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Neoliberalism, policy localization and idealised subjects: a case study on educational restructuring[1]

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Abstract:

Debate about neoliberalism has been a defining drama of twenty-first century geography. Appreciation of the contingent nature of neoliberalization has promoted interest in the localization of policy, and this paper furthers debate in three ways. Firstly, it highlights the importance of the peopling of the state and more specifically the importance of everyday public sector workers in the localized production of roll-out neoliberalization. Secondly, it illustrates the significance of these actors' ideas about idealised policy subjects -- and the ways they relate these to their own client groups in different socio-economic neighbourhoods -- in the localised emergence of policy. Thirdly, it explores the consequences of this for geographically and socially uneven service provision under neoliberalization.

These arguments are illustrated through a case study focus on educational restructuring under New Labour. Our focus is on the Extended Service initiative which combines workfare and family policy agenda by giving primary schools a duty provide/signpost: wraparound childcare; enrichment activities for children; and parenting support. The case study explores how headteachers' understandings of idealised neoliberal parenting subject positions, and their notions of ideal childhoods, shape their attitudes to the implementation of this programme in schools serving different socio-economic communities. This process not only involves the reproduction of classed, (de)gendered, and heterosexed discourses seen in national policy, but also moments where local actors draw on alternative models of parenting and/or childhood to influence school-based policy, with the result that what is perceived to be 'good' for families of one social class is not seen to be so for others. There is a complex politics at play here. Academics must both expose the class biases inherent in neoliberal policies, at the same time as they work as 'critical friends' in improving public service provision which impacts positively on some individuals' lives.

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[1] Both authors have made an equally valuable contribution to this paper.

I   Introduction

Debate about neoliberalism has been a defining drama of twenty-first century geography. Over the past decade scholars have engaged with the changing manifestations of, and crises in, this political-economic ideology in diverse parts of the globe, and its importance in spheres as varied as changing state formations, urban policy, and the management of nature (Bailey and Maresh 2009; Breathnach 2010; Goldfrank and Schrank 2009; Peck et al. 2009). The seeming ubiquity of neoliberalism, however, has prompted concern that geographers must recognise spatial diversity in its form if we are to avoid casting it as a monolithic, inevitable and logical response to wider economic conditions (Larner 2003). A key response to this conceptual appreciation of the contingent nature of neoliberalization has been a research into the hybridisation of policy in diverse fields and at different scales (McCarthy 2005; Peck and Theodore 2001; Wright 2008). This paper furthers debate on the localised production of neoliberal policy through a focus on educational reform, and more specifically via an analysis of the ideas state actors hold about their policy subjects and the public services they require.

There are three distinctive elements to our argument which combine to produce innovative insights into the localization of neoliberal policy.   Firstly, we explore the role of everyday agents of the state in shaping policy as it emerges in practice. Neoliberalization is, as Peck (2004) reminds us, as social process, and it is therefore crucial to explore the relative power of particularly structurally positioned agents of the state in shaping neoliberal policy as it emerges on the ground. Secondly, we examine these actors' attitudes to their policy subjects, exploring their images of ideal citizens and the way they relate these to their client groups in diverse socio-economic communities. This spotlight on the importance of different policy subjects, for example idealised understandings about citizen-workers, parents and children, and the ways these notions are infused with particular class and gender ideologies, enables us to challenge the relative silence in the geographical literature on understandings of human nature, and different human subjects, in neoliberal policy (Raco 2009). Thirdly, we

appraise the consequences of local actors' understanding of neoliberal subjects, and their role in shaping local policy provision, by examining how the localised production of one contingent form of neoliberalism shapes the services provided to different socio-economic communities. Neoliberalism is not the same everywhere and it is crucial that we trace the implications of this for geographically and socially uneven public service provision.

The next section expands upon these general ideas before introducing a specifically English form of roll-out neoliberalism and its policy subjects in more detail. We chose one education policy as an example through which to explore these matters and the methodology provides details of our research. The central sections of the paper highlight the attitudes of headteachers, as everyday state actors, to their policy subjects and their implications for diversified public service provision. In conclusion, insights from this case-study inform our broader argument that studies of neoliberalism must attend to: the peopling of the state; the importance of idealised subject positions; and the impacts the localised production of neo-liberal policy has on the services offered to different social groups.

II   Reading neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, contingent neoliberalization and idealised policy subjects

Neoliberalism has been a defining narrative in human geography research over the past decade, with research being as broad in its topical foci as it has been in its spatial extent (Bailey and Maresh 2009; Breathnach 2010; Goldfrank and Schrank 2009). A central tension in this narrative has been the desire to balance the production of broad-scale accounts of neoliberalism which draw out its general or abstract qualities, with the need to map the contingent neoliberalisms that emerge in specific time/spaces. Thus on the one hand, concerns have been raised that our accounts of neoliberalism have been overly monolithic, an approach which risks reinscribing the hegemonic story of neoliberalism (Larner 2003: Gibson-Graham 2008), at the same time as it obscures understanding of 'actually existing

neoliberalism' (Brenner and Theordore, 2002, 353), and the differential development, form, and impacts of neoliberalization in diverse contexts (Peck et al. 2009). On the other hand, appreciation that we need to engage with the hybrid and contingent nature of neoliberalism as it emerges in practice has also been matched by an insistence that analyses of neoliberalism cannot only provide detailed accounts of its situated messiness, but must also use these to say something about its generic features (Peck and Tickell 2002; Peck 2004; Castree 2006).

In this paper we take as given that all existing forms of neoliberalism are contingent in nature. We draw on more general analyses of the changing nature of neoliberalism to set the specific form of neoliberalization we are interested in in its wider context (see next section). Having done so, we concentrate on the particularities of this contingent form of neoliberalization, and seek to explore the localization of policy (McCarthy 2005; Wright 2008). Scale here matters, as it is not only the case that policies mutate as they are reproduced in non-linear ways in different countries (Peck and Theodore 2010), but also that the associated policy agenda emerge in diverse ways in different types of regions, towns and neighbourhoods. In this paper our interest is in the way one 'national' policy is differentially shaped as it is implemented in varied socio-economic neighbourhoods.

This focus on one policy in a contingent form of neoliberalization allows us to contribute to wider debates about policy localization and the general nature neoliberalism. To begin, we are interested in neoliberalization as a social process. As Peck points out "its diffusion is carried not simply by faceless, structural forces but also by … structurally positioned agents" (Peck 2004, 399). Current research is doing much to elucidate the role of the policy making elite in global institutions, non-state actors such as industry lobbyists, travelling technocrats, as well as activist networks, in shaping and resisting neoliberal policy and its mobility (Bailey and Maresh 2009: Cumbers 2008; Larner and Laurie, 2010). However, our interest in the localization of state policy demands that we add an analysis of the role 'everyday' public sector workers to this agenda.

Our interest is in how these actors think about their policy subjects, and how they relate those ideas to their own client groups as they shape policy as it emerges in practice. Raco (2009) argues that most geographical interest in neoliberalism has concerned itself with the reshaping of state institutions and structures of governance, with less attention being paid to the assumptions made about human nature and their implications for citizenship. His insistence that we focus on these existential politics is given weight by the relatively small geographical literature which emphasises the importance of idealised subjects in neoliberal policy, and their consequences for different social groups. Careful deconstruction of policy texts reveals what subject positions -- for example, which visions of the citizen-worker, parent or child -- are normalised or lauded as desirable in national policy, and which subjectivities are seen as being in need of intervention in their deviation from this apparent 'norm' (Haylett 2003; Elizabeth and Larner 2009; Raco 2009). The localization of policy is once again crucial here, as there is the potential for the reproduction, misreading and rejection of such idealised subject positions as neoliberal policy is implemented in diverse communities. As MacLeavy argues, it is 'by helping to recast existing analyses of neoliberalism with a greater sensitivity to the production of policy subjects, we can enable more adequate accounts of resistance to, resilience in and reworkings of neoliberalism at the local level' (MacLeavy 2008: 1658).

Existing analyses suggest that this will enable us to say something about the class-based nature of neoliberal restructurings. Raco's work shows how particular ideas about class underpinned the New Labour project in Britain with the "seemingly 'independent' nature of middle-class citizenship… promoted as a yardstick around which other types of more 'dependent' citizenship are judged" (Raco 2009, 440). However, we also need to uncover the assumptions about other class groupings in neoliberal policies; as Haylett (2003) argues 'what policy means to working-class lives depends on what working-classness means to policy' (Haylett 2003, 69). This focus on policy subjects must not, however, be confined to class and there is room for productive engagement between political-economy research in geography

and the broader feminist social science literature in identifying the inextricable connections between class and gender relations (MacLeavy 2007; McDowell 2005). Moreover, insights from research in Britain, Canada and New Zealand highlight the importance of the figure of the child in neoliberal policy agenda (Jenson 2004; Elizabeth and Larner 2009; Lister, 2006).

The ways key actors think about neoliberal policy subjects, and their own client groups, matter we contend because they inform their attitudes to service provision in different socio-economic communities. Thus while we are mindful of Gibson-Graham's (2008) concern that studies of the power of neoliberalism can effectively reinforce it (as knowledge production has a constitutive role), we nevertheless argue that tracing the local production of neoliberal policy remains crucial as it allows us to examine who gets access to which kinds of services in a neoliberal state. This is not only useful in contributing to academic understanding of how individual agents in the local state influence through the institutions they lead who gets access to which kinds of services, and thus how some people come to be winners and others losers in the distribution of public services under neoliberalization, it also opens up the possibility that we as academics might make critical interventions in policy production.

To progress this agenda we now move from a general discussion of neoliberalism to introduce the particular form of neoliberalization which is our focus of interest in this paper. We begin below by introducing English roll-out neoliberalization under New Labour, and explore existing insights into, and current limitations in our understandings of, its policy subjects.

English roll-out neoliberalization and its policy subjects

Peck & Tickell (2002) trace shifts in neoliberalism's form, rationale and consequences over the past quarter of a century through a focus on the North Atlantic zone, which itself is an inevitably hybrid form of neoliberalism (Peck 2004). This analysis demonstrates a shift first

from 'proto' to 'roll-back' neoliberalism as the abstract ideas of Hayek and Friedman were translated in to state projects by Thatcher and Reagan, to the 'roll-out' neoliberalism of Clinton and Blair which combined technocratic economic management with a socially interventionist agenda. It is the specifically English form of neoliberalism we are interested in, where the election of a New Labour Government in 1997 brought a 'third way' approach to politics which was most often framed in terms of 'rights and responsibilities'. This saw the combination of workfare-oriented economic policies and a social agenda focused on inclusion and a desire to reduce specific social inequalities.

In terms of workfare, developments seen in England have much in common with the 'Make Work Pay' policies which Jenson and Saint-Martin (2006) argue have been seen in a number of OECD countries, with HM Treasury declaring that 'work is the best form of welfare for people of working age' (2002, Department for Work and Pensions Objective II). Detailed studies of policies such as the New Deal reveal, however, that their form and implementation though influenced by developments in the United States and elsewhere, are country-specific in nature (Peck and Theodore 2001). The 'third way' politics espoused by New Labour means that this shift to workfare policies was not solely driven by a desire for increased economic competitiveness and reduced welfare bills, but also by concern about social in/exclusion. In the immediate aftermath of their election, New Labour initially worked with a fairly broad understanding of social exclusion; however, by the late 1990s this wide-ranging definition had been superseded and replaced by an emphasis on paid work as the primary, or sole, way in which people of working age could be integrated into society (MacLeavy 2008).

A second element of welfare state restructuring was the expansion of child and family policies under New Labour. In contrast to workfare initiatives which (theoretically) transfer responsibility for economic survival from the state to the individual, child and family policies such as the National Childcare Strategy (DfEE 1998a), extensions to maternity and parental

leave (Lewis and Campbell 2007a; Lister 2006), and the introduction of parental rights to request flexible working arrangements (HM Treasury 2004) all represented increased state involvement in the organisation of social reproduction. 'Third way' politics, this time framed in terms of flexibility and choice, underpinned the work-family balance element of these developments which seek to reconcile economic/business needs for a flexible labour force with the rights of parents to make choices that are appropriate for their families (Lewis and Campbell 2007b). More generally, child policy also saw a twin emphasis on investing in children (e.g. in childcare, early years provision and education) and on regulating their upbringing and behaviour (e.g. Parenting Orders, fining/jailing parents for child truancy) (Lister 2006). This 'increasingly interventionist agenda', underpinned by an approach to social exclusion which posits families as the building blocks of society where children can be taught to behave and aspire, was 'pursued in the name of promoting order and social justice' (Gillies 2008, 96). Parenting in this context is not regarded as a behaviour guided by love and experience, but a skilled job in which amateur parents need professional advice (Gillies 2005b, 2008; Mayall 2006).

Feminist and political economy research demonstrates some interesting parallels in workfare and child/family initiatives in terms of their policy subjects. Research on workfare has shown that the emphasis on social inclusion through involvement in paid work/work-readiness programmes has operated, at the discursive level at least, in a gender-blind way (seeing all adults as potential workers, and ignoring other barriers to employment such as the unequal domestic division of labour and the high value placed on maternal care for children) (MacLeavy 2007; McDowell 2005). MacLeavy argues that this discursively gender-blind approach actually creates 'an idealised female subject–one who will want to choose to have and raise children and will want to choose to be fulfilled, ultimately, through economic contribution' (2007, 736). Equally, debates about work-family balance (Lewis and Campbell 2007b), parenting support initiatives (Gillies 2005a), and policies which make parents responsible for children's anti-social behaviour (Lister 2006) all use gender-neutral language

and depend upon a normative definition of the successful parent, as a responsible, active, (employed) citizen who will evaluate the opportunities available and seek to do the best for their children (Gillies 2005b; Reay 2008).

MacLeavy's (2007, 2008) identification of the idealised neoliberal female subject as both mother and active worker is useful, and we concur with her suggestion that we need to identify the idealised subject positions that emerge from neoliberal policy and practice. Identification of the normative understanding of the successful parent through critical social policy research adds weight to this argument (Gillies 2005b; Lister 2006; Reay 2008). However, we also need to take this further. On the one hand, there is a need to explore how such idealised neoliberal subject positions are used to judge different groups of parents. Existing analysis demonstrates that working-class mothers have been a target of workfare and family/child policies, and concern has been raised that they are blamed for failing to make the right choices, rather than being seen to be limited in their choices by structural conditions, when they do not conform to the 'norms' associated with these idealised neoliberal subject positions (norms which are in reality based upon middle-class practices) (Armstrong 2006). However, there is a paucity of research on how these idealised subject positions in policy discourses are translated into policy implementation in working-class communities. Moreover, there is a lack of analysis of the ways in which these idealised subjectivities matter in practice for parents of other social classes.

On the other hand, there is an urgent need to consider how ideas about ideal childhoods figure in neoliberal policy and practice. There are hints in existing literature that this might be an important issue in England. Mayall (2006, 10; see also Lister, 2006) argues:

> New Labour is interested in the future of children….The end, or goal, is to produce adult citizens who can and will engage in paid work, and take social responsibility….Childhood itself–the present tense of childhood–is devalued.

This emphasis is not ubiquitous, however, as ideas about what children need *now* are occasionally more explicit in the work-family balance policy discussions (e.g. in justifications

for the extension of maternity leave) (Lewis and Campbell 2007b). There is then considerable

scope to examine the (potentially inconsistent) ways in which ideas about children and

childhood inform policy and practice, an endeavour which from a geographical perspective

must explore both the spatiality of these ideas, and the potentially recursive relationship

between idealised adult subjects and idealised childhoods, as well as the consequences for

diverse groups of parents and children.

The case of educational restructuring

This paper develops debates about policy localization through a focus on everyday state actors

and how their understandings of idealised policy subjects, and their own client groups,

influence the services provided to different people. Education is an aposite case study

through which to explore these issues because the sector has risen up the political agenda in

the Global North as economic restructuring, along with concurrent social changes including

the feminisation of the workforce, has presented new challenges to established welfare states

(Jenson and St Martin 2006). This renewed emphasis on education in neoliberal state reform

has seen restructuring across the sector (Hanson Thiem 2009; Holloway et al. 2010).

Our focus in this paper is on the implementation of the 'Extended Services' initiative

in primary schools in England, a pertinent policy which combines elements of workfare and

family policy which have been characteristic of English welfare state restructuring under New

Labour. This policy, first introduced in 2005, sought to broaden the role of education and

ensure that by 2010 all primary schools had included within their remit responsibility for:

providing/signposting before and after school childcare for working parents 8am-6pm 48

weeks a year; facilitating children's participation in enrichment (extra-curricular) activities;

and providing access to support which will enable parents better to raise their own children.

Parental support includes, for example, swift and easy referral to other health/social care

services; parenting groups/classes; and family learning (e.g. providing parents opportunities to

learn either for themselves or alongside their children, thus leaving them better placed to inspire and support their children's learning) (DfES 2002, 2007)).   The policy, which continues under the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (albeit with funding now allocated as part of schools' baseline budgets) is linked with the retrenchment and renewal of the workfare/welfare state as it seeks to facilitate parents' participation in the labour market (promoting labour market flexibility, reduced welfare dependency and lowering child poverty), while also investing in children's futures through access to clubs and activities, and ultimately better parenting (developing both a skilled labour force and increased social cohesion for the future). Implementation is intentionally varied between schools, as each is charged with assessing and responding to the needs of their local community (Cummings *et al.* 2007; DfES 2002, 2007). What this means is that local actors have, theoretically at least, considerable influence on how this particular neoliberal policy emerges in practice.

Our aim in this paper is to develop debate about the localisation of policy through a case study focus on this extended services initiative. Our focus is on headteachers who are key agents of the state in the local delivery of educational restructuring. We examine how their understandings of idealised neoliberal parenting subject positions, and notions about ideal childhoods, shape their attitudes to the implementation of the Extended Services programme in schools serving different socio-economic communities. In so doing, we draw out the consequences of this for the uneven maps of social provision created under neoliberalization.

III   Methodology

The study on which this paper is based explored the implementation of Extended Services in a provincial English local authority (which we refer to by the pseudonym Hortonshire in order

to maintain the anonymity of the LA and those with whom we worked[2]). Hortonshire was

chosen as the location for the study as, compared with other LAs, it was well advanced in the

implementation of Extended Services. Moreover, the geography of Hortonshire meant that it

contained schools serving children from different class backgrounds, whilst overall the

authority roughly conformed to national averages in terms of the number of children receiving

free school meals (DCSF 2009). Children were living in a mixture of large urban, smaller

urban and rural communities, and the provincial nature of the local authority is evident in the

ethnic make up of its pupils, more of whom are white (>95%) than national averages (87%)

would suggest (ONS 2005)

The research undertaken included a questionnaire survey and semi-structured

interviews with primary school headteachers. The questionnaire survey, which asked both

about Extended Service provision and the challenges involved in policy implementation, was

sent to all primary school headteachers in Hortonshire. The response rate was 67% and the

results reported here have been subject to chi-square analysis. Semi-structured interviews

were then undertaken with a purposeful sample of 25 headteachers chosen to reflect schools

in higher, middle and low income areas, schools which included those in urban and rural

areas, and which (with the exception of greater diversity in a small minority of higher-income

schools) served predominately white catchment areas.

Thinking about class is challenging as the concept encapsulates more than occupation

and earnings, including economic, social and cultural factors (Armstrong 2006; Gillies 2006).

In this paper we use it as a way to describe the material and social status of families in the

research. A key proxy of social class in the British school context is Free School Meal (FSM)

eligibility, with government making an explicit link between this, poverty and educational

attainment (DCSF 2008). The Office for National Statistics defines a school as 'deprived' if

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[2] Furthermore, we approximate figures in our description of Hortonshire and do not divulge some data sources.

over 30% of children are eligible for FSM (ONS 2004) and as such, schools with FSM eligibility over 30% were classed as Low Income[3] (LI) in this study. Those with FSM levels around the county and national average (percentages in the middle teens) were classified as 'Middle' Income (MI), and those with FSM eligibility below 2.5% were classified as 'Higher' Income (HI).

In each of the three sub-groupings, eight headteachers were interviewed, with one additional interview conducted in a middle-income school. The interviews explored headteachers' perspectives on the school community and different aspects of the Extended Services programme. To ensure anonymity, interviewees were allocated numerical identifiers for use in the storage, analysis and publication of transcript data.

IV   Parents, childhood and the role of school

Representing parents

The paper now turns to the research findings, exploring how 'local' decision making shapes the way a 'national' policy emerges in practice. We begin by introducing the ways headteachers represent the parent bodies in schools serving different socio-economic communities, before going on to consider how ideas about parents and their children intersect with wider socio-economic circumstances to produce class-differentiated attitudes to the provision of wraparound care, child enrichment activities and parenting support.

Headteachers' representations of parents in higher-income schools coincide with normative models of parenting found in Government policy (Gillies 2005b; Lister 2006; Reay 2008). They represent them in gender-neutral terms as capable, responsible people, who

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[3] These terms express the socio-economic differences between the communities the schools serve; the circumstances of individual families may differ from this.

aspire for their children to do well, and who seek to ensure their children get the best, and make the best of, available opportunities. To this end parents were active in choosing schools, expected their children to do well, and supported learning in the school and at home:

> 'Parents are quite inquisitive and quite demanding in terms of the, their children's achievement. They, the parents here are OFSTED report readers' (HI3).
> 'The catchment is very much professional individuals and high, very, very high expectations; parents and families know what they want. But incredibly supportive of learning, incredibly supportive of what we're trying to do' (HI6).

Indeed, perhaps the only ways in which these were not seen as model parents was in their inability to help during school hours, and in being a little too active in their citizenry, and not conforming to the idea seen in wider policy that the State (in this instance in the form of teachers) knows better than parents (Gillies 2008; Mayall 2006):

> 'Sometimes they think they know better and say that, that's the difficulty I suppose, that's the difference [to the low-income school in which I used to work]' (HI1).

The accounts of headteachers in middle-income schools are more mixed, in part reflecting the 'very different types of parents on the yard in the morning, very different levels of economic well-being' (MI3). The diversity of income levels amongst parents is seen to feed into different levels of aspiration for their children:

> 'I think the parents who don't work and just haven't worked probably don't have particularly high expectations for their children…you come to school and you be good. But that wouldn't be true of most of our parents, I think most of our parents want their children to do as well as they can so they get a job' (MI2).

However, while the majority of parents are still seen to conform to some elements of normative notions of good parenting (e.g. joining in with non-academic activities at school) only a minority are seen to be properly supporting their children's learning (e.g. attending curriculum evenings; listening to children read):

> 'I don't think they [parents] think they need to support us, I think they just leave it up to us, they don't hear their children read very often, I mean that's a big sweeping statement…but there is a large proportion of our families who don't hear their children read, yet will complain if we don't hear them' (MI5).

The mismatch between headteachers' and parents' understandings of home-school links (Harris and Goodall 2008) is evident in this quotation. While headteachers agree with New Labour's stance that 'parents are a child's first and enduring teacher' (DfEE 1998b, 3), most parents in middle-income areas either resist or are unaware of the 'delegation of work previously undertaken in school' (Reay 2008, 645).

In the low-income schools, the image of an ideal parent only emerges in opposition to their construction of the parents of children attending their school. Headteachers are forthright in their belief that these parents, who are again referred to in gender-neutral terms, fail to support their children's learning, either as in the middle-income school because parents see this as school's responsibility, or because they fail to value education in appropriate ways:

> '[A]nything to do with reading, writing and maths is our responsibility and…for some of our parents they can't see their role in that, that's our job' (LI2).
> '[T]here are a core group of parents who don't value school and don't value education and don't really encourage children to do that' (LI6).

In some instances headteachers pursue morally-laden arguments, implying parents are evading their responsibilities and acting selfishly in not putting children's needs first (Ribbens-McCarthy *et al.* 2000):

> 'there needs to be an acceptance by all the parents that they are the major carers of their children and they need to put their children first, they need to suspend their own activities in favour of their children, they need to spend the bulk of their money on supporting their children and they need to be totally and utterly engaged with their children's education and…they need to be role models for their children, good role models I mean' (LI1)

Others, however, do not directly blame these parents for failing to conform to normative models of parenting. Rather, they emphasise the barriers parents face in supporting their children – including parents' poor experiences of schooling, as well as problems with debt, domestic violence, associated housing mobility, and drug/alcohol abuse – whilst still expressing concern that these 'kids aren't getting the right sort of messages' (LI4). Critical social policists have argued that New Labour has paid insufficient attention to the structural

conditions which make it impossible for working-class parents to care in 'normative' (that is middle-class) ways, and instead placed too much emphasis on blaming working-class parents for making poor choices (Gillies 2005a; Reay 2008). However, it is clear that at the point of policy implementation this 'blame game' has yet to be settled. Nevertheless, the picture the interviews paint is one in which parents in low-income areas are framed as deficient, either through moral weakness or social circumstance, and as failing to provide for the proper socialisation of their children (cf. Gillies 2006).

Wraparound care

We take these diverse interpretations of the parent bodies at different schools as our background as we go on to consider how schools are responding to the increased part Extended Services asks them to play in supporting adult workers. The economic restructuring which has taken place since the 1970s, along with the continued development of the workfare state under New Labour (Peck and Theodore 2001), have seen increased opportunities for, and pressures on, mothers to work, whilst a raft of family policies have sought to facilitate parents' work-family reconciliation (Armstrong 2006; McDowell 2004, 2005). In this context schools are being recast as spaces of care in order to support the employment of parents (DfES 2005), a change which is not universal in its interpretation or implementation.

In low-income schools the idealised female subject of neoliberal policy discourse in Britain, who MacLeavy (2007) points out is seen to be fulfilled through concurrent childrearing and paid employment, is not an effective factor in headteachers' thinking. While the Government champions employment as the route out of poverty (HM Treasury 1999), and has legislated for wraparound care to be available 8am-6pm subject to local need, the reality is that many headteachers do not see this as a service that the 'non-working' parent body at their school requires:

> 'there was an after school club (ASC) when I first started and it's had to fold because there isn't the call for it really because a lot of the parents don't work' (LI3)

'with having few working parents it makes it almost unnecessary to provide [it]' (LI8).

The problems inherent in reading childcare need from practice have been highlighted elsewhere (Holloway 1998), but the result here is that while 51% of Hortonshire schools have ASCs, these are significantly less likely to be found in low-income schools[4].

Breakfast clubs, by contrast, are found onsite in 65% of Hortonshire schools and provision rates do not vary with FSM eligibility[5]. Breakfast clubs' primary function in low-income areas is to feed children:

> 'a lot of the children wouldn't have a breakfast if they didn't come, they get themselves up and they get themselves here' (LI3).

The efficacy of breakfast clubs is difficult to measure, but headteachers in these low-income areas valued them, arguing that children are better placed to learn when full, and are calmer after being fed in a school environment (Harrop and Palmer 2002). Their enthusiasm, in sometimes difficult budgetary circumstances, reflects their interpretation of parents in low-income areas as inadequate. Indeed, in discussing wraparound care these heads were clear about the benefits of children spending time away from their parents in what they cast as the 'sanctuary' (LI4) of the school:

> 'I think there are a lot of children who come from this estate who would be much better off being in wraparound care, being in school from eight 'til six because they'd be getting a much better quality of provision…if they were here than if they were at home or on a street' (LI5).

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[4] ASCs were available in 86% of HI schools involved with our questionnaire, compared to 14% of low-income schools. Across all schools in the sample, ASC provision rates varied significantly with FSM eligiability: $\chi^2(4)=24.451$; p=0.000.

[5] $\chi^2(4)=0.340$; p=0.987.

This understanding of parental care as deficient in some circumstances also informs some middle-income heads approach to wraparound care. Here too childcare is seen to be good for children, providing them with positive adult input and nutrition:

> 'if the provision is done very well, is activities that couldn't be offered at home, where you're in an area where parenting isn't necessarily that good they do get a positive opportunity to work with…other adults in a different situation to a teaching situation if it's done well. They gain a breakfast which not all children get in the morning' (MI2).

The picture in middle-income areas does not simply reflect that in low-income areas, however, as here greater emphasis is also placed on parents need to work and this is, as in wider policy documentation, always expressed in gender-neutral language by these heads (Lewis and Campbell 2007b). Here headteachers' views are more in accord with the emphasis in New Labour policy that suggests that many parents will want to work (MacLeavy 2007), that doing so has wider socio-economic benefits for children, and that not doing so results in child poverty (Dean 2007):

> 'some of our families wouldn't survive financially without that opportunity [to go to work]' (MI1).
>
> 'I think these days you tend to have two extremes, you either have those people who have chosen or have not been able to access work and therefore they tend to be on very low incomes with their children….and there's a big block now of children whose day to day existence is really around both parents, or their main carer if they only have one, working' (MI8).

Working parenthood, in this context, is cast as virtuous parenting for the benefit of children (cf. Holloway 1999).

In higher-income areas the neoliberal notion that women are both workers and mothers (MacLeavy 2007), clashes with headteachers' assumptions that parents are competent, that children will benefit from spending time with them, and thus that the best environment for children is the home. To expand, headteachers in higher-income areas understand their parent bodies as capable and caring, and thus regard wraparound care as a service for working parents (rather than their children):

'the children in this area do come to school…with full tummies having had breakfast… They do have very, very busy parents so actually there is need for a breakfast club or after school club care because of parents working' (HI6).

This causes a dilemma for some of these heads. Where parenting is judged positively, spending time away from parents is not seen to be in the best interests of children. Rather than offering children an escape from their 'turbulent' (LI6) family lives, wraparound care is seen to undermine the idealised middle-class heterosexual nuclear family on which these apparently generic parenting 'norms' are based (Gillies 2005b; Reay 2008), norms which reinforce the notion that a child's place is in the home (Holloway and Valentine 2000), :

'I can see why there's wraparound care because parents have to work but something inside me is saying actually what you're providing here is also contradicting some of your own philosophies about children being in one cosy home with their mums and dads, doing stuff as a family' (HI8).

'For working parents [wraparound care is a] fantastic idea. [Interviewer: And what about for the children?] I think poor things. You know it's a long day and it's tiring and in the ideal world one parent would stay at home, if you're going to have children one parent, my view is one parent, it doesn't matter male or female, one of them stay at home look after the children and the other one go to work' (HI2).

Notwithstanding shifts in neoliberal policy which include paid work in idealised understandings of parenthood (Lister 2006; MacLeavy 2007; McDowell 2004), the haunting spectre of the traditional heterosexual nuclear family, where one parent stays at home, continues to inform judgements about socio-economically diverse parents. In this case it undermines support for wrap around care in higher income areas as the policy is seen to be contributing to the erosion of the very type of family life which is used as the yardstick against which to judge less wealthy parents. We are not, however, witnessing the simple reproduction of ideas about the 'traditional' nuclear family. Rather, these headteachers use the same gender-neutral language about parenting which is seen in national policy debate in order to support and coerce women's labour force participation (Lewis and Campbell 2007b; MacLeavy 2007; McDowell 2005), and an overtly anti-sexist insistence on the

interchangeable nature of men's and women's roles, to valorise a de-gendered version of worker/homemaker model of family life where men and women can undertake either role. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that even as this model of family life is held up as a beacon of good practice, the large numbers of working parents in these areas, who have the ability to pay for wraparound care, means that its provision is buoyant and sustainable.

Enrichment activities for children

The Extended Services agenda also gives schools enhanced responsibility for the production of future citizen-workers. One element focuses on schools as spaces of enrichment for children, and in higher-income areas headteachers see enrichment activities provided in/signposted through the school as playing a crucial role in developing children's physical and mental capabilities (Valentine 2002), and in teaching skills which will enhance their social inclusion:

> 'vast, huge numbers of children are involved in sports and other activities outside school hours, large numbers….The benefits are a lot of our children are very healthy and they're well rounded, they have to survive in lots of social situations' (HI6).
> 'I believe that school needs to be a place of opportunity that encourages children to be participators and for that you need to provide the opportunities' (HI5).

Reviews of parenting styles suggest that their views resonate with middle-class practices where enrichment activities are one route through which inter-generational class-advantage is reproduced (Devine 2004; Skeggs 2004). Indeed, Vincent and Ball (2007, 1071) have argued that ensuring their children's participation in enrichment activities – through which the professional middle-classes reproduce cultural capital in their children – has itself become read as a class-specific marker of good parenting. Contemporary policy too reinforces these ideas, suggesting that ideal parents should review and access the best opportunities available to their children (Gillies 2005b; Vincent and Ball 2007; Reay 2008).

However, while headteachers in higher-income areas were positive about the benefits children accrue from enrichment activities, their emphasis on the need for family time also emerged in this context. Specifically, the very busy schedules of some children (Katz 2008) are seen by higher-income headteachers to undermine other aspects of an ideal childhood and to contribute further to the loss of family life:

> 'I think some children are tired and I think some children just need a chance to be and to play and not to be you know it's Monday night so it's guitar, it's Tuesday night so it's football, it's Wednesday night so it's something else' (HI1).
>
> 'I think the drawback is the loss of the family… if I said to them how many times in a week do you sit round a table and talk to your family? Some children would be less than one' (HI6).

Other notions of childhood, in this instance that childhood should be a time of freedom and a time spent with family, therefore tempered enthusiasm for this policy development in an area where children already had considerable opportunities. Unlike national policy, in this case headteachers were more concerned with children's current experiences of childhood than the importance of enrichment activities to their future citizen-worker becomings (cf. Lister 2006; Mayall 2006).

By contrast headteachers working in lower and middle income areas highlight the social and financial barriers (Vincent and Ball 2007) which prevent many children in their areas accessing enrichment activities:

> 'A lot of our families are struggling with the day to day… and aren't necessarily in a position to think 'ooh there's football every Thursday night free for my three children, I'll access that'….It's more about well getting to Thursday and making sure that everybody banging on the door isn't causing too much of a problem and that there's enough food in the house' (LI6).
>
> 'obviously the lower end of the socio-economic bracket that perhaps poverty is, has been denying them chances to do certain things… [we need] to make sure that money isn't stopping them accessing these courses and things' (MI5).

Providing access to enrichment activities through school is therefore seen as crucial to ensure equality of opportunity with more middle-class children. This is important as headteachers

argue that these activities widen children's horizons, which both has direct academic benefits (e.g. providing experiences to inform story writing) and more broadly promotes children's self-esteem and teaches them they can aspire to a world outside their own:

> 'children who come from middle-class homes get this by going to swimming club and ballet and all the rest of it, children who come from our sort of deprived type don't get that and so by us providing that, they're getting a taste of the outside world, outside their little enclave as well because a lot of our children won't move off the estate…we've got parents who are third and fourth generation on the estate. So it widens their horizons and gives them ideas, some aspirations of what is out there apart from this' (LI1).

Notwithstanding this increased number and range of enrichment activities which have been provided through Extended Services in middle and low-income schools, some extra-curricular activities, such as foreign languages, music tuition and science club, remain more widely available in higher-income schools where parents are better able to pay for activities[6].

Alongside this emphasis on the importance of enrichment activities in ensuring children's future social inclusion and social mobility, there is also concern, especially amongst heads in low-income areas, about the important part enrichment activities can play in promoting children's current well-being (cf. Lister 2006; Mayall 2006). Apollonian understandings of children as innocent and in need of protection, as well, less often, as Dionysian constructions of children as inherently unruly (Holloway and Valentine 2000; Skevik 2003), inform low-income heads emphasis on the importance of safe play opportunities for children's well-being, as well as social order in the wider community:

> 'They need to be kept off the streets. Because this [school] is like a little haven for them, they come and it's a bit like an oasis in a desert for them … they'll be out on the streets until goodness knows what time at night because there isn't anywhere for them

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[6] Differences in provision availability by FSM eligibility: foreign languages $\chi^2(4)=15.069$, p 0.005; music tuition $\chi^2(4)=21.62$, p=0.000); and science club $\chi^2(4)=12.15$; p=0.01.

to go and then they will be mixing with the wrong types of people.….it's the influences that are out there, the drugs, the alcohol, the smoking' (LI8).

'They need the after school thing where they can go after school for a couple of hours where it's safe and they're not out on the streets getting into mischief' (LI4).

As was the case for wrap around care, while institutionalised environments are seen to threaten middle-class family life, the same spaces are seen to enhance the current and future experiences of children from low-income backgrounds.

Supporting families

Parenting support is an equally important part of the way schools are being asked to intervene to produce future citizen-workers, an emphasis which reflects the professionalisation of parenting under New Labour (Gillies 2005b, 2008; Mayall 2006). Headteachers in low-income areas were very positive about Extended Services' emphasis on supporting families (DfES 2002, 2007) because they felt the socialisation and care that some of their pupils received at home were deficient and that this affected their ability to learn:

'We've got these problems of children who haven't been nurtured well, who haven't had the speech and language sort of model or input and…even a loving, safe environment. And until those other factors are put in place what you put on top in school isn't going to change things fundamentally' (LI7).

In these schools headteachers demonstrated a commitment to the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES 2003), embracing the idea that schools need to educate the 'whole child' rather than focus solely on education standards, and viewed attending to the wider needs of children and families as a core feature of their job. In this context, Extended Services which helped support families were seen as crucial in aiding children's progress (Cummings *et al*. 2007; DfES 2007), and cast schools as an 'extended family' for modern parents:

'there's no point just working with the children because the parents have such a big influence on them and then also the community in which they live have a major impact on their lifestyle. So unless you get all three working together and have the same sort of aims and focus, you're not going to really make a lot of progress' (LI8).

'We [school] are the extended family. At one time you'd go and see your granny or your auntie you know, but now where do you go? You go and see the old lady who is the headteacher because she's the oldest person you can probably think of who might know how to do it' (LI1).

In effect headteachers were trying to ensure congruence in the value systems underpinning different aspects of children's lives, helping parents to conform to normative models (Gillies 2005b; Reay 2008; Vincent and Ball 2007), rather than simply replacing their role with state input: 'the ideal solution … is that you empower the parents to parent properly rather than you get the state to do it' (LI7). New Labour's professionalisation of parenting has been critiqued for imposing middle-class mores on working-class parents, without paying due attention to the structural conditions in which they work (Gillies 2005a; Reay 2008). As policy emerged in schools, however, some headteachers did recognise the difficulties facing parents but this did not lead them to reject these class-specific models of parenting; rather it convinced them of the need to support parents in order that they might aspire to these and better support children's learning. Indeed, the only caveats about family intervention that emerged focused on the quantity available (ensuring 'hard to reach' families (LI6) were not overloaded) and the insufficient weighting given to successful work with families in a school inspection regime overly dominated by attainment.

The representation of schools as an 'extended family' is also invoked by headteachers in middle-income areas: '[i]n this non-society I'm not quite sure where else they're [parents] going to get the information and we can only signpost even then' (MI1). This caveat about schools ability being limited to signposting highlights an important difference in views. Whereas in low-income schools headteachers enthusiastically embrace a whole child and family approach, those in middle-income areas were more guarded, embracing their role in swift and easy referral to other health/social care services, but rejecting the notion that they had wider responsibility for transforming children's lives, or teaching parents to parent:

'things like information and referral service, that was much more in line with what schools should be doing, rather than actually taking over the whole responsibility for the child's successes or failures in life' (MI9).

'[W]e can be a good role model in terms of having boundaries and discipline and showing parents that there is such a thing as positive discipline rather than the parenting that often happens. I don't think it's our job to hold classes for parents' (MI4).

Notwithstanding the fact that these parents were not seen to conform to normative models in terms of support for children's learning (DfEE 1998b; Harris and Goodall 2008), concerns about this alone were not sufficient to prompt full engagement with the family support elements of Extended Services.

In higher-income schools headteachers' understanding of parents as capable and committed individuals meant that little parental support was seen to be required. Swift and easy referral to other services was thought to be of less relevance: 'here I don't have as much need for multi-agency collaboration, there aren't children with the significant needs as there were [in my previous low-income school]' (HI1). Moreover, these parents who conform to normative understandings of good parenting are seen to have a different power relation with headteachers (compared with their counterparts in low-income areas). This means that headteachers felt they needed to avoid the impression that they are interfering in family life, and were concerned that parents would react negatively to such interventions:

'I always have to be careful that I'm not seen as the nanny state' (HI5).

'I think they would be horrified if you would suggested it [parenting support]…they think they're perfect, most of them' (HI2).

'risking being punched in the face, it's not my job to teach parents to parent' (HI3).

Once again, in the rebalancing of the relationship between families and the state under Extended Services, we see less enthusiasm from headteachers for state involvement in the social reproduction of higher-income families. However, in contrast to wraparound care and enrichment activities which are popular amongst these parents, a lack of demand from higher-

income parents also means that activities such as school-based parenting classes lack sustainability in these areas.

Changing educational provision

Overall, two dimensions of change emerge from this analysis of headteachers' attitudes to Extended Services, and in both of these cases idealised notions of parenting and childhood intersect with wider circumstances to produce class-differentiated attitudes to service provision. On the one hand, specifically English responses to the economic and social change witnessed since the 1970s have resulted in schools being asked to play a greater role in supporting adult workers through provision/signposting of childcare, thus increasing state involvement in social reproduction. The value placed on care by the 'traditional' nuclear family (Hubbard 2008), and the notion that a child's place is in the home (Holloway and Valentine 2000), undermine headteachers' support for this form of care in higher-income areas where parents are viewed as competent. However, while these institutionalised environments are seen to threaten middle-class family life, the same spaces are seen as potentially enhancing the current and future experiences of children from middle and low-income backgrounds. Nevertheless, parental demand, and ability to pay, means afterschool clubs are more abundant in higher-income schools, whereas the lack of working parents in low-income areas means that parents (unlike their children) are not viewed as needing this service.

On the other hand, New Labour's understanding of education as both a crucial economic and social policy (Reay 2008), results in schools being asked to produce future citizen-workers in new ways, with greater emphasis being placed on child enrichment and parenting support, both in order to produce flexible workers of the future, and to ensure greater social stability, compliance and inclusion today and in future generations. Child enrichment activities are highly valued in all areas. Headteachers in middle and low-income

schools adopt a future-orientated perspective on childhood seen in wider Government policy (Lister 2006; Mayall 2006) and seek to ensure their pupils have access to activities which develop social and cultural capital, in order to enhance children's social mobility. Headteachers in higher-income areas draw on alternative narratives about childhood as a time for freedom and family life to question the very busy schedule of some children at their schools (Katz 2008). Notwithstanding the provision of extra activities in middle and lower-income areas through the Extended Services programme however, some activities remain more widely available in higher-income schools. By contrast, the emphasis on parenting support in the Extended Services programme, which reflects the professionalisation of parenting under New Labour (Gillies 2005b, 2008; Mayall 2006), was only full-embraced in low-income schools, as parenting here was seen to be most at odds with the model of ideal parenting found in neoliberal policy discourse (Lister 2006; Reay 2008), with care in some cases being regarded as deficient.

V   Conclusions

This paper furthers debate on the localization of neoliberal policy through a case study focus on educational restructuring under New Labour's roll-out neoliberalism. The empirics have traced the redrawing of the boundaries between state and family responsibility for economic well-being and social reproduction, as schools take on greater duties in supporting adult workers and producing future citizen-workers in new ways. In conclusion, we now look to the wider lessons beyond education that such research can teach us about the localization of neoliberal policy.

We turn firstly to the importance of the peopling of the state in the localization of neo-liberal policy. When examining localization all policies need to be understood in relation to wider drivers of change – in this case state responses to the new social risks which have seen policy convergence on the importance of education as both an economic and social tool

(Jenson and St Martin 2006) – but this does not mean that the local spaces of policy delivery are merely derivative. Rather, the neoliberal policies shaping these spaces are hybridised, or in part made, within them (Larner 2003). The position of public sector workers in this process is particularly interesting in roll-out neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell 2002). They are indeed agents of the neoliberal state, but the emphasis on meeting local need opens up spaces for them to influence policy in ways that reflect their own moral/political agenda. In this case study, for example, headteachers in low-income areas influenced the emergence of policy by downplaying its workfare element (such as after-school childcare) but embracing its socially interventionist components (including children's activities and parental support). The lesson is that we not only need to explore the agency of policy making elite, businesses lobbyists, travelling technocrats and activists (Bailey and Maresh 2009: Cumbers 2008; Larner and Laurie 2010) in shaping/resisting neoliberal policy, we must also add to this agenda the role of more 'everyday' agents of the state who make such policy through its local implementation.

Secondly and relatedly, it is in examining these local state actors' moral/political stance that the paper demonstrates the importance of including an analysis of ideas about policy subjects in our explorations of contingent neoliberalization and the localization of policy. An emerging geographical literature is examining which types of subject positions are normalised in neoliberal policy, and which are seen as in need of intervention (Haylett 2003; Elizabeth and Larner 2009; MacLeavy 2007; Raco, 2009). This paper demonstrates the importance of tracing these through to implementation in practice. In this case study, a group of liberal professionals whose ideals are shaped by their own classed, (de)gendered and heterosexed assumptions about ideal parenting and childhood, raise concerns about the inappropriateness of state interference in middle-class family life (as childcare is seen to undermine parenting in the home; as activities detract from family time; as parents are not viewed as needing support) at the same time as they support enhanced state involvement in low-income families lives (as institutional environments are viewed as good for these

children; as enrichment activities broaden their horizons; as parents are seen to need support). This process not only involves the reproduction of discourses seen in national policy at the level of implementation within schools, but also moments where local actors draw on alternative models of parenting and/or childhood to influence school-based policy, demonstrating their importance in understanding the localization of neoliberal policy (MacLeavy 2008). However, the analysis also reveals that the power of these ideas, and that of local state actors, is not without bounds: in some circumstances their ideas shaped policy outcomes, but in others the coincidence of particular sets of ideas about parenting and childhood were insufficient to overcome entrenched social divisions, and in particular the economic contexts in which different parents operate.

Thirdly, and again relatedly, the study demonstrates that in some circumstances everyday state actors' attitudes to ideal policy subjects, and their own client groups, matter as they influence service provision in different socio-economic communities. In this case study, the complex, and sometimes contradictory, ways in which notions about idealised parenting subjects and appropriate childhoods are mobilised in schools serving different socio-economic communities result in a situation where what is perceived to be 'good' for families of one social class may not be so for others. Understanding how neoliberalism results in class-differentiated outcomes does not simply risk reinforcing its hegemonic nature (cf. Larner 2003; Gibson-Graham 2008); rather it contributes to academic understanding of the ways some groups come to be the winners and others the losers in the uneven distribution of public services in roll-out neoliberalization.

In examining the distribution to services to different social groups it is essential that we engage with the complex politics at play in the localization of neoliberalism. In this case study, for example, we have the uneasy coexistence of liberal professional power to define and shape services that enhance what they judge to be 'appropriate' parenting and childhoods, and a progressive politics which seeks (amongst other things) to promote equality of

opportunity in current and future life chances by providing services for low-income children and their families. The roll-out neoliberal state is clearly delving deeper into what would once have been regarded as family life in order to influence the lifestyles and development of its citizen-workers, but at the same time committed individuals are using their roles as public sector workers to challenge the current and future social exclusion of their pupils. The solutions on offer are limited in that they seek to remodel the individual rather than the broader political-economic system which places those individuals at a disadvantage (Raffo and Dyson, 2007), but elements of these policies can have a progressive impact on some people's lives (in this case, for example, by providing access to breakfast and activities for children whose families are living in poverty). We need to engage with the enabling aspects of these policies, at the same time as we expose their class biases, both so we develop an academic understanding of the distribution of public services under neoliberalization, and in order that we as academics can use our research in practice, as we have in this case study, by acting in the role of 'critical friend' in debating service improvement with local policy makers and service providers.

Acknowledgements

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