours*, 3 (2009) 60-77; Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty*; Cathryn B.A. Wilson, ‘Mad, Sad, or Bad?: Newspaper and Judicial Representations of Men Who Killed Children in Victorian England, 1860-1900’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 2012; Daniel J.R. Grey, ‘“Liable to very gross abuse”: Murder, moral panic and cultural fears over infant life insurance, 1875-1914’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18 (2013) 54-71; Anne-Marie Kilday, *A History of Infanticide in Britain c. 1600 to the Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) pp.111-150; Tim Siddons, ‘Suspected New-born Child Murder and Concealment of Pregnancy in Scotland, c.1812-c.1930’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2014; Jim Hinks, ‘The Representation of “Baby-Farmers” in the Scottish City, 1867–1908’, *Women’s History Review*, 23 (2014) 560-576; Victoria M. Nagy, *Nineteenth-Century Female Poisoners: Three English Women Who Used Arsenic to Kill* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Jim Hinks, ‘Other People’s Children: Representations of Paid-Childcare in Britain, 1867-1908’, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2015; Shirley A. Smith, ‘“A Crying Sin”:

child sexual exploitation by strangers, such as the ‘Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ reports by W.T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette* that led to the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, or fears that a sophisticated global network of human trafficking (the so-called ‘white slave trade’) was in operation often gained significantly more traction and were much more possible to debate openly than the expression of fears that individual girls and boys might be at risk of abuse by predatory adults in their own streets, homes, and schools.³⁴ The echoes of this ambivalent and sometimes explicitly contradictory Victorian discourse regarding child sexual abuse – which frequently held children complicit in their own victimisation – continued to resonate well into the late twentieth century, with significant consequences for the representation and treatment of both victims and offenders.³⁵ As the authors of a recent pioneering article on the history of child sexual abuse in twentieth-century England and Wales have observed, ‘what we call child sexual abuse was known about across the twentieth century, although it was described and categorised in a proliferation of ways with a range of effects that were not simply (and indeed rarely) about safeguarding children’.³⁶

Infanticide in South-West Wales, 1870-1922’, unpublished PhD thesis, Aberystwyth University, 2015; Victoria Bates, *Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England: Age, Crime and Consent in the Courts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). It is also helpful to consider these alongside parallel developments and moral panics relating to the same issues in Ireland: see variously Lindsey Earner-Byrne, ‘Child Sexual Abuse, History and the Pursuit of Blame in Modern Ireland’ in Katie Holmes and Stuart Wards (eds) *Exhuming Passions: The Pressure of the Past in Ireland and Australia* (Irish Academic Press, 2011) pp.51-70; Cliona Rattigan, *What Else Could I Do? Single Mothers and Infanticide, Ireland, 1900-1950* (Irish Academic Press, 2012); Sarah-Anne Buckley, *The Cruelty Man: Child welfare, the NSPCC and the State in Ireland, 1889-1956* (Manchester University Press, 2013); Elaine Farrell, *‘A most diabolical deed’: Infanticide and Irish society, 1850-1900* (Manchester University Press, 2013); Karen M. Brennan, ‘“A Fine Mixture of Pity and Justice:” The Criminal Justice Response to Infanticide in Ireland, 1922-1949’, *Law and History Review*, 31 (2013) 793-841; Ciara Breathnach and Euan O’Halpin, ‘Scripting blame: Irish coroners’ courts and unnamed infant dead, 1916-32’, *Social History*, 39 (2014) 210-228; Ciara Breathnach, ‘Infant life protection and medico-legal literacy in early twentieth-century Dublin’, *Women’s History Review* (2017) Online First DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1307283>

³⁴ On the influence of ‘white slavery’ panics and British engagement with this as an international concern (renamed as ‘traffic in women and children’ from the 1920s onwards), see Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* (Penguin, 1995); Dan Gorman, ‘Empire, internationalism, and the campaign against the traffic in women and children in the 1920s’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 19 (2008) 186-216; Jo Doezema, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters: The Construction of Trafficking* (Zed Books, 2010); Rachael Attwood, ‘Lock Up Your Daughters! Male Activists, “Patriotic Domesticity” and the Fight Against Sex Trafficking in England, 1880–1912’, *Gender & History*, 27 (2015) 611-627; Rachael Attwood, ‘Stopping the Traffic: the National Vigilance Association and the international fight against the “white slave” trade (1899–c.1909)’, *Women’s History Review*, 24 (2015) 325-350; Julia Laite, ‘Between Scylla and Charybdis: Women’s Labour Migration and Sex Trafficking in the Early Twentieth Century’, *International Review of Social History*, 62 (2017) 37-65, and Julia Laite, ‘Traffickers and Pimps in the Era of White Slavery’, *Past & Present* (forthcoming). On the impact of the Criminal Law Amendment Act see Kim Stevenson, ‘“Not just the ideas of a few enthusiasts”: Early Twentieth Century Legal Activism and the Criminalization of Immorality’, *Cultural and Social History*, 14 (2017), 219-236.

³⁵ Carol Smart, ‘A History of Ambivalence and Conflict in the Discursive Construction of the “Child Victim” of Sexual Abuse’, *Social & Legal Studies*, 8 (1999) 391-409.

³⁶ Adrian Bingham, Lucy Delap, Louise Jackson and Louise Settle, ‘Historical child sexual abuse in England and Wales: the role of historians’, *History of Education*, 45 (2016) 411-429 (pp. 436-427).

Despite the implicit or sometimes explicit suggestion that what could or should be understood by 'normal family life' and wellbeing for children in Britain and its Empire was always common-sense, value-neutral, and self-evident, this was unsurprisingly mediated in practice by contemporary constructions of gender, race, and class.³⁷ A key element of British

³⁷ The historiography on the family and its welfare in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain is vast, but see variously Anna Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', *History Workshop Journal* 5 (1978) 9-65; Denise Riley, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* (Virago, 1983); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Hutchinson, 1987); Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford University Press, 1993); Lara V. Marks, *Model Mothers: Jewish Mothers and Maternity Provision in East London, 1870-1939* (Clarendon Press 1994); Linda Mahood, *Policing Gender, Class and Family: Britain, 1850-1940* (UCL Press, 1995); Megan Doolittle, 'Missing Fathers: Assembling a History of Fatherhood in Mid-nineteenth Century England,' unpublished PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1996; Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (Rivers Oram Press, 1996); Abrams, *The Orphan Country*; Leonore Davidoff, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink and Katherine Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (Longman, 1999); John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Yale University Press, 1999); Pat Starkey, *Families and Social Workers: The Work of Family Social Service Units 1940-1985* (Liverpool University Press, 2000); Caroline Bressey, 'Forgotten histories: three stories of black girls from Barnardo's Victorian archive', *Women's History Review*, 11 (2002) 351-373; Michael Peplar, *Family Matters: A history of ideas about family since 1945* (Longman, 2002); Kathryn Gleadle, "'The age of physiological reformers": rethinking gender and domesticity in the age of reform' in Arthur Burns & Joanna Innes (eds.) *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp.200-219; Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (Yale University Press, 2003); Hilary Marland, *Dangerous Motherhood: Insanity & Childbirth in Victorian Britain* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Lydia Murdoch, *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (Rutgers University Press, 2006); collected essays in Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers (eds.) *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); John Welshman, *From Transmitted Deprivation to Social Exclusion: Policy, poverty and parenting* (Policy Press, 2007); Elizabeth Thiel, *The Fantasy of Family: Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature and the Myth of the Domestic Ideal* (Routledge, 2008); Jordanna Bailkin, 'The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State', *Journal of Modern History*, 81 (2009) 87-121; the collected essays in Lucy Delap, Ben Griffin and Abigail Wills (eds.) *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Siân K. Pooley, 'Parenthood and child-rearing in England c.1860-1910', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2009; Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel, *Child, Nation, Race and Empire: Child Rescue Discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester University Press, 2010); Laura M. Ishiguro, 'Relative distances: family and empire between Britain, British Columbia and India, 1858-1901', unpublished PhD thesis, University College London, 2011; Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and their Relations 1780-1920* (Oxford University Press, 2012); Angela Davis, *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England, c.1945-2000* (Manchester University Press, 2012); Pat Thane and Tanya Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 2012); April G. Gallwey, 'Lone Motherhood in England, 1945-1990: Economy, Agency and Identity', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2012; Alana Harris, *Faith in the family: A lived religious history of English Catholicism, 1945-1982* (Manchester University Press, 2013); John Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918-1955: The Dangerous Age of Childhood* (Pickering & Chatto, 2013); Thomson, *Lost Freedom*; Selina Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War England, c.1948-1970', *English Historical Review*, 537 (2014) 362-387, Julie-Marie Strange, *Fatherhood and the British Working Class, 1865-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford University Press, 2015); Frost, *Illegitimacy*; Michael Lambert, "'Problem families" and the post-war welfare state in the North West of England, 1943-74', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 2017; and collected essays in Barron and Siebrecht (eds.) *Parenting and the State*.

missionary thought during the nineteenth century, as Esme Cleall has demonstrated, was an underlying assumption that without conversion to Christianity and the direct adoption of Victorian kinship models, it would be impossible for Southern African and South Asian men and women to form proper and loving familial relationships with their relatives – including their children.³⁸ Far from simply passively accepting top-down models of ‘good parenting’ and the introduction of controversial measures such as compulsory smallpox vaccination, however, when they disagreed with the ideas presented to them British women and men argued fiercely that their own perspective and judgement as parents was essential for the authorities to take on board.³⁹ By the late nineteenth century, there was also considerably more willingness (albeit in relative terms) than there had been in previous decades by the state and by philanthropic organisations to stage interventions in cases where it was felt that children were not subject to proper care and control. As Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht have noted, between 1870 and 1950, ‘Interaction [between parents and the nation-state] could take different physical forms and took place in different social contexts but remained a constant factor in how states across Europe...sought legitimacy and power’.⁴⁰

Concentrating on the period from 1800 to 1960, the essays in this special issue of *Law, Crime and History* focus on the different ways that ‘the child at risk’ was understood and responded to in nineteenth- and twentieth-century England. Margaret L. Arnot’s contribution, which opens the special issue, focuses on how parental homicide was represented in visual popular culture during the first half of the nineteenth century. Examining six illustrated broadsides in detail, Arnot demonstrates the complicated narratives that this often overlooked cultural source can reveal about attitudes to gender and parenting, mental health, the vulnerability of children, and criminal justice. While historical analyses of broadsides have often concentrated on the textual aspects and largely overlooked the images these could contain, Arnot argues persuasively that the visual representations were carefully designed to add weight to the complicated emotional, religious and moral messages of each broadside. Although some types of homicide – in particular the killing of newborns – seem

³⁸ Esme Cleall, *Negotiating Difference: Missionary Discourses in the British Empire, c. 1840-1900* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) especially pp.48-73.

³⁹ For example see Nadja Durbach, *Bodily Matters: The Anti-Vaccination Movement in England, 1853-1907* (Duke University Press, 2005); Lucinda McCray Beier, *For Their Own Good: The Transformation of English Working-Class Health Culture, 1880-1970* (Ohio State University Press, 2008); Siân Pooley, ‘All we parents want is that our children’s health and lives should be regarded’’: child health and parental concern in England, c.1860-1910’, *Social History of Medicine*, 23 (2010) 528-548.

⁴⁰ Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht, ‘Introduction: Raising the Nation’ in Barron and Siebrecht (eds.) *Parenting and the State*, p.2.

never to have been directly represented in broadside illustrations, scenes depicting the murder of older infants and children could be shockingly graphic. Yet the horror this sort of image conveyed to the reader did not necessarily mean that elements of sympathy for a murderous mother and father would be absent from the text. As Arnot observes, the richness and complexity of these visual sources, and the competing and sometimes directly contradictory discourses that were included in such broadsides, points to the need for a much more extensive gendered analysis of child-killing, including both its cultural representation and its judicial treatment, between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century.

The second article, by Kim Stevenson, is concerned with the issues faced by child witnesses giving evidence in trials for sexual abuse during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As noted at the start of this essay, for a considerable period of time children were frequently – and until very recently – assumed to be unreliable witnesses by default. Often, it was believed, children of young age simply could not fully understand the full implications of the oath that was required of all those called to testify. Combined with the (erroneous but widespread) assumption that there was a high rate of false accusations relating to sexual offences, and the gruelling process of cross-examination in the presence of the defendant in order to determine the veracity of their account, this must have inevitably made an already stressful process for child witnesses more traumatic, and impacted on both the delivery and content of their testimony. In response to these concerns, by the early nineteenth century it had become a common but still controversial practice to halt trials so that a child witness could be given a short course of religious instruction, designed to emphasise the importance of the oath and the dire consequences in the hereafter of failing to tell the truth. From 1849, however, such judgements about the suitability or honesty of child witnesses tended to rest less on religious grounds, and had shifted to nebulous but influential concepts such as the ‘respectability’ of those called to testify. Stevenson compellingly argues that judicial approaches to child witnesses in cases of sexual abuse during this period were strongly influenced by changes in the social and cultural understanding of childhood. These changing views, and their impact, had significant consequences for determining the outcome of criminal trials and on the experiences of child witnesses.

Judith Rowbotham’s article deals with judicial and popular responses to corporal punishment for children between 1850 and 1910, and the drawing of lines between what constituted ‘acceptable chastisement’ of a child in England and Wales, and what was perceived as crossing over into unacceptable violence and abuse. This was a period when not only was

corporal punishment of adults in military or judicial settings being gradually abandoned, but there were increasing suggestions made in both fiction and writings on education that this was potentially inappropriate as a means of punishing children, too. As Rowbotham shows here, Victorian and Edwardian attitudes to corporal punishment were extremely complex: even those teachers, critics and novelists who vocally opposed use of the cane or similar measures might still consider it as a necessary 'last resort' when they believed they were dealing with especially egregious offences by recalcitrant youths. Overall, most English and Welsh schools between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century considered that the right to inflict corporal punishment on their charges was an essential requirement for ensuring the smooth running of their institution and the discipline of individual pupils. But where the line fell between this acceptance of corporal punishment as a reasonable means of enforcing discipline, and the distinction of 'assault', was in practice contingent on the individual circumstances of each case. One crucial aspect of this was that the courts expected that punishments would be inflicted in a 'moderate' fashion, by a teacher who was no longer angry about the child's bad behaviour. Cases in which it was believed that those *in loco parentis* had lost their temper during such chastisement, and consequently behaved unreasonably, were held to at best undermine the effectiveness of corporal punishment as an educational and moral tool, and at worst condemned as criminal conduct.

In the fourth article, Victoria Bates critically examines the late nineteenth-century concern with the 'precocious girl', and the impact of this idea on debates about the age of consent during the 1880s. Focusing on the landmark Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, Bates demonstrates how the idea of 'precocity' as both a psychological and a physiological category was not only written into medical and legal debates, but used to camouflage value judgements about the 'right kind of girl'. Those adolescents who were instead labelled by the press, or the courts, as the *wrong* sort of girl all too often found that the law offered little protection, and less sympathy. Victims of child sexual abuse who were defined as 'precocious' stood a much lower chance securing justice through the judicial system. Far from being depicted as a child *at risk*, a well-known trope for organisations such as the NSPCC which could command a great deal of support and mobilise action for legislative or social change, such girls instead were described as *being* a risk. As Bates argues here, precocity was a nebulous category with permeable borders – it was possible to refit it in a number of different ways and with different markers in order to suit particular commentators. Thus, social purity campaigners, politicians, doctors and lawyers might reach conclusions about the dangers of the 'precocious girl', both to individual men and to British society at large, from a wide range of evidence and benchmarks against which they could measure this.

In addition to demonstrating the malleability of this pernicious concept, Bates notes that there is a pressing need for historians to pay more attention to how 'precocity' was articulated, not only because of its broader influence during this period, but because of its ongoing importance in shaping responses to child sexual abuse and the age of consent during the course of the twentieth century.

The final contribution to this special issue, by Kate Bradley, examines the career of Lady Cynthia Colville (1884-1968), an aristocratic voluntary social worker who exerted a profound influence on developments in infant welfare and the juvenile justice system during the early and mid-twentieth century. For Colville, who combined marriage and motherhood in the British upper classes with volunteer social work in East London, first in maternal and infant welfare and later as one of the early women magistrates, the idea that children at risk could be effectively helped was a key motivating force. While her original entry to this field was certainly influenced by the prevailing understanding of this as a 'suitable role' for a young upper-class married woman, rather any desire to embark on a professional career, Colville remained actively involved in working with children from deprived backgrounds until the 1960s. Her appointment as lady-in-waiting to Queen Mary from 1923 also gave her unique opportunities to drum up extra support in the highest circles of society for her charitable work in Shoreditch. In this sense, as Bradley notes, Colville was a fascinating marker of the continuities and changes in attitudes to poverty, philanthropy and the professionalization of social work and related fields during the first half of the twentieth century. Despite her conformity in several respects to tradition and the conservative values of the British establishment, as Bradley points out, to see Colville merely as continuing a Victorian practice of 'good works' does a disservice to both the genuinely innovative elements of her perspectives on child welfare, and her lasting commitment to the community in Shoreditch.

The individual subjects covered by these authors span a wide temporal and topical range, including the question of 'appropriate' punishments (whether of guilty adults for the killing or sexual abuse of child victims, or that meted out to disobedient children), the role of elites in social work, and how the passage of legislation and outcome of individual criminal trials might be influenced by ideas such as 'reliability', 'respectability' or 'precocity'. But they are united by their focus on the idea of 'the child at risk' as a cultural and social construct that generated – and still generates – a considerable amount of anxiety, energy and comment in modern Britain. As these essays demonstrate, such repeated bouts of cultural anxiety and the subsequent actions this provoked did not necessarily lead to better or more 'just' experiences for children at risk during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Indeed, in some

instances, it is clear that vulnerable British children have been as or more likely to be perceived by both the authorities and the general public as a danger rather than as having been *in* danger, and treated with a corresponding and damaging lack of sympathy and care. In 2017, the impact of the Adam Johnson case, and the ongoing investigations of Operation Hydrant and The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse demonstrate that these sadly remain valid and pressing concerns.