

## Chapter 2

# ‘Straightening Crooked Souls’: Psychology and Children in Custody in 1950s and 1960s Ireland\*

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### Introduction

This chapter explores the emergence of the psychological child in Irish custodial institutions during the 1950s and 1960s. The grim historical narrative of Ireland’s Industrial Schools and Reformatories, supported by copious witness testimony and documentary sources, has been clearly established through investigative journalism (Arnold, 2009; Raftery, 1999), official inquiries (Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse [CICA], 2009), and academic studies (Buckley, 2013; Raftery & O’Sullivan, 1999) as one of systematic neglect and frequently endemic child abuse. Cumulatively, such studies have shown the unusually high recourse to child institutionalisation in the Republic of Ireland and that children from poor families, or who were otherwise viewed as socially or morally undesirable (especially the children of unmarried mothers), were significantly overrepresented in such institutions. The maintenance of this system required a considerable degree of symbiosis between the Church and State in the context of prevailing social norms (see especially Buckley & McGregor, 2019) and, crucially, the marginal status of


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\*‘When I see such vast sums being expended on the roads of Dublin and the neighbouring counties, I may be pardoned in wishing that something could have been spent on straightening the crooked souls of very many youths in the past two decades.’ Letter from Archbishop John Charles McQuaid to Taoiseach Seán Lemass, 11 June 1966, National Archives of Ireland, Department of An Taoiseach, 98/6/156.

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**Histories of Punishment and Social Control in Ireland: Perspectives from a Periphery, 37–55**

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institutionalised children facilitated neglect and left them particularly vulnerable to physical, mental and sexual abuse. For Sarah-Anne Buckley (2013) and other commentators, the persistent use of these schools and the scale of the institutionalisation of the children of poor families in mid-twentieth-century Ireland was anomalous. They contend that their use reveals a central contradiction in the stance and policies of the Roman Catholic Church and the Irish State that was resolved at the level of social class. On the one hand, there was an ostensible and rhetorical reluctance by the State to interfere in the sanctified family unit on the basis of child welfare, however, this was coupled with a range of highly interventionist policies and policing, including institutionalisation, for poor children who were identified as a social threat (Buckley, 2013) and whose familial environments were pathologised (Cox, 2018).

This chapter explores another aspect of this history – the gradual recognition in the 1950s and 1960s, at a policy level, of the necessity to cater for the emotional and psychological needs of offending and non-offending juveniles in residential care settings – and it traces the specific psychological theories and arguments used by advocates seeking these reforms. Most studies date the shift in attitude at a policy level to the publication of the ‘Kennedy Report’ in 1970 (Committee on Reformatory and Industrial Schools, 1970). This Report, officially entitled *Some of Our Children: A Report on the Residential Care of the Deprived Child in Ireland*, and chaired by the District Justice of the Children’s Court, Eileen Kennedy, who trained and worked as a nurse before studying law, has been described as ‘one of the most damning indictments of the operation of any State system ever produced’ in Ireland (Coleman, 2009; McNally, 2009, p. 210). Its publication signalled a significant disenchantment with the institutionalisation of children in the Republic of Ireland (Buckley & McGregor, 2019) and it made extensive recommendations including that: inappropriate and inadequate institutions should be closed; remaining services should be professionalised; the emotional and mental well-being of children in care should be catered for; and psychological and psychiatric assessment should be provided. While the Kennedy Report was an important moment, as Carole Holohan (2018, p. 175) demonstrates, it did not revolutionise the Industrial School system with ‘new understandings of how to provide for vulnerable children and young people’. Nor should Kennedy be understood as representing a ‘new departure’ in advocating for children’s psychological and emotional well-being. There was a significant intellectual hinterland shaping the Report’s recommendations, including international influences which informed Irish debates on the psychological needs of children, notably those discussed at the UN Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders held every five years from 1955 onwards (Holohan, 2018).

In this chapter, we trace an overlooked influence on debates in Ireland, in particular post-war theories of child development, notably the English psychoanalyst John Bowlby’s attachment theory (Thomson, 2013). Bowlby was one of the many influential psychiatrists and psychologists, including Ronald Winnicott, to focus on the family as a category of analysis in the post-war period. Associated with the Tavistock Clinic and the general ‘Tavistock milieu’ in London,

several members, like R.D. Laing, David Cooper and Aaron Esterson, explored the ‘intra- and inter-personal relationships within the family’ and ‘the ontological ramifications of these relationships’ (Wall, 2018, pp. 143–71). Bowlby and Bowlbyism, however, became particularly well-known and, as we show below, was explicitly referenced by advocates commenting on services in Ireland. In this chapter, we assess the impact of Bowlbyism on the reframing of the offending and non-offending institutionalised child in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s, and the links with the emergence of interest in, and demands for, the systematic integration of psychiatric assessment and services in the juvenile criminal justice system. Bowlbyism, in local translation, informed part of a mounting critique of existing childcare provision in Ireland which gained momentum from the 1960s onwards. While the lay and religious agents of this intercultural transfer, on the basis of their own training and expertise, sought to displace older variants and organisational providers of childcare in Ireland’s increasingly archaic custodial institutions, the cultural acquisition of psychological and social science knowledge underlying their authority was heavily mediated through a dominant Catholic, ‘socio-spiritual’ (Skehill, 2003, 2007) cultural space. Bowlbyism, with its focus on the close physical as well as emotional relationship between mother and child, we argue, aligned neatly with the Republic of Ireland’s 1937 constitutional settlement which affirmed the centrality of the traditional nuclear family and of women, assumed to be mothers, in the home.

### **Bowlbyism, Institutionalisation, and Post-War Society**

John Bowlby’s attachment theory, with its emotional landscape centred on the managed freedom of family life, was extremely popular and influential among those interested in child psychology in Europe and America. For the historian Matthew Thomson (2013), the theory was an important element in the post-war social democratic settlement in Britain. Bowlby’s primary pre-war research was in juvenile delinquency, on which he first published in 1944, however, his 1952 WHO report, *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (Bowlby, 1944, 1946, 1952) was more influential. It was followed by a popular penguin edition, *Child Care and the Growth of Love*, which became a best seller and was translated into 10 languages (Davis, 2012). In his work, Bowlby examined the effects of childhood deprivation, arguing that the absence of home life, particularly a mother, was a key factor in the development of juvenile delinquency. Davis contends that for Bowlby the ‘mere physical separation from the mother ... was a pathogenic factor in its own right’ (Davis, 2012, p. 122). The popularity of Bowlby’s theories, and of Bowlbyism as a phenomenon, has been linked to Britain’s failure to maintain support for nursery care in the post-war period, thereby limiting women’s entry into the workforce (Thomson, 2013). Its extension to juvenile custodial regimes, whose inmates were removed from the family setting and under fairly strict systems of discipline, was not a simple matter, as Bowlby’s attachment theory functioned as a critique of the psychological impact of existing arrangements for institutionalised children (Thomson, 2013). Nonetheless, the influence

of Bowlbyism on official reports seeking to humanise residential institutions for children is evident in England dating from the Report of the Curtis Committee ([Care of Children Committee, 1946](#)). The Committee, chaired by former career civil servant Myra Curtis, had been established in 1945 to inquire into existing methods of care for children who had been ‘deprived of a normal home life’ and also to consider what further measures might be taken to compensate for the lack of parental care of such children ([Curtis, 1946](#)). The Curtis Report, to which Bowlby contributed expert testimony, had a profound impact on official policy towards children in institutional care and, consequently, psychiatric diagnosis and treatment assumed an increasingly significant role in the British youth justice estate ([Shapira, 2013](#)).

In the post-war period in Ireland, most children in care were detained in Reformatory and Industrial Schools, separated from families and from mothers. Originally established in the late nineteenth century by the different churches in Ireland ([Barnes, 1989](#)), the vast majority were managed by Roman Catholic religious orders by the twentieth century. From 1924, the schools were warily and somewhat desultorily administered by the Department of Education (Commission of Inquiry into the Reformatory and Industrial School System [[Cussen](#)], [1936](#); [Skehill, 2005](#)). The first post-independence commission of inquiry into the Reformatory and Industrial School system, was chaired by George Cussen, a Senior District Justice who presided over the Dublin Children’s Court for several years. The Cussen Report ([1936](#)) largely validated the existing institutional arrangement of the schools, and its continuing management under various religious orders, ‘as the most suitable method of dealing’ with such children (p. 11). It arrived at this conclusion despite its detailed recommendations for reform – unevenly applied by the Department of Education in the years that followed – and identification of the principal cause of committal to both Reformatories and Industrial Schools as ‘not of one criminal tendencies but of poverty’ ([Cussen, 1936](#), p. 10).

Following Cussen, the Industrial and Reformatory Schools continued as an important part of the Irish State’s management of child welfare. By 1945, there were 273 children, 224 boys and 49 girls resident in the State’s three remaining Reformatory Schools, committed there between the ages of 12 and 16 years. A further 6,565 children, 3,108 boys and 3,457 girls, normally aged up to 16 years, were housed in Ireland’s 51 Industrial Schools ([Department of Education, 1946](#)). While this was considerably shy of its 1898 peak, when just short of 8,000 children were detained in Irish Industrial Schools, it represented a sizeable recent increase that coincided with the Second World War (the Republic of Ireland remained neutral and the period is often referred to as ‘The Emergency’). In July 1936 there had been 109 children in Reformatories and 6,039 in Industrial Schools ([Department of Education, 1937](#)), and, by 1939, the corresponding figures had risen to 128 and 6,226 ([Department of Education, 1940](#)). Subsequently, the Industrial School population declined by an average of 4 per cent per year from a high point of 6,565 in 1946 to 3,517 in 1962. It then experienced a more rapid diminution in population of about 12 per cent per year, and by 1970 the total number detained in Irish Industrial Schools was just 1,271 ([Department of Education, 1967, 1973](#)).

As detailed in the Ryan Report (CICA, 2009, Vol. V), for the period under review, children were typically committed to Industrial Schools through the District Courts. Children were brought before the court by a diverse range of statutory and non-statutory agencies including the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Saint Vincent de Paul, parish priests, the Gardaí (Irish police force), school attendance officers, and local health authorities. District courts committed children on the basis of indictable offences, truancy, or more broadly, need. The latter category encompassed material want, parental neglect and moral risk. A very small number of parents or guardians committed children under their care on a voluntary basis. Health authorities could also place children in Industrial Schools without involving the court system. While the proportion of children so committed was minuscule in the early 1950s, this had risen significantly by 1970.

While the vast majority of children were committed to the schools as non-offenders, there were differences in terms of gender. Boys were significantly more likely than girls to be sent as offenders. On average, between 1945 and 1970, 2 per cent of girls and 22 per cent of boys were sent to Industrial Schools for indictable offences; among boys, this had risen to 51 per cent by 1968–1969 but the figure remained largely static for girls. If we include committals to Reformatory Schools along with Industrial Schools, on average, between 1944–45 and 1959–60, fewer than 5 per cent of girls were committed for indictable offences. In the following decade, however, due to a significant decline in committals of girls to Industrial Schools, the proportion of girls committed to Reformatory Schools for indictable offences was 16 per cent (Department of Education, 1967, 1973). Nonetheless, from 1940 until 1960, girls consistently made up about 55 per cent of the Industrial School population while boys comprised 80–90 per cent of the Reformatory School population during a similar time frame. From 1963 onwards, girls made up slightly less than half the combined population of both institutions (46–49 per cent).

## **Child and Juvenile Psychiatric Services in Ireland**

In addition to cleaving to an outdated model of institutionalisation for child welfare for much of the 1950s, psychiatric and psychological diagnosis – and much less treatment – had limited sway within the Irish criminal justice system, including child custody institutions. There was a severe lack of the most rudimentary and fundamental forms of psychiatric intervention; at the Dublin Children’s Court – established under the Children’s Act 1908 and at that time the only such court in the State – the number of child offenders referred for psychiatric evaluation was paltry. In 1962, Dr Maureen Walsh, one of only two psychiatrists attached to the court, estimated that less than 20 cases were referred to her for evaluation in the previous year (Working Party Appointed to Enquire into Matters Affecting the Medical Care of Prisoners; Department of Justice, 1962b). This reflected a more general State inertia in the development of the justice system and penal provision that persisted until the early 1960s and the appointment of Charles Haughey as Minister for Justice in 1961. (Haughey is often depicted as a ‘reforming’ Minister;

Rogan, 2010; Wall, 2020.) It was also the product of the late development of ancillary child psychiatric and medically run intellectual disability institutions (Kilgannon, 2020; Reid, 2018).

The absence of child psychiatric and psychological services, so important to the evolution of notions of child justice and welfare in England (Hendrick, 2006), forestalled the development of a medicalised conception of child delinquency and treatment in Ireland. In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, there had been some concern among female inspectors of the potential emotional ill effects of the separation of children from their parents in workhouses (Gallaher, 2021). In the 1910s and 1920s, the Irish Jesuit priest, E. Boyd Barrett, published on psychology, including child and juvenile psychology. Boyd Barrett's work, especially his interest in psychoanalysis, brought him into conflict with his superiors at the Society of Jesus, although his work was not suppressed entirely (Kugelman, 2014). In terms of psychiatric and psychological services, however, from the mid-1930s, a single, solitary, outpatient child psychiatric service operated at the Adelaide Hospital, Dublin, but this was, significantly, a service provided by a Protestant-run hospital (Eustace, 1941). Shortly after the 'Emergency', two further child psychiatric outpatient services were established at the National Children's Hospital and at Temple Street Hospital, both in Dublin. Dr Maureen Walsh was the Clinical Director of the Service at the National Children's Hospital while her colleague attached to the Children's Court, Dr Mary Mulvanny, ran the Temple Street Clinic (Stack, 2003). As detailed by Tom Feeney (2012), from late 1944, the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, motivated by denominational rivalry with the Adelaide Hospital, first laid plans to establish a child guidance clinic in Dublin. This was only realised in 1955 when the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God opened a child guidance clinic at Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin (Kelly, 2016). In 1958, the Society of Jesus established a private child guidance centre in Ballsbridge, Dublin, together with a school, St. Declan's, for the 'emotionally disturbed' (Department of Education, 1964–65; National Association for the Mentally Handicapped of Ireland, 1971, pp. 40–41). By the early 1960s, these services were joined by two hospital-based child guidance clinics in Dublin: one at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, run by the Sisters of Mercy and other one at Our Lady's Children Hospital, Crumlin, a then newly opened facility managed by the Daughters of Charity and chaired, down to the present day, by the Archbishop of Dublin (Department of Justice, 1962a). Medicalised residential 'mental deficiency' institutions were also largely absent in the immediate post-war period, partly due to the decision not to extend the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act to Ireland (Jones, 1992; Reid, 2018). By 1946, there were only six national schools in the State for the education of children with either physical or mental disabilities. The number had increased to 48 by 1964, which operated alongside 20 schools for 'mentally handicapped' children, with a combined enrolment of about 1,100. These schools were typically run by religious orders or managed by them on behalf of local authorities (Department of Education, 1964–65; National Association for the Mentally Handicapped of Ireland, 1971).

While there was a dearth of out-patient psychiatric services in Ireland's mental health services in general, the development of specific services for children

at an institutional level was perhaps slower to emerge and had limited presence within the youth justice apparatus. This has led Paul Sargent to date the emergence of the Irish ‘psychological child’, in the context of juvenile delinquency, to the late 1960s (Sargent, 2014, p. 165). Yet, it is possible to trace an earlier nascent discourse on the psychology of the child offender and on the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency to the preceding decades. Mediated through a ‘socio-spiritual’ (Skehill, 2003, 2007) lens, this discourse was imbued with the ideological precepts of Catholic social teaching. Catholic social teaching of the period, and in particular the tenets of ‘Catholic Action’ – which promoted the ‘participation of the Catholic laity in the Hierarchical Apostolate’ with the aim of restoring ‘Catholic life to the family and to society’ – derived its substantive philosophy from papal encyclicals, such as *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) (Campbell, 1935, p. 284; Kelly, 1999). The latter encyclical, ‘on the reconstruction of the social order’ articulated, in its own terms, ‘a new social philosophy’ that would navigate a path through the moral perils of modernity and the welfare state, between the ‘idols of liberalism’ and the ‘alluring poison’ of socialism (Pius XI, 1931, paras. 14, 55). This international movement was highly influential in the development of a Catholic Irish sociology as propagated from the 1930s by a small number of university-based priest sociologists (Conway, 2011). St. Patrick’s College, the national Catholic seminary at Maynooth, functioned as the epicentre of early Irish sociological inquiry with the first Irish chair in the discipline, invested by the Knights of Columbanus, established there in 1937 (Conway, 2010). The main organs of sociology for this movement were Catholic periodicals, such as the *Furrow*, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, *Rural Ireland*, *Studies* and *Christus Rex*, whose intended audience would appear to have broadly encompassed the clergy and intellectual Catholic laity. As Ben Conway (2011) observes, until the latter half of the 1950s, Irish Catholic sociological output was largely non-empirical and sought to uncritically translate into a local context the social teachings of the Catholic Church, although there were exceptions, such as the work of Boyd Barrett.

The articles on juvenile delinquency published in these outlets, though limited in number, confirms this perspective; in 1951, the Governor of the Clonmel Borstal, J.A. Furlong (1951), contributed an article to the *Furrow* on the ‘great social evil’ of juvenile delinquency. His chief purpose was to argue against the role of the prison as a deterrent and to emphasise instead the rehabilitative potential of Clonmel Borstal. His position reflected a defensiveness in stated policy following public criticisms of the borstal and the prison system as overly punitive by Boys’ Town founder Father Edward Flanagan during his visit to Ireland in 1946 (*Irish Times*, 1946a, 1946b, 1946c; Keogh, 2004; Reidy, 2009). In the article, Furlong (1951, p. 350) opined that while the need to ‘win’ such young offenders back to society was ‘important’, the necessity of winning them ‘back to Christ was the greater imperative’. Likewise, he rejected any role for psychiatry or psychology in the justice system, or the view ‘fashionable in England and elsewhere’ that crime, outside self-evident and exceptional cases, might significantly derive from ‘some psychic disorder or neurosis’ (Furlong, 1951, p. 356). The borstal governor undoubtedly espoused a non-pathologising framework for the causation of such

delinquency, finding the boys he dealt with essentially normal, with their criminality grounded in the specific material and spiritual deprivation of urban ‘slums’ that was to be countered with the common sense intuition of their needs married with ‘sound Christian charity’ (Furlong, 1951, p. 357).

### **‘All and Sundry of the Modern Methods’: Psychiatry and Psychology for the Institutionalised Irish Child**

By the latter half of the 1950s, however, a greater interest in empirical research, statistical methods, and psychological approaches was evident in the discussions of delinquency and the institutional care of children in Irish Catholic sociological journals. An important forum for this emergent discussion was the priestly sociological journal, *Christus Rex*, the imprint of a Catholic Action society of the same name, established by newly ordained priests in 1941 at St. Patrick’s College (Kelly, 1999). In 1955 Mona Macauley, a campaigner for children’s rights and a social worker with several voluntary and statutory agencies including the Infant Aid Society, the Adoption Board, and the Joint Committee of Women’s Societies and Social Workers (*Irish Times*, 1984), published an article in *Christus Rex* on the role of voluntary societies in the care of deprived and dependent children (Macauley, 1955). While locating the ultimate responsibility for such children with the State, Macauley (1955, p. 126) argued, citing Pope Pius IX, that, where voluntary organisations were willing to undertake this work, it would be ‘an injustice, a grave evil, and disturbance of right order if the State refused them this privilege’. Yet, while cautioning against the implementation of ‘all and sundry of the modern methods’ in Ireland, she insisted on the value of childcare research findings from other countries when not ‘in conflict with our way of life’ (Macauley, 1955, p. 125). Principally, her article drew on Bowlby’s 1952 WHO report, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, in its insistence that children, where possible, should be kept in their ‘proper setting’ – the family – even if imperfect and, where that was not possible, a substitute family should be found and the institution should serve only as a ‘last resort’ (Macauley, 1955, p. 127). The absence of a ‘mother-substitute’, Macauley (1955, p. 128) argued, was likely to ‘rob the child of the sense of security, and may retard it both socially and emotionally’. Likewise, she felt that many ‘so-called delinquents’ in Industrial Schools should never have been removed from their families and that this path may have been forestalled with adequate investment in probation officers, family caseworkers, and psychiatrists. She further characterised the Industrial School regime as one of ‘strict regimentation devoid of individual attention’ and maintained that the staff required ‘a knowledge of the psychology of human relationships’ and to be supported by the ‘constant attendance’ of psychiatrists and psychologists (Macauley, 1955, p. 131).

Similarly, Ann Kenny, another social worker writing in *Christus Rex* in 1956, addressed the question of child institutionalisation largely through the prism of the deprivation of parental care and emotional support (Kenny, 1956). Citing the findings of the 1946 Curtis Committee and the work of Bowlby and the British psychoanalyst, Anna Freud, Kenny (1956, p. 105) argued that the necessary result



of maternal deprivation was ‘the affectionless and delinquent child’. Freud, one of the principal founders of child psychoanalysis (Shapira, 2017), is a particularly significant reference point in terms of the residential care of children. During the Second World War, she had established the Hampstead War Nurseries in London to cater for children made homeless by the war. In the debates concerning the impact of wartime evacuations on children, Freud argued that the threat to the emotional health of children stemmed less from material privations and air raids than their potential to break up families and threaten the stabilising emotional bonds of family groups and particularly the bond of children with their mothers. Her innovative response was to organise the children in the London baby homes into small family groups with female staff fulfilling the role of substitute mothers (Kennedy, 2009; Midgely, 2007; Shapira, 2013).

Kenny, comparing Ireland unfavourably to America, where the trend in institutional care had been towards ‘smaller groups’ and ‘the reduction of the institutional population’, lamented the fact that ‘in Ireland it cannot be said that we are very progressive with regard to institutional care’ (Kenny, 1956, pp. 108, 112). She noted that Irish institutions, especially those for boys, were often over crowded with ‘as many as 700 in some of the institutions’, while individual and group care was lacking (Kenny, 1956, p. 108). Drawing on her experience working in a London children’s home, Kenny observed that when Irish children in Industrial Schools were presented with toys, they proved unable to play and simply ‘stood and stared vacantly’, while their English counterparts were ‘bright, happy and talkative’ (Kenny, 1956, p. 112). Kenny advocated for a number of substantial reforms, including a reduction in the institutional population; the placement of caseworkers on the premises to tend to the child’s individual needs and ensure staff recognised that a child has been emotionally deprived; the appointment of a psychiatrist on the staff for the purposes of diagnosing and counselling; and that group care should be introduced with 20 or 30 children living under the care of a house mother, as was the case increasingly in the USA and the UK. Remaining true to Catholic social thinking, she also reasoned that psychiatrists and chaplains should work closely together in Catholic institutions, ‘since misbehaviour and sin are so closely entwined in the mind of the Catholic child’ (Kenny, 1956, p. 113).

Kenny’s recommendations were similar to those of the 1958 Committee established by the first Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin, Robert Briscoe, to inquire into vandalism and juvenile delinquency in the city (*Joint Committee on Vandalism and Juvenile Delinquency (JCVJD)*, 1958). Briscoe assembled a broad range of voluntary, civic, and youth organisations for this task, including a social worker and a probation officer. Although the Joint Committee lacked a child psychologist, the Committee members claimed to have benefitted from ‘lengthy discussions with persons expert in this field’ (JCVJD, 1958, p. 2). This dialogue appears to have informed the Report’s characterisation of the juvenile delinquent as the likely product of some ‘malformation of outlook or deficiency of character’ (JCVJD, 1958, p. 3). According to their findings, the conditions underlying the development of such inadequate personalities were varied, however, a particular emphasis was laid on problem families and inadequate parenting, a problem which Committee members held had been exacerbated by the demoralising

impact of the extension of welfare services in Ireland which had denuded parents of a sense of responsibility towards their children. In a likely reflection, at least in part, of the popular dissemination of Bowlbyism, the authors concluded that the key factor leading to the psychological disturbance of childhood associated with juvenile delinquency was the deprivation of parental care and affection in the home:

A child, especially in the early years, needs a home and parental care and affection of a normal kind so as to produce an unconscious sense of security from want and fear. Where this sense of security is lacking from any cause, the ‘deprived’ child ... may experience serious psychological disturbance. (JCVJD, 1958, p. 5)

Locating the chief remedy for juvenile delinquency in the Roman Catholic faith, which would act as a bulwark against the onslaught of juvenile malfeasance evident in other countries, the Committee differentiated its subdued critique of the existing Industrial School system from any open disapproval of the religious orders who managed these institutions (JCVJD, 1958, pp. 6, 12). Nonetheless, the Report contended that many of the Industrial Schools were too large and the ‘boys’ within them were too ‘far removed from any family atmosphere’ thus impeding the development of the secure attachments essential to character formation (JCVJD, 1958, p. 12). Instead, they argued, these institutions should be broken down into family size units, as was the case in other countries. They also argued for the establishment of a grading or classifying ‘school’ where the mentally defective and subnormal could be identified and removed to special schools (JCVJD, 1958, p.12).

In the ensuing years, juvenile delinquency was given substantial coverage in *Christus Rex* and, in 1960, ‘Youth Problems’ figured as the theme of the society’s annual conference (Hegarty, 1959; Holohan, 2018; Mullan, 1960). Many of these papers constituted statistical assessments, demonstrating the rise in indictable offences by juveniles in Ireland during the latter half of the 1950s while some cavilled against judicial leniency or the pernicious impact of psychiatry in undermining notions of personal responsibility (Hegarty, 1960a, 1960b). However, the Maynooth-based Reverend Timothy Crowley (1960), in an article entitled ‘Modern Psychology and Some Problems of Youth’, while asserting that most juvenile delinquents were essentially ‘normal’, gave some limited consideration to psychological morbidity as a causal element in juvenile offending. Identifying the domestic home as the chief environmental factor in the creation of delinquency, Crowley emphasised the necessary emotional security that a strong maternal attachment could provide as a prophylactic against criminal misconduct; he also stressed the importance of strong, respectful, and affectionate paternal relationships for boys as a model for future relationships with authority figures. In terms of the justice system, he asserted that psychologists should be available to children’s courts, not only to deal with the small cohort of ‘unstable and disturbed children’ but to advise on the best treatment for those not so afflicted (Crowley, 1960, p. 252).

The first determined attempt, at a state level, to modernise services, including psychological and psychiatric services for juvenile offenders in Ireland, was marked by the establishment of the relatively short-lived Interdepartmental Committee on the Prevention and Treatment of Offenders in September 1962 (Kilcommins, 2004, p. 70; Rogan, 2010, 2011). This Committee, largely the product of the newly appointed Minister for Justice, Charles Haughey, was given a ‘deliberately wide’ brief looking into juvenile delinquency, the probation system, and the institutional treatment of offenders and their after-care (Department of Justice, 1962c; Kilcommins, 2004, p. 68). Chaired by Peter Berry, Secretary General of the Department of Justice and a key Haughey ally, it also included high-level civil servants from the Departments of Education, Health, and Industry and Commerce. While a modernising zeal that stressed rehabilitation rather than discipline in penal policy was evident among the Committee’s representatives from the Department of Justice, many of the Committee’s expert sources and informants accented the central role of a stable and emotionally secure family life in preventing delinquency, the desirability of breaking up large institutions into more family-like group-homes, and the necessity of addressing the presence of both ‘mentally deficient’ and ‘disturbed’ cohorts within the offending and non-offending juvenile custodial population.

Among the circulated briefing material for the Committee was a revised version of a paper on juvenile delinquency presented by the barrister James O’Connor (1962) to a meeting of the secular pressure-group Tuarim in 1959. In his research, O’Connor cited the work of the American criminologists, Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck (1950), to argue that the absence of parental affection naturally led to psychological disorder and delinquency. The Gluecks’ extensive criminological research is credited with shifting the study of juvenile delinquency away from a consideration of sociological factors relating to social inequality or the spatial analysis of the Chicago school and towards the psychological processes underlying family relations (Shon and Mansager, 2019). Likewise, O’Connor underscored the key role of family and home environment in providing a stable basis for character development and thus argued that family breakdown was a key factor in delinquency. John Stack, the Medical Director of the St John of God’s Child Guidance Clinic, when interviewed by the Committee in November 1962, likewise contended that the greatest prophylactic against delinquency was ‘home stability’ and that the majority of child offending cases derived from ‘incompatibility and absence of normal marital relations, parental irresponsibility or inadequacy, [and] large families in small houses’ (Department of Justice, 1962d). The chaplain to Lakelands Girls’ Industrial School, Sandymount, Dublin, Father P.A. Lemass, directly enjoined the Committee to consult the work of Bowlby:

Father Lemass mentioned a book – ‘Child Care and the Growth of Love’ by John Boleby [*sic.*] ... as one which could usefully be read by all in charge of institutionalised youth. This is a study of British war-evacuees displaced to strange surroundings and compares their development with those retained in the home environment. (Department of Justice, 1963a)

Alongside the promulgation of this popularised and incipient form of ‘Bowlyism’ was a sometimes direct, and more often tacit, criticism of current institutional arrangements, promoting instead some form of deinstitutionalisation, and the necessity to introduce group-homes. The radical and well-known Jesuit priest, Michael Sweetman, contended in his submission to the Committee that for children in alternative care ‘some kind of family atmosphere should be maintained’ and proclaimed that:

[...] no external conditions or system however efficient or scientific will be of any value unless deep and satisfactory personal relations are established with the children. The impersonality is one of the destructive influences in large institutions and is I believe principally responsible for these boys’ frequent inability to cope with life afterwards. (Department of Justice, 1963b)

O’Connor (1962, p. 30), in one of the most strident criticisms of contemporary regimes, referenced Peadar Cowan’s *Dungeons Deep* (1960), a critique of Ireland’s prison, borstal, Reformatory and Industrial School systems, to foment against the practice of putting young boys in Industrial Schools under the charge of ‘men of religion who ... have no maternal instincts and know little about the management of a family of young children’. Similarly, Fr Lemass suggested that, extending beyond the Committee’s ultimate recommendation that a matron or nurse should be employed in all Industrial Schools for boys as a feminising influence, the superintendence of all such institutions should be fulfilled by husband-and-wife teams (Department of Justice, 1963a). The Reverend Conor Ward, a Lecturer in Sociology in University College Dublin, informed the Committee that in Britain fosterage was seen as preferable to institutionalisation but where no alternative to institutional care was forthcoming ‘the tendency was to break them up into self contained “family group homes” accommodating not more than 15–20 children with paid house-parents’ (Department of Justice, 1962e). In the light of such thinking, as the Committee was informed, a small number of girls’ institutions, such as St. Joseph’s Industrial School for Girls in Kilkenny, Lakelands Industrial School, and St. Vincent’s Industrial School for Girls, Goldenbridge, Dublin, had introduced limited forms of such group schemes (Department of Justice, 1963c, 1963d). However, as the Mother Superior of St Anne’s Reformatory School in Kilmacud, Dublin, observed, while group approaches were ‘the ideal from the point of view of treatment’ and had been introduced in institutions managed by her order in Britain, they were expensive to implement and ‘treatment on these lines is impossible without very substantial State aid’ (Department of Justice, 1963e).

A point of concern for the 1962 Committee and for some of its informants was the emerging awareness of the presence of ‘mentally deficient’ and psychiatrically disturbed committals to the Industrial and Reformatory Schools. Already in 1961, the Department of Justice had noted that ‘many boys’ sent to St. Patrick’s Institution for Young Offenders, were ‘subnormal’ (Department of Justice, 1961, p. 19). In Haughey’s address to the first meeting of the Committee, he had

also raised the question of the psychiatric examination of recidivists and possible arrangements for the segregation and treatment of the 'mentally retarded' (Department of Justice, 1962c). The medical officer of St. Patrick's, Dr T. Murphy, estimated that, at any time, somewhat less than 10 per cent of the population of the institution were 'psychiatrically disturbed' (Department of Justice, 1962f). Dr Murphy also estimated that typically the institution contained 'two or three epileptics' and a further 10 or so 'incipient schizophrenics'. Those suffering from this latter ephemeral and apparently embryonic condition, according to Murphy, were probably better off in St. Patrick's than in any other institution as the 'healthy, active and disciplined' regime there often forestalled the development of psychosis, whereas 'if he had been allowed to continue his shiftless and delinquent career in an unhealthy environment outside its walls, [it] would surely have overtaken him' (Department of Justice, 1962f). Murphy also adverted to the presence of a 'subnormal' population in St. Patrick's. The Committee members agreed with the prison doctor that among these, 'the few low grade mental defectives' present should, ideally, be transferred to an alternative institution (Department of Justice, 1962f). In fact, the Committee attempted to establish an agreement with St. John of God's for the removal of so-called 'mental defectives' but they were largely rebuffed. Dr John Ryan, the Medical Director of St. John of God Services for the Mentally Handicapped, informed the Committee that it was pointless for them to accept such inmates from St. Patrick's as they were too old to respond positively to specialised treatment; custodial care was the only viable option; and, lacking a special detention centre, 'the criminal mental defective was as well off in prison as in any other institution'. Ryan conceded that they might 'consider applications' for younger children before the Children's Court but declared himself unenthusiastic about such a proposition as the 'delinquent defective abused the freedom of the Home and had an unsettling influence on the other inmates' (Department of Justice, 1962g).

Maureen Walsh, however, stressed the dangers of the absence of routine professional assessment at the Children's Court, arguing that most juvenile offenders might erroneously appear 'to be perfectly normal and free from any mental defect or illness or emotional disturbance' (Department of Justice, 1962g). At a minimum, she felt, all juveniles appearing before the courts for a second offence should be psychiatrically examined rather than waiting, as was then the case, until an offender's fourth or fifth appearance before ordering an evaluation by one of the court psychiatrists. Walsh also referred to the fact that, in the absence of alternative settings, the Children's Court was at times forced to send children in need of psychiatric treatment to Industrial Schools where no such treatment was forthcoming (Department of Justice, 1962b). The District Justice of the Children's Court, E. O'Riain (1962), supported Walsh's position in a memorandum issued to the 1962 Committee detailing how over the previous five years he had been compelled to send some 57 'mentally defective boys', a term which the judge used to encompass both learning difficulties and psychiatric disturbance, to either Daingean Reformatory or the Industrial Schools. As a solution to this dilemma, Walsh advocated for the establishment of a residential psychiatric centre that might also function as a remand home for children (Department of Justice,

1962b). O’Riain (1962) also advocated for the establishment of a ‘special institution’ for such child offenders. There was adequate legal provision for the creation of a specialist institution ‘for the detention and treatment of mental cases who would normally merit committal to an industrial school’ under Section 62 of the Children’s Act (1908), but no such institution had yet been created (O’Connor, 1962). J.J. McCarthy, Secretary to the Committee, informed Walsh that it was intended that St. Patrick’s Institution would fulfil such a function for male offenders aged between 16 and 21 years of age (Department of Justice, 1962b). For younger offenders, the plan would be to eventually replace Marlborough House, Dublin, a dilapidated detention centre for boys, with a new remand and detention home for boys in Finglas, Dublin, which would incorporate psychiatric assessment and treatment facilities (Dáil Éireann, 1969). This was belatedly achieved in 1974, when St Laurence’s Residential Special School opened (Interdepartmental Committee on Mentally Ill and Maladjusted Persons, 1974). Although ultimately unrealised, the Committee also recommended that at the principal Industrial School for male juvenile offenders, St. Joseph’s Industrial School, Letterfrack, County Galway:

Provision should be made for periodic visits to the school by a psychiatrist and an expert in intelligence testing so that any mental or nervous illness, emotional disturbance or personality defect of an inmate could be diagnosed and his I.Q. ascertained and appropriate treatment and training provided. (Department of Justice, 1963f)

The Committee’s achievements, in the period prior to Haughey’s departure from the Department of Justice in 1964, included the development of a psychiatric facility, a corrective training unit and an educational centre at Mountjoy Prison, the wider appointment of prison welfare officers, and an expansion of the then understaffed Probation Service (Kilcommins, 2004; Rogan, 2011). This commitment to reform, regarded as revolutionary in an Irish context, was chiefly driven by the Department of Justice and was the product of an agenda shared by Berry and Haughey (Rogan, 2010). However, the Department’s ability to meaningfully effect real change in juvenile custodial institutions that lay outside its direct control (the Reformatory and Industrial Schools) was ultimately dependent upon the amenability of the Department of Education to such proposals (Keating, 2015). While many of the recommendations issued by the Committee were resisted by the Department of Education and were the subject of compromise, the wider significance of the Committee’s work for our purposes lies in the fact that it broadly represents the first significant consideration by agents of the State of the psychological and emotional needs of children in custodial care. Further, this orientation was substantially shaped for the Department of Justice representatives on the Committee by either informants working in or proximate to the juvenile justice system, or by clinical or academic experts from the fields of psychology, psychiatry and sociology. In this, the work of the Committee clearly presaged the orientation towards the understanding of the juvenile delinquent

and child in alternative care in terms of psychological and emotional needs that would be evident in the Kennedy Report (1970).

## Conclusion

The Kennedy Report (1970) articulated a public recognition of the need to cater for the emotional and psychological needs of both offending and non-offending children in residential care. Its extensive recommendations advocated for children in residential care to be raised in group schemes, to replicate a family atmosphere, and that psychiatric and psychological assessment and treatment be made available to children in care. While the implementation of these recommendations was uneven, the enthusiasm among Irish sociologists and social workers for Bowlbyism, and for other contemporary child development theories that emphasised the familial and maternal attachment as a bulwark against delinquency, is discernible in the Report and in earlier debates. Such child development theories offered commentators and practitioners, keen to adhere to Catholic social thinking, yet critical of Ireland's Industrial and Reformatory Schools, psychological and psychiatric models that were simultaneously 'modernising' and in keeping with the 1937 Irish Constitution. For Irish commentators, Bowlbyism and associated attachment theories offered a means of critiquing child penal welfare practices while side-stepping more radical attacks on the conservative nature of Irish welfare policies.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the editors Lynsey Black, Louise Brangan and Deirdre Healy, and UCD School of History colleagues, Mary Hatfield and Oisín Wall, for their valuable comments. The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the Wellcome Trust (Senior Investigator Award, grant number 103351/Z/13/Z).

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