The Decivilizing Process and Urban Working-Class Youth in Scotland

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Introduction

ONE EFFECT OF THE HISTORICAL PRECEDENCE OF BRITAIN'S EARLY DEVELOPMENT AS a capitalist state-society is the deep imprint on social relations produced by social class distinctions. In this context, and until relatively recently, the social category "working class" was often worn with pride as a badge of honor in British society. It provided dominated groups with a positive framework for collective self-understanding and identity. Material impoverishment was compensated in part by collective representations of class as an authorized and legitimated source of social solidarity. Class relations depended on a relatively stable dichotomy between insiders and outsiders. "Folk like us" were frank, honest, and unpretentious, whereas "people like them" were aloof, pompous, and disingenuous. If this image of the British working class too often romanticized, ennobled, and homogenized a more complex and internally divided social reality, it nonetheless contained a kernel of truth.

Today, however, elementary truths about Britain as a definite kind of class society are routinely traduced and derided. Over the past two decades, "class" as a structured socioeconomic relationship has fallen from public consciousness. It is now an unreliable marker of party political alignment. In the 2000s New Labour governments attempted to expunge class from the lexicon of British politics under the "Respect agenda" (see Millie 2009). The removal of class as a political language of social divisions and interests has the effect of obscuring the social structures that determine the possible positions individuals are compelled to occupy in social space.

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In its place, public discourses of "respect and responsibility" elevate moral, cultural, and individualistic explanations of social suffering (see Hancock, Mooney, and Neal 2012). Denial of the structuring effects of class position removes from the socially dominated a crucial source of collective claim-making. Instead of focusing on the structural disadvantages in the labor market, the blame for material and symbolic dispossession is laid at the door of genetically or morally flawed individuals, in ways not dissimilar from Victorian images of the "dissolute" and "undeserving" urban poor. And, vice versa, economic success becomes the morally deserved result of genetically and culturally successful individuals and their children.

In this sphere, as Norbert Elias (2012) classically demonstrated, feelings of responsibility, obligation, reciprocity, shame, and propriety are induced as an unintended, spontaneous effect of functional interdependencies. Within the centuries-old process of increased self-restraint, decivilizing "spurts" forcibly reassert formal relations of superiority and inferiority that had hitherto been in long-term decline. Elias's focus on the dialectical tension between civilizing and decivilizing *processes* is misleadingly replaced by some with reified *states of being,* shifting the focus onto the social and psychological problems of "incivility" and criminalization (Rodger 2008). Individuals and cultures that are removed from wider interdependencies — above all, from the labor market and organizational hierarchies — also escape from external disciplines that demand "civilized" attitudes and conduct. Lacking middle-class aspirations, a supposedly indulgent culture of welfare entitlement and self-interest allows inferior social groups to draw on the public good one-sidedly without making any productive contribution in return. Elementary codes of conduct, decency, courtesy, and civility are thought to have atrophied within the most deprived social groups within the working class. Unemployed or underemployed welfare recipients therefore appear to lack the values and behaviors of the wider "civil" society.

UK public policy, at least since the election of New Labour in 1997, tried to face this decadent underclass culture by engaging in unsuccessful attempts to forcibly correct and modify the attitudinal and behavioral deficiencies of dysfunctional individuals and families. Above all, New Labour viewed the failure of lower social groups as a consequence of moral indifference and of a work avoidance ethos (Haylett 2001). However, this approach ignored a substantial body of evidence that points to changing structures of employment as the primary determinant of poverty and inequality in Britain. Half of all adults living in poverty in the UK are from working households (52 percent), with one or more adults working part-time (16 percent), full-time (22 percent), or being self-employed (11 percent) (McKendrick et al. 2011, 101). Low pay and structural unemployment and underemployment, not cultural attitudes or uncivil conduct, are the root causes of class dispossession and social suffering.

In this climate, the label "working class" no longer functions in Britain as a marker of authenticity, solidity, and respectability, but rather signifies something

base, backward, and shameful: the working class has turned from the mythical "salt of the earth" into the reviled "scum of the earth" (Jones 2011). Whether in the form of belligerent youth, benefit claimants, council tenants, or public sector trade unions, the working class seems distinctly garish, outdated, and ungrateful, a moral rubbish heap set against a society newly minted as "middle class" according to the self-image of the neoliberal imagination. If the working class figures at all in public discourse, then it is as the marginal identity of the young, white urban poor, subject to populist moral and emotional denigration, fear, and contempt. In the past two decades, acute public concerns emerged around cultural representations of the marginal figures of the "Chav" in England and the "Ned" in Scotland. These categories function as folk devils to evoke middle-class feelings of disgust, fear, embarrassment, and repugnance (Jones 2011; Law 2006a). Middle-class entertainers, politicians, and journalists embrace discourses about "Chavs" and "Neds" in a conspicuous display of the cultural competence and moral standards that are required on the other, civilized side of the social ledger.

This essay seeks to overcome the rather static effect of de-historicized, fixed categories of the British "underclass." In particular, we seek to highlight the specificity of the figure of the Chav on the one hand and that of the Ned on the other, which correspond to differences in the sociohistorical development of class disdain in the distinct nations of Scotland and England, despite the fact that they both inhabit the same nation-state, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Law 2006b). Such differences tend to disappear under the widespread assumption that the Chav phenomenon in England automatically resonates elsewhere in the UK, albeit under different names. Differences in the historical development of the urban working class in Scotland have produced a casual familiarity with Neds through a colloquial common sense that oscillates between "humor" and moral outrage. This feeds into a historically distinctive and autonomous Scottish media, criminal justice system, and welfare-based institutions. Within this institutional nexus, the sense of national distinctiveness is further accentuated by the devolved state-society. Since 1999 the major functions of the central UK state, particularly social policy, have been devolved to a semiautonomous Scottish state under political demands for increased self-government, a process that will culminate in a referendum in 2014 for constitutional independence from the UK. This fact colors all discourses about the underclass in Scotland.

Civilizing the Underclass in Britain

Previously disconnected folk devils began to coalesce in the 1990s with the emergence of the Chav figure in England as a contemptible underclass caricature—idle, feckless, ignorant, slovenly, criminal, and promiscuously heterosexual (Jones 2011). The Ned figure seemed to refer to the same thing in Scotland. Hayward and Yar (2006, 15) situate "Ned" as only one of a range of localized terms, whereas "Chav" has risen to hegemonic status nationally. Chavs/Neds became a journalistic cliché

for UK media fears about the wider effects of the lifestyles of the white urban poor. Terms of class disdain, what Tyler (2008, 24) calls "disgust speech," are routinely mobilized in the public sphere to point the finger at an undeserving stratum of social refuse: "This disgust speech generates a set of effects, which adhere to, produce, and embellish the disgusting figure of the chav: chavs are white, live on council (or social housing) estates, eat junk food, steal your phones, wear crap sports wear, drink cheap cider, they are the absolute dregs of modern civilization; a social underclass *par excellence*, chavs are disgusting."

Special malice is reserved for young working-class women, routinely depicted as loathsome, self-obsessed, superficial, and promiscuous creatures (Skeggs 2005; Tyler 2008). This discourse of disgust and disdain reached fever pitch during the media coverage of the disappearance of Shannon Mathews from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, England, in February 2008, which stood in sharp contrast to the (initially) sympathetic coverage of a missing child, Madeleine McCann, during the previous year. Whereas the middle-class McCann family elicited widespread sympathy from journalists and public figures, the working-class Mathews family faced public censure, moral indignation, and ridicule (see Mooney and Neal 2009–10). Imagined as representative of a wider social stratum, an unusual episode involving one troubled family became emblematic of what the journalist Carole Malone called "a sub (human) class that now exists in the murkiest, darkest corners of this country [*sic*]" (in Jones 2011, 22).

Although the public discourse on Chavs/Neds appears to have emerged relatively recently, it draws on much older sociolinguistic ideologies of class and race (Bennett 2012). Elias (2012, 465) identified a much longer history of class repulsion, for example, when, in the eighteenth century, the nobility was physically repelled by the ascending bourgeois class: "Anything that touched their embarrassment-threshold smelt bourgeois, was socially inferior; and inversely: anything bourgeois touched their embarrassment-threshold. It was the necessity to distinguish themselves from anything bourgeois that sharpened this sensitivity." Clearly, the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie, a rising class encroaching on the highest circles of court society, was an entirely different sociopolitical entity from the contemporary middle class that looks with contempt at disenfranchised working-class youth. Nonetheless, emotional and moral tensions between class fractions in Britain today must be situated within the long-term sociohistorical dynamic that Elias (2012, 2008) called "the civilizing process"—the long-run but unintended process in the West that converted the external constraints of social structure into the internal self-restraints of bodily dispositions.

This process was, and is, simultaneously social, economic, political, geographical, cultural, and psychological. It can be very crudely sketched as follows: As the division of labor advances, greater social interdependencies emerge; upper classes are restrained from direct physical violence; violence and taxation become an exclusive function of the state; larger geographical areas are pacified, creating space for a money

economy and an urban bourgeoisie to develop; and self-restraint becomes increasingly automatic as it spreads to wider groups in society. Uninhibited gratification of the senses is increasingly transformed into a restrained sensibility that demands emotional control and empathy with sufferers and places definite limits on arbitrary violence. As people are compelled by the central authority of the state to live in peaceful interdependency with each other, social life becomes more predictable and orderly (Elias 2012, vol. 2). Violent, unguarded, or emotional outbursts become signs of weakness to be censured by impersonal powers of calculated reserve. For Elias, a propensity to observe work discipline, even when it can be substituted with idle comfort, is a core characteristic that distinguishes the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie from a decadent court aristocracy. Socially desirable behavior now appears to be produced voluntarily by personal initiative and self-control. The very person of the bourgeois individual under self-control from the inside out, a *homo clausus* or "closed person," provides an exemplar to the whole society (Elias 1978, 119). Self-restraint appears to individuals as their own special ability rather than as an effect of the impersonal social interdependencies of markets, commodities, and functions (Elias 2012, 150). Decorous behavior is valorized as the innate and natural ability of the accomplished, hard-working, well-adjusted middle-class individual who observes the cultural impulse to conform to socially acceptable, hence reasonable and dignified, norms and values.

Class and the Chains of Dependency

The lack of cultural and personal discipline that marks out the Chav/Ned underclass as a decivilizing threat. Excessive displays of degraded consumption by Chav/ Neds offend against the closed restraint of the *homo clausus*. For Hayward and Yar (2006), work-determined conceptualizations of a demoralized underclass in the 1980s have been transformed into an ostentatious display of symbolic cultural goods by young people, with Chavs as symbols of the wider society of consumers. Chav discourses vilify urban youth for disgraceful forms of consumption rather than for the worklessness that had typified the ideological representation of the underclass in the 1980s: "This discourse which pathologizes and marginalizes is fundamentally decoupled from the question of economic capital, replacing it instead with a perceived lack of cultural capital" (Hayward and Yar 2006, 14; see also Hollingworth and Williams 2009).

   Clearly this formulation parts company with Bourdieu's (1984) insistence that economic capital and cultural capital are mutually convertible forms of currency. Yet Hayward and Yar (2006, 18) insist that "if contemporary fascination with the 'chav' is about anything it is about a reconfiguration of the underclass idea through the lens of an unmediated consumer society." However, consumption can never be "unmediated." By placing the accent on poor or tasteless consumer choices by Chav/Neds, the multiple mediations of production and consumption (as well as distribution and exchange) are reduced to a single transparent moment of visibil-

ity—clothing, posture and gait, speech, and so on—as outward markers of the decivilized subject. Consumption is always the final and most visible "finishing touch" of the production of objects as exchangeable commodities. Once the object leaves production and enters society, every relation to it is an external one that depends on a long impersonal chain of functional interdependencies (Elias 2012, 471–72).

Desirable commodities that appear to the youth as brand markers of lifestyle choices therefore efface their own point of origin and prior structuring in the realm of production and circulation. Youth subcultures may come to overidentify with the apparent contingency of unstable choices in branded products as a compensation for their own lack of economic value, in what Marx referred to as commodity fetishism. Neds consume commodities that are viewed by the tasteful consumer as vulgar, tainted, and ridiculous. In so doing, the excessive fetishization of the (fake) brand by inferior social groups devalorizes it in practice. In their lack of cultural refinement, Neds are reminders of the insecure, menial toil that "civilized" taste and manners want to place securely behind the scenes of social life.

Yet underclass figures are also productive for the wider civilizing process. They form the point of departure for an entire apparatus of professionals, journalists, politicians, state officials, solicitors, police officers, fashion designers, and so on. As Marx (1861–63, 306) noted, even the criminal can be classed as "productive" for the civilizing process, which always requires an "uneasy tension and agility" for its further development: "The criminal produces an impression, partly moral and partly tragic, as the case may be, and in this way renders a 'service' by arousing the moral and aesthetic feelings of the public. The criminal breaks the monotony and everyday security of bourgeois life, giving rise to that uneasy tension without which even the spur of competition would get blunted."

Marx's conceptualization is a necessary reminder of the civilizing counterpoint effect of the most dominated and reviled social groups. Increased integration and mutual restraint often depend on processes of displacement and exclusion elsewhere, what Elias (2012, 422–27) sometimes described as the contradictory tensions of "modern barbarism," a dual process of "diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties." Contrasts and inequalities between classes and state-societies are progressively reduced at the same time as the varieties and nuances of conduct are increased, in a "controlled de-controlling" of emotional life. A constant dialectic of repulsion and assimilation between the classes varies in intensity over time and space, but tends overall to become more even and temperate.

Dominant groups are not entirely unaffected by the mores and standards of lower groups. Subordinate groups like "the underclass," which lack any possibility of upward social mobility, may well exhibit a fatalistic vigor in their conduct and manners. From their more or less fixed position in social space, dominated groups are encumbered by far fewer anxieties about "correct" bourgeois standards of good form, restraint, and taste. Such apparent freedom can exert an attracting as well as a repelling effect on groups more completely gripped by the exigencies of functional

dependency, inviting them, for instance, to adopt street fashions, postures, or argot in a controlled decontrolling of self-restraint.

The Underclass and Civic Nationalism

Ned is falsely assumed to denote a "Non-Educated Delinquent," a pejorative backronym that permits symbolic power to denigrate with impunity under the pseudoscientific veneer of an official category, much like the recent use of NEETs (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) to classify unemployed young people in the UK (Lawson 2011). Despite claims to the contrary, descriptions of the Chavs as a cultural underclass in England cannot be readily translated into accounts of the Ned phenomenon in Scotland (Hayward and Yar 2006; Skeggs 2005). As we have already insisted, social figurations take shape under distinctive national forms of state-society development. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004, 236) argue, "each society, at each moment, elaborates a body of social problems taken to be legitimate, worthy of being debated, of being made public and sometimes officialized and, in a sense guaranteed by the state."

   A relatively autonomous state-society in Scotland has played a strategic role in defining youth crime in general and Ned culture in particular as a major social problem in need of tackling. In the case of Neds, it is not simply bad cultural taste that is of concern to the agencies of the devolved Scottish state. Rather, discourses about Neds construct an image of disruptive and suspicious subjects in opposition to marketized images of Scotland as a neoliberal state-society engaged successfully in global competitive accumulation. In this context it is frequently claimed that Scotland is a "civic nation" that has passed through "a social revolution" unparalleled in Western democracies to become a middle-class "professional society" (see Law and Mooney 2006). In August 2011, when Scottish cities were untouched by urban riots while major English cities were set aflame, this image of Scotland as a transformed civic nation led the Scottish First Minister to claim that such disorders would not take place in Scotland because it is a "different society."[1]

   This suggests that distinctive civilizing processes internally pacified urban Scotland in contrast to the socio-spatial tensions punctuated by collective violence in urban England. Claims about civilizing processes therefore function as markers of national difference, despite deep structural similarities between Scotland and England. The Ned figure plays a different cultural role in Scottish society than the Chav phenomenon, as a new consumption-based underclass, plays in England. Etymologically, the term can be traced back at least to the 1950s, though it may have originated in the Edwardian period around 1910, or even further back (Coleman 2012, 232). Urban discourses about Neds in Scotland are not only of older vintage, but they also take less virulent forms than those about Chavs in England.[2]

   Nonetheless, "Ned" tends to be a derogatory denominator. Young people rarely use the label to refer to themselves and typically reserve it for other groups

or individuals seen as socially inferior or physically threatening. One study of the speech practices and social identities of urban adolescents in Glasgow found that self-identification was a highly complex and fraught affair for young urban working-class Scots. In forming their own self-categorizations, young people routinely negotiate cultural spaces deemed "normal" in contrast to Ned pathologies:

Int: So what are you then, what group would you like to be in?
Youth 1: Normal.
Int: What are normal people like?
Youth 2: Me … I don't know what group I'm in, 'cause my ma'll [mother will] says to me—you're a wee hairy [promiscuous female]. I go—no, I'm no. She goes—aye, you are. Then when I talk, my pals go—you pure talk like a wee Ned.
Int: What are you then?
Youth 2: I'm a wee Glasgow person. I wouldnae say I'm a Ned 'cause I don't go oot and start fights an' aw that. I wouldn't say I'm a wee geeky person either. (In Timmins et al. 2004)

Working-class people in Scotland have long been exposed to the class condescension of everyday speech forms, coded as socially incompetent "slang" dialects by traditional authority figures even as other, more formal contrasts between classes decay (Stuart-Smith 1999). Moreover, this symbolic ascription of negative attributes to an entire social stratum has led to the recategorization of the British working class as an ethnic group. This conflation of class and race draws from a deep well of inferiority categorizations. In Victorian Britain, members of the working class were cast as colonized subjects faring little better in the hierarchy of "civilized" values than the dominated peoples of the British Empire (Bonnett 1998). In the UK, Chavs have become synonymous with the *white* working class, while the category "working class" is increasingly synonymous with poor whites (Nayak 2006; Sveinsson 2009).[3] Similarly, Neds are discussed as the white working class in Scotland, the ethnic equivalent to Chavs in England (see Raisborough and Adams 2008). However, such attributions ignore the relative absence of ethnic categorizations for the working class in Scotland. Across almost all public discourse in Scotland, civic nationalism eclipses ethnic nationalism, although an unspoken relationship exists between the two (Kamusella 2012). Here the sole exception appears to be ethnoreligious sectarian divisions between Protestants and Catholics at football games. Crowd misconduct at football games is to be civilized by the Scottish government through the introduction in 2012 of new legislation, The Offensive Behavior at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012, which redefines as a "sectarian hate crime" any offensive reference to the religious or political posture of rival fans.

Beyond the arbitrary ethnicization of class in Scotland, the construction of a decivilized universe "re-animalizes" degraded people and places by collapsing any distinction between nature and culture. In this way, the most dominated and

reviled social groups can be exiled from the public culture of the civic nation. Class habitus and environmental habitat become almost indistinguishable. For instance, Haylett (2003, 61–63) notes an implicit correlation between council housing, "estate culture," and "welfare culture" in England. This semantic culture-nature slippage enables "disorderly" and "dysfunctional" aspects of urban working-class habitus to be perceptually restructured in quasi-animalistic terms (see also Cook 2006, 43–46). Though not solely an urban phenomenon in Scotland, Ned culture and behavior are assumed to be the marginalized practices of disaffected and alienated working-class youth in "the schemes" of Scotland's large public housing estates (see Johnstone and Mooney 2007; Law, Mooney, and Helms 2010). Public housing has played a major historical role in the fabric of urban Scotland and retains a symbolic significance as a degraded criminogenic environment (Damer 1989).

Public housing estates in urban Scotland are constructed as decivilized locales, populated by animalistic creatures who naturalistically revel in a well-deserved material and cultural poverty. This trope surfaced with particular venom over the Glasgow East by-election in 2008, when populist class hatred among mainly London-based journalists pathologized the area and its people as "Shettleston Men" culturally locked into despondency and self-exclusion (Mooney 2009). Deindustrialized cities like Glasgow and Dundee undoubtedly have deep-seated problems. Until recently, Glasgow had some of the highest levels of people on Incapacity Benefit (IB), a particular target of anti-working-class diatribes. At its peak, one in five working age adults were claiming incapacity benefits; yet after 2003 the number of claimants began falling faster than elsewhere. A major academic study shows that this pattern represents a form of "disguised unemployment," not a welfare dependency-despondency subculture. It reflects the loss of 100,000 manufacturing jobs in the city between 1971 and 1991, with Glasgow falling precipitously from 208th to 10th place in the UK for economic inactivity rates during the 1980s. Then in the early 2000s improvements in the local job market followed (Webster et al. 2010).

Whereas Glasgow and the Clydeside conurbation feature most prominently in the stories and representations of Ned behavior, most of Scotland's main towns and cities are assumed to have a Ned "problem." Towns like Dundee are the object of disparaging remarks on hostile websites that, under the ideological alibi that it's "just a laugh" (Law 2006a; see also Jones 2011), simultaneously mock poverty and public housing, promiscuous teenage mothers, endemic criminality, dissolute lifestyles, welfare dependency, squalid environment, and the supposedly general lack of cultural taste among the poor.

Civilizing through Criminalizing

With the reestablishment of a Scottish parliament in 1999, there was, in theory at least, some potential for the already distinctive and separate Scottish criminal justice system to diverge markedly from the policies and practices of criminal justice in England and Wales. A democratic concern with welfare and rehabilitation

have long been claimed to form the distinguishing core of the Scottish criminal justice system. As a consequence, communitarian public provision of welfare and mutual support appear as key civic or civilizing values (McAra 1999, 2004). First, the 1932 Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act imposed a statutory duty on the courts to prioritize the welfare of the child. In the late 1960s, the creation of Children's Hearings promoted rehabilitation rather than retribution in order to avoid the criminalization of children (Croall 2005; Ferguson 2005; McAra 2004, 2006). The welfarist philosophy of Kibrandron was the dominant approach to youth justice in Scotland for 30 years until the Children (Scotland) Act of 1995 substituted the protection of the child as offender with the protection of the public as victim.

A steady shift in Scottish criminal justice toward a more punitive stance, particularly in the field of youth justice, has occurred since the early 2000s. This has eroded the promise that devolution would strengthen Scotland's traditional welfare ethos. Indeed, signs of a shift toward a more punitive approach were already evident in 1998, when young people living on public housing estates in the Scottish town of Hamilton were subjected to a six-month curfew. Under this scheme, any young people under the age of 15 found on the streets after 8:00 p.m. and judged by the police to represent a danger to themselves or to others were escorted home to their parents' care *(The Guardian*, April 11, 1998).

The construction of "antisocial behavior" (see Krause, in this volume) as a key criminal justice issue in Scotland closely parallels the emergence of an ASB problem in England and Wales, fueled by a growing middle-class concern with young repeat offenders. This concern was reflected in the Partnership Agreement between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in forming the ruling Scottish Executive between 2003 and 2007 (Scottish Executive 2003a). In the 2003 Scottish Executive Report, *Putting Our Communities First*, for instance, the definition of ASB included young people "hanging around" and other relatively minor transgressions of common decency such as litter, graffiti, and dog fouling! In the retail- and leisure-led regeneration of Glasgow, a New York–style zero tolerance for begging, prostitution, gangs, alcohol, and general "antisocial" conduct attempted to sweep clean the city center economy of its urban dross (Helms 2008).

The ideology of ASB has the effect of lowering the threshold between everyday life and criminal justice system. A greater range of behaviors and lifestyles now fall under the gaze of the state and social control agencies (Cook 2006, 80). Such a punitive attitude is reflected in more unforgiving approaches to youth criminal justice. In 2002, an Action Plan to Reduce Youth Crime was published that pinpointed repeat and persistent offenders as a key target. In 2003, pilot fast-track hearings for youth offenders and a pilot youth court scheme were launched at Hamilton and Airdrie Sheriff's Court (with the Minister for Justice commenting that "punishment is a key part of the youth justice process"; see Piacentini and Walters 2006). In 2004, the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act included the extension of ASBOs to 12- to 16-year-olds, the provision of electronic tagging to under-16s, Community

Reparation Orders (for those aged 12 and older), and Parental Orders. Amidst the political and media rhetoric about "plagues of group disorder" (Margaret Curran, quoted in *The Scotsman*, June 18, 2004), one could be forgiven for thinking that Scotland was gripped by a massive and general upsurge in youth crime. This heightened politics of youth criminality coincided with a spike in recorded crime in Scotland, which since that point has been in steady decline, falling to its lowest level in 30 years by 2010 (Scottish Government 2011).

The Scottish National Party (SNP)—a minority member of government in 2007, subsequently reelected in 2011 with a majority—is generally considered to be less punitive than its Labour and liberal democrat counterparts (see McNeill 2010). At the elections of May 2011, Labour conveyed a much more punitive message than the SNP did. The clearest indications of a softer approach from the SNP is that there has been a markedly reduced concern with antisocial behavior and less of an emphasis on the behavior and problems of persistent young offenders. The SNP government's approach in this area, reflected in the key policy document entitled "Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action" (Scottish Government 2008), reflects what McAra and McVie (2010) have characterized as an "uneasy" mix of welfarist, actuarialist, and retributive influences. The welfarist elements are evident from the outset, the document beginning with a largely positive statement about the contribution of young people to Scottish society in general (McNeil 2010, 51). An emphasis on children's well-being connects deviant youth to welfare institutions such as education and health, keeping them at a distance from the criminal justice system and favoring early and intensive intervention for those classed as "at risk." Although it is important to remain cautious about claims concerning the welfarist basis of criminal justice policy in Scotland, especially in relation to youth justice, the approach of the SNP government marks something of a retreat from the steady trend in the early- to mid-2000s toward a convergence with the much more punitive model of England and Wales (see Croall 2012).

Decivilizing Media and Symbolic Power

If Elias examined "manners books" from the Middle Ages onwards to chart the emergence of self-restraint among the upper classes in Europe, today a broad range of mass media perform a similar function and operate as texts that instruct their audiences in good taste and conduct. Scotland has not only a semi-state apparatus of its own but also a quasi-autonomous media of long standing (Blain and Hutchison 2008). As moral lessons against social impropriety and incompetence, television programs typically invite viewers to adopt an affronted bourgeois stance of superiority, good taste, and social competence in contrast to the inept displays of social inferiority, cultural ignorance, and domestic incompetence of the lower classes (Law and Mooney 2011–12).

One of the most popular television programs in Scotland in recent decades is the comedy series *Chewin' the Fat,* produced by BBC Scotland. This presents a series

of sketches and skits featuring two characters that are immediately recognizable by Scottish viewers as "the Neds," since they are attired in typical Ned clothing — Burberry-style checked baseball caps and tracksuits ("trackies"). *Chewing the Fat* also features sketches about "Ned TV" and a Glasgow-based "Ned swimming gala" in which violence, disorder, and mayhem are presented as the key cultural attributes of Neds (Law 2006a).

Although comedic representations may strike a sympathetically parodic tone, more realist depictions can have an insidious ideological effect in reinforcing portrayals of the urban poor as barbarous beasts. This was graphically illustrated by a controversial documentary made in urban Scotland, *The Scheme* (BBC, 2010–11), which depicted the daily lives of six families from the Onthank and Knockinlaw impoverished housing estates in Kilmarnock (Law and Mooney 2011–12). A cast of characters were seen to battle against a series of material, personal, and social disadvantages: drug dependency, petty crime, casual violence, ASBOs, teenage pregnancy and abortion, single parenting, imprisonment, ill health, and bereavement. Although the program was promoted as emblematic of "important social problems," it could lay no claim to depicting the typical characteristics of even the bottom decile of Scottish society.

Some compared the stigmatization effect that *The Scheme* had on Onthank with that of a BBC documentary, *The Fourth World*, about the Lilybank scheme in 1970s Glasgow.[4] But the earlier documentary was a more earnest exercise in serious social documentary analysis, centered around the participant observation of Kay Carmichael, a social policy academic and activist. It gave expression to bored teenagers, gang fights, casual violence, glue sniffing, vandalism, fractious neighbors, and tempestuous public exchanges. But where *The Fourth World* had a sense of political mission and social analysis, however limited, *The Scheme* flattered a morbid fascination for abject social suffering. Little sense was provided of the wider forces of neoliberal political economy that over the past 30 years have restructured the material conditions of life for former industrial working-class communities in Kilmarnock and elsewhere across urban Scotland.

Besides the broadcast media, the Ned underclass figures regularly in Scotland's semiautonomous print media, which routinely clothes itself as distinctively Scottish (that is, not English and not specifically British either) (Law 2001). Compared to the treatment of Chavs in the English press, the use of Neds in the Scottish press exhibits a distinctive temporal pattern and a more intensive usage. Taking the blunt instrument of a Lexis-Nexis search of selected Scottish newspapers[5] (not including Scottish editions of large-circulation papers like *The Sun*), the term "Neds" was barely mentioned by the press in the 1990s, except in the humorous columns of Jack Mclean and Tom Shields in *The Herald*. Table 1 and Figure 1 show that this datum has increased steadily, especially since 1999 — the year of the opening of the Scottish Parliament — and reached a peak of more than one thousand citations in 2003, when political concerns with Ned behavior were at their zenith and when an

Calendar Year	Quantity
2011	751
2010	520
2009	374
2008	466
2007	526
2006	251
2005	554
2004	820
2003	1,012
2002	483
2001	342
2000	237
1999	240
1998	102
1997	61
1996	61
1995	54
1994	44
1993	29
1992	19
1991	0
1990	0

Table 1. Annual frequency of the term "Neds" in selected Scottish newspaper titles (1990–2011)
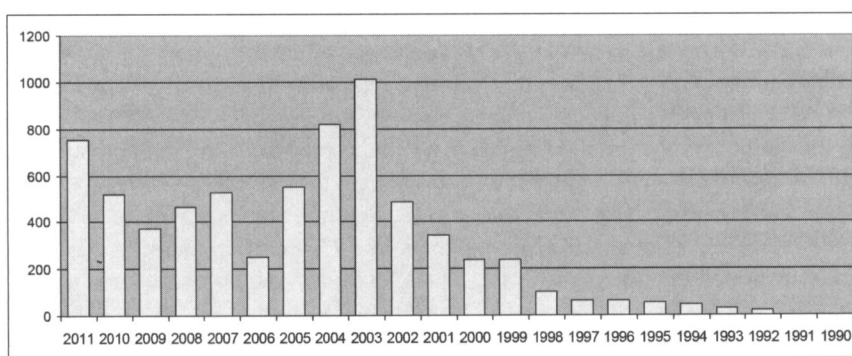

Figure 1. Total "Neds" word frequency in selected Scottish newspaper titles (1990–2011)

attempt was made in the Scottish Parliament to ban the use of the term. This compares with the highpoint of 946 mentions of "Chavs" in all UK newspapers in 2005 found by Hayward and Yar (2006, 10). Although the overall trend since the early 2000s has been downwards, nonetheless post-2003 the number of citations has consistently been higher than pre-2003. Between 2001 and 2006, the well-known Scottish tabloid the *Daily Record* and its sister paper, the *Sunday Mail,* used the term three times more regularly than the "quality" Glasgow papers *The Herald* and *Sunday Herald*, that in turn tended to use it twice as much as the Edinburgh-based *Scotsman* and *Scotland on Sunday* papers. Surprisingly, in 2010–2011 the frequency of Ned citations in *The Herald/Sunday Herald* appeared to surpass that of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* (see Figure 2). These papers cater predominantly to readers located in west-central Scotland, the region that spawned the Ned as a colloquial figure.

Print culture also generated a new genre of Chav-Ned humor. Ned joke books began to appear, including *The Little Book of Neds* (2005), *Ned Jokes* (2007), and *Ned Speak* (2006), by Lee Bok, who is also credited with the equally vitriolic *The Little Book of Chavs* (2004) and *The Chav Guide to Life* (2006). *The Little Book of Chavs* quickly sold out its first print run of 100,000, an indication that these cheaply produced texts strike a chord about class anxieties and that hate humor can prove a profitable enterprise. These books recycle the same hackneyed, hateful jokes that once passed for publicly acceptable banter directed against subordinate groups like ethnic minorities, women, and homosexuals (Billig 2001).

Amidst this spate of hate humor books, in 2005 appeared *Nedworld*, under the pseudonyms Kylie Pilrig and Keanu McGlinchy. From start to finish, a torrent of stereotyped class hatred is unleashed that would be legally impossible against any other minority group in the UK. The book purports to shed humorous insight into "the outrageous lifestyle of the ASBO generation"; in fact, its clichéd jokes merely
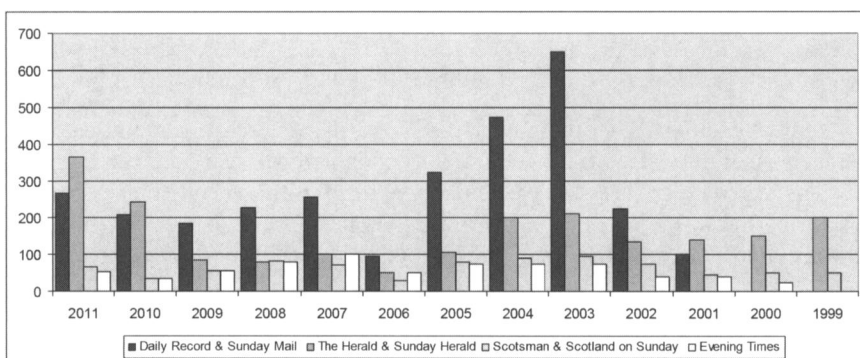

Figure 2. "Neds" frequency count in selected Scottish newspaper titles (1999–2011)

repeat the typical race hate jokes so common in British society in the 1970s. This example is indicative of hundreds of others similar in tone and structure:

> A ned died pure poor and many local shops donated money to the fund for his funeral out of sympathy. The manager of the jeweller's was asked to donate a fiver. "Only a fiver?," he asked. "Only a fiver to bury Brad Pitt Mckenzie? Here's a cheque. Go and bury one hundred of them?" (Pilrig and McGlinchy 2005, 64)

Here the reader is invited to share the genocidal desire of the joke teller for the physical elimination of Neds in their hundreds. As one reviewer noted, the book provides

> an index of middle-class fears about the underclass [*sic*]. It had to be writ-ten sooner or later and is, in some perverse way, timely. It flies in the face of politically correct ideas about representing the long-term unemployed, the urban poor, the non-educated and delinquent.[6]

In contrast to the "ultimate race hate word," the n-word, which as Billig (2001, 278) notes, "announces hatred without semantic constraint," "Ned" has become a word that can be invoked repeatedly since little semantic social constraint or self-restraint is demanded when referring to the most dominated social group of the working class. Ned-type characters of ridicule even appeared in children's papers like *The Beano*, a popular comic produced in Dundee. The cartoon featured a new family, The Neds, comprising Ned, Nedette, and their kids, Asbo and Chavette (December 17, 2005, and April 18, 2006; see Raisborough and Adams 2008) and led to protests in the Scottish Parliament against "classism" and to challenges from Scotland's Children's Commissioner (*Sunday Times*, February 5, 2006; *The Scots-man*, February 6, 2006). These counterprotests against denigration represent yet another indication of some of the ambivalences about Neds in Scottish civic and political institutions, in sharp contrast to the widespread contempt for Chavs so ef-fortlessly expressed by the English political and media establishment (Jones 2011).

Conclusion

For some sociologists "working class" is primarily a cultural or moral category as much as, or more than, a dynamic socioeconomic relationship (Sayer 2005). In this perspective, class is considered relational insofar as it is constructed through the attribution or denial of moral worth by another group with sufficient social power to make authoritative value judgments. By contrast, a focus on the tension identified by Elias between civilizing and decivilizing processes resituates cultural and material marginality within the curve of development of Scotland as a distinct state-society. From this perspective, it becomes necessary to distinguish Neds from Chavs as marginalized devil figures within the distinctive sociopolitical trajectories of Scotland and England.

Of course, as marginalized underclass figures subject to overlapping histories of class disgust, Neds and Chavs share a set of attributed characteristics: tasteless clothing, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, sexual promiscuity, territorial gang membership, and loud, risky, and reckless conduct. As a collectively imagined category, the Chav/Ned figure offends against the ideological and psychological weight of a much longer "civilizing process" of class conditioning. Within the process of "diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties," the ideological spurt of contempt for Neds and Chavs elicits emotional repulsion and disgust for lower social groups. As a denigrated social body, the figure of the Chav/Ned reeks of impropriety and, conversely, cultural vulgarity smells of the Chav/Ned.

However, the ascription to Neds and Chavs of shared consumption and behavioral patterns accepts at face value generic labels of "incivility" that obscure national (and local) differences in social development. The social, institutional, political, and media agitation over Neds in Scotland exhibits distinct national aspects that need to be carefully delineated. Rather than homogenizing dominated social groups under the sign of the Chav figure particular to England as a state-society, a focus on the different historical development of state-society in Scotland suggests that the Ned represents a more ambiguous underclass figure. It can be called upon to symbolize good-natured humor or social critique, but it may equally be mobilized for moral outrage and criminalization processes. Elias has been invoked by academics to highlight the "criminalization" of welfare as a new phase in the decivilizing process (Rodger 2008). However, this tends to be conceived as a single process operating across the UK, only allowing for some policy differences in Scotland. In contrast, we have sought to provide a longer-term perspective that emphasizes the tension between civilizing and decivilizing processes (plural) within the curve of national development in Scotland as a distinct state-society. Here the nationally autonomous institutions of Scottish state and civil society—criminal justice system, policy-making networks, government, and media producers—rely on the antisocial underclass figure of the Ned to formalize the civilizing process and to correct and modify informal urban subcultures developed over a century or more. Civilizing pressures are not a zero-sum process of repulsion and exclusion, but are marked by ambivalences and mediations in the dialectical tensions generated by class positioning in social space.

With the major welfare functions of the state devolved to Scotland a dozen years ago, and with the UK state increasingly losing its territorial integrity, the Scottish government finds itself torn between welfare nationalism and competitive nationalism (Law and Mooney 2012). Within this contradictory space, civilizing processes are subject to the dynamic tensions produced by the formal, external demands of the civic-welfare nation and the informal pressures of individuals competing in crisis-prone marketized conditions. Neds appear as a decivilizing underclass counterpoint to the devolved state-society welfare bargain conceived as a national platform for competitive accumulation. A new phase of public austerity

that deepens neoliberal priorities and the referendum for state independence in 2014 will ensure that problematic and ambivalent representations of the underclass will remain contingent on the development of Scotland as a distinctive state-society.

NOTES

1.   Severin Carrell, "England Riots: Alex Salmond Angry as 'UK' Headlines Sweep Scotland into Fray," *The Guardian*, August 10, 2011.

2.   More sympathetic representations of the urban working class in Scotland can be found in films like Peter Mullan's *Neds* (2011), the fiction of James Kelman and Agnes Owens, the poetry of Tom Leonard, and, in a different register, the fantastical lifeworlds of Irvine Welsh stories.

3.   Stoked by the BBC Television's *White* season in 2007, much publicized liberal angst was displayed about the effects of an abandoned "white" working class that is supposedly unable to adjust to multicultural Britain and tempted to seek collective refuge in defensive, exclusionary identities of neofascists like the British National Party and the English Defence League (Rhodes 2011) or in the "British jobs for British workers" wave of illegal solidarity strikes in January 2009.

4.   Derek Alexander, "Decades before *The Scheme* Another Scots Community Suffered the TV Treatment," *Sunday Mail*, June 27, 2010.

5.   The frequency count provides a rough approximation of the pattern of "Ned" usage in the Scottish press. It includes occasional uses of the term as an abbreviation for the names Edward and Netherlands.

6.   Ewan Morrison, "Heard the One about Brad Pitt McKenzie," *Sunday Herald, Spectrum*, November 6, 2005, 32.

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