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*In the Gaps and On the Margins:  
Social Work in England,  
1940 – 1970*

*Thomas Bray*  
Department of History  
University of Warwick

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
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To my parents I owe so much. From my father I take my interest in things and ideas, from my mother my interest in people and relationships, and so their traces are readily discernible in this thesis. Without their love, good humour, and understanding (so, so much understanding), none of this would have been possible.

Over the past four years I have been lucky enough to undertake some...interesting adventures in lands both Mid- and High- with old friends. In some unspeakable way, a certain sojourn around the canals of Warwickshire and a trip to the mysterious depths of Scotland have both proved instrumental in sufficiently distracting my brain for the thesis to actually

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or different form, to this or any other University for a degree.

Signature:



## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the role of social work within post-war England, particularly its place within the welfare state and wider society. The thesis focuses on social work's ambiguous position 'in the gaps' and 'on the margins', where it operated between a variety of spheres, including other professions in the medical and social services, policy-makers, individual clients and communities, and social researchers.

Within this position, social workers were commonly tasked with mediating between these different groups, and helping to interpret the various languages and expectations present in post-war English welfare and society. This meant that social workers aimed to make the provision and consumption of welfare more effective, both through working closely with individuals, families, and communities, and through promoting efficient coordination and cooperation between the welfare services. The thesis discusses the problems which this approach sought to address, and the issues which resulted. The study of social workers offers an insight into the negotiations and compromises implicit in post-war society, and also allows us to consider how issues of social change and the problems which emerged or persisted in post-war England were navigated.

The thesis also considers the relationship of social work with the psychological and social sciences, and seeks to reconsider how concepts from those disciplines were utilised within welfare practice. This includes an emphasis on pragmatic practice, on the discretion of the individual worker, and on the attempts of social workers to generate knowledge about the field of their work and the efficacy of their intervention.

Overall, the thesis shows how closer attention to social work can illuminate some of the tensions which arose in the post-war provision of medical and social services, in the everyday practice of welfare, and as a result of social, cultural, and demographic change.

**Abbreviations**

|      |  |
|------|--|
| ACCO | Association of Child Care Officers                 |
| APSW | Association of Psychiatric Social Workers          |
| ASW  | Association of Social Workers                      |
| BASW | British Association of Social Workers              |
| BBC  | British Broadcasting Corporation                   |
| BFSW | British Federation of Social Workers               |
| COS  | Charity Organisation Society                       |
| FSU  | Family Service Unit                                |
| FWA  | Family Welfare Association                         |
| HMSO | Her/His Majesty's Stationary Office                |
| LMA  | London Metropolitan Archives                       |
| LSE  | London School of Economics and Political Science   |
| MRC  | Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick |
| NHS  | National Health Service                            |

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## Introduction

*All social workers are familiar with that awkward question posed by laymen: “What is ‘social work’? What exactly do you do?” It will be a black day for the profession if they ever have a completely clear and convincing answer ready – David Donnison, writing in social work journal *Case Conference* in 1956.<sup>1</sup>*

In the first decades of the welfare state, social work was an elusive topic. It proved as difficult to define for those who encountered social workers and who were employed in the welfare professions (including social workers themselves) as for the laymen mentioned by Donnison.<sup>2</sup> It still poses a challenge for historians almost seventy years later. As a result of this ambiguity, stereotypes and assumptions prevailed throughout the period: Joan Eyden\*, for example, described in 1949 the lingering perception that social work was ‘the well-meant but misguided efforts of the benevolent amateur interfering in the lives of others’.<sup>3</sup> Eyden’s comments came in an article entitled ‘The Professional Social Worker’; this notion, that the social worker could be counted amongst the various professions within the newly-born welfare state, was a challenging one, and even fifteen years later, social work was still

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<sup>1</sup> David Donnison, ‘The Social Work Profession’, *Case Conference*, 3.3 (July 1956), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 1 contains some biographical information on figures which make frequent appearances in the thesis, one of which is David Donnison. Those who are included in the appendix are denoted with an asterisk upon their first mention in the main body of the text.

<sup>3</sup> Joan L. M. Eyden, ‘The Professional Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 246.

striving for recognition.<sup>4</sup> This struggle for professional status was one which would become the central narrative of British social work's history.<sup>5</sup>

## I Gaps and Margins

This thesis seeks to utilise the ambiguity of social work, and the struggle of social workers for professional recognition, to help reconsider our understanding of post-war England. In particular, it studies how social workers frequently found themselves operating in the gaps between services and on the margins of society.

This was a conscious endeavour, and social workers articulated the particular place of their profession in a number of ways. Throughout the thesis, I refer to this position as 'in the gaps' and 'on the margins', an amalgamation of two quotes: Clare Winnicott's\* statement at a conference in 1963, 'I remember very clearly in my own experience as a social worker this awareness I so often had that I was bridging gaps between people', and the contention at a 1952 conference on ethics that social work, 'by its very nature, lies on the margin, at the rough edges'.<sup>6</sup>

Such was social work's role in the welfare state; even in the multi-professional teams which constituted the social and medical services, social workers were frequently on the periphery.<sup>7</sup> It was also apparent in matters of policy, where

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<sup>4</sup> Eileen Younghusband, 'Looking Backwards and Forwards', *Case Conference*, 12.3 (July 1965), p. 78; Rodney Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945* (Basingstoke and New York, 2005), p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> Vivienne Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives: The Changing Task of Social Work* (Aldershot, 1995), p. 62. It is arguable that social work did not become a proper profession until the Local Authority Act of 1970: Sharon Pickney, 'The Reshaping of Social Work and Social Care', in Gordon Hughes and Gail Lewis (eds), *Unsettling Welfare: The Reconstruction of Social Policy* (London, 1998), p. 255. Nevertheless, I refer to social work before this date as a profession, rather than using clunky terms such as 'occupation' or 'quasi-profession', for reasons of convenience and clarity.

<sup>6</sup> C. Winnicott, 'Face to Face with Children', in Joan F. S. King (ed.), *New Thinking for Changing Needs* (London, 1963), p. 35; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work* (Wallington, 1953), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> John Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', *British Journal of Social Work*, 38.4 (2008), p. 668.

social work's presence in the gaps and on the margins proved especially productive in mediating and negotiating social change and policy. The profession also found itself occupying such a position in the application and production of psychological and sociological knowledge. As we shall see, the roles which social work came to adopt, and the accompanying ambiguity described by Donnison, presented both advantages and disadvantages for the profession itself. For the historian, however, it provides a useful vantage point from which to consider the gaps and margins of areas such as post-war English society, the welfare state, and the social sciences. In interrogating the existence of these gaps, and examining the way in which social workers attempted to bridge them (or marshalled voluntary and informal efforts to do so), we can begin to understand some of the fault-lines which appeared, endured, or faded over this period.

Although I am primarily concerned with post-war social work, I begin my analysis in 1940 so that I can consider the effect of wartime disruptions on social workers and their professional context, as well as their role in discussions over plans for post-war reconstruction, which were generally at their peak between 1942 and 1943.<sup>8</sup> I finish in 1970 because of major legislation in this year which dramatically altered the structure and role of the social work services, transforming them from a series of specialist branches into a unified and generic profession. I have also focused on England in this thesis, since this was largely the geographical limits of my source base and because other regions of Britain were sufficiently different to merit their own focused research. Scottish social work, for example, operated within a different, more centralised legislative context, and was generally more

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<sup>8</sup> John Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955: The Dangerous Age of Childhood* (London and Brookfield, VT, 2013), p. 125.

progressive.<sup>9</sup> The main issue, however, was the social contexts in which Welsh and Scottish social work existed, with different religious and cultural influences.

Although they do appear in the story of English social work, attempts to draw inferences about the social structures and post-war changes of Scotland and Wales from the fortunes of their social workers would have failed to do justice to the complexities of these nations. I have been parochial to avoid unnecessary simplification.

## **II                    The State of the Field**

Social work was primarily a welfare profession, and the manner in which social work helps us understand post-war welfare is its most useful contribution to the historiography. The story of twentieth-century Britain was, as James Vernon argues in his overview of social democracy, that of ‘the inexorable rise of the welfare state’,<sup>10</sup> and the study of social work gives us an invaluable insight into the middle act of that story. Many aspects of social work emerged from its therapeutic role, and we cannot understand social workers’ relationship with policy-makers, the social sciences, social research, or other professionals without acknowledging their role as welfare workers. For that reason, this thesis is rooted in an interest in social work as a welfare profession which operated in the gaps and the margins of other, often more established services. It was from this that the political, social scientific, and collaborative aspects of social work were derived.

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<sup>9</sup> Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1* (London, 1978), pp. 250-255.

<sup>10</sup> James Vernon, ‘The Local, the Imperial and the Global: Repositioning Twentieth-century Britain and the Brief Life of its Social Democracy’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 21.3 (2010), p. 416.

This thesis sets out to discuss how social work can help us to reconsider and complicate the story of post-war England. All the areas on which it focuses, apart from perhaps that of teamwork, enjoy healthy historiographies, although it is worth noting that it was only at the end of the last century that work on the post-war period began in earnest.<sup>11</sup> Some of these, such as the welfare state, are the product of decades of work; others, such as social research, have only recently sprung to life. These historiographies are all elucidated in their respective chapters. Nevertheless, there are some bodies of existing work which inform the entire thesis, and which are worth addressing before we join our social worker subjects in the gaps and the margins of post-war society.

## **II.i The Post-War Settlements**

The first historiographical tradition integral to this thesis is the notion of the ‘post-war settlements’.<sup>12</sup> Paul Addison, who popularised (but did not invent) the term in his text, *The Road to 1945*,<sup>13</sup> portrays the post-war decades as characterised by general agreement over principles such as Keynesian economics and the welfare state. This consensus survived until the crises of the 1970s and the election of Margaret Thatcher.<sup>14</sup> Since its publication in 1975, many words have been spent

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<sup>11</sup> Becky Conekin *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, in Becky Conekin *et al.* (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London, 1999), pp. 5-7.

<sup>12</sup> For good over-views of this historiography, see: Gordon Hughes, ‘“Picking over the Remains”: the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK’, in Gordon Hughes and Gail Lewis (eds), *Unsettling Welfare: The Reconstruction of Social Policy* (London, 1998), pp. 4-10; Richard Toye, ‘From ‘Consensus’ to ‘Common Ground’: The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and its Collapse’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48.1 (2013), pp. 4-8; Mathew Thomson, *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 10-12; Peter Kerr, *Postwar British Politics: From Consensus to Conflict* (London and New York, 2001), pp. 2-6.

<sup>13</sup> Toye, ‘From ‘Consensus’ to ‘Common Ground’: The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and its Collapse’, p. 5; Harriet Jones, ‘Introduction’, in Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah (eds), *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-64* (Basingstoke and New York, 1996), p. xiii.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (London, 1975).



challenging this position,<sup>15</sup> including ardent critiques of the Beveridge Report,<sup>16</sup> published in 1942 and often considered, perhaps erroneously, a blue-print for the welfare state.<sup>17</sup> Some commentators have, amidst critiques of the notion of consensus, offered additional settlements of their own with which to explain post-war society and politics.<sup>18</sup> Not only is there debate over what these settlements might have entailed, but there is also no overall agreement on what entails a 'settlement'. For Mathew Thomson, the term suggests a clear transformation in the aftermath of the war, with a consensus across the political spectrum on the desired ends and necessary means.<sup>19</sup> Some accounts start from the premise that these settlements revolved around new relationships between the state, the economy, civil society, and the public sphere,<sup>20</sup> while others view them as compromises, often between different class interests, including some groups and excluding others.<sup>21</sup>

All of these descriptions are valuable in considering post-war Britain, and even if terms like 'consensus' and 'settlement' have proved to be illusive,

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<sup>15</sup> See especially: Harriet Jones and Michael Kandiah (eds), *The Myth of Consensus: New Views on British History, 1945-64* (Basingstoke and New York, 1996). The ideological uses of the notion of 'consensus' have been an enduring focus. See: Ben Pimlott, 'The Myth of Consensus', in Lesley M. Smith (ed.), *The Making of Britain: Echoes of Greatness* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 129-142; Toye, 'From 'Consensus' to 'Common Ground': The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and its Collapse', pp. 3-23.

<sup>16</sup> The classic text here is: Fiona Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction. Issues of Race, Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. pp. 161-165. On the tendency for Beveridge bashing, see: Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State. A History of Social Policy since the Industrial Revolution: Fourth Edition* (Basingstoke and New York, 2009), p. 257.

<sup>17</sup> Rodney Lowe, 'Postwar Welfare', in Paul Johnson (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change* (London, 1994), p. 357.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example: John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare* (London, 1997); Thomson, *Lost Freedom*.

<sup>19</sup> Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 10-11. See also: Harris, 'Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945-2001', p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare* (London, 1997), pp. 1-8; Colin Hay, *Re-stating Social and Political Change* (Buckingham, 1996), p. 44, quoted in: Clarke and Newman, *The Managerial State*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties* (London, 2006), p. 24; Walter Lorenz, 'Decentralisation and Social Services in England', *Social Work & Society*, 3.2 (2005), pp. 201-202; Hughes, 'Picking over the Remains': the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK', pp. 4-7; Fred Powell, *The Politics of Social Work* (London, 2001), p. 5; Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*, pp. xiii-xiv, 161-162.

occasionally misleading concepts, I am ultimately in agreement with Richard Toye that they are ‘simply too convenient a shorthand to be dispensed with entirely’.<sup>22</sup> Although I have found little analytic use for the notion of consensus, especially since social work offers a way to examine many of the debates about the principles and practice of welfare in this period, the idea of post-war settlement appears throughout this thesis. I am sympathetic to the notion that there did exist certain expectations about the shape which post-war society could and should take, what Fiona Williams has labelled ‘central organizing principles’,<sup>23</sup> and that there was the attempt to express these through such institutions as the welfare state.

However, such settlements were by no means comprehensive arrangements, with the result that social work came to occupy the gaps and the margins. I invoke the spectre of the post-war settlement with the explicit aim of showing where it fell short or came undone. One of the thorniest issues within this is how people learnt to live in and utilise a welfare state. We do not as yet have a compelling explanation of how the various post-war settlements did and did not join up, nor is it apparent how individuals in the social and medical services negotiated the new welfare structures.<sup>24</sup> Howard Glennerster, for example, has suggested that post-war society was founded upon particular compromises and understandings which, he has argued, were comprehensible to those at the time even if they seem unintelligible to us

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<sup>22</sup> Toye, ‘From ‘Consensus’ to ‘Common Ground’: The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and its Collapse’, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*, p. xiii.

<sup>24</sup> There have been plenty of accounts of how groups interacted with government during the foundation of the welfare state, and the negotiations between government and the medical establishment their role in the NHS has become a well-worn part of the welfare story. For one example, see: Nicholas Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (London, 1995), pp. 121-126.

today.<sup>25</sup> It is such compromises, but perhaps moreover the tensions which could result, which form a particular interest of this thesis, for they produced spaces in which social work could operate.

## II.ii The Historiography of Social Work

With regards to the historiography of social work itself, it is difficult to quibble with John Stewart's suggestion that the profession 'has until recently been the subject of historical neglect'.<sup>26</sup> Much has been done to uncover the roots and the development of social work, especially amongst social workers themselves, but the broader picture is frequently absent.<sup>27</sup> The existing scholarship is dominated by two principal concerns: the professionalisation of social work,<sup>28</sup> and the role of social work within the forces of surveillance and social control deployed by the modern state.<sup>29</sup> Some work has connected these two areas, showing how social work's adoption of psychological and psychiatric concepts helped it to both pathologise and

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<sup>25</sup> Howard Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945: Second Edition* (Oxford and Malden, MA, 2000), p. 2. On moving beyond simplistic notions of consensus, see: Jones, 'Introduction', pp. xiii-xvii; Conekin *et al.*, 'Introduction', pp. 5-7.

<sup>26</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 50.

<sup>27</sup> For a brief but insightful overview of the social work historiography, see: Selina Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', *The English Historical Review*, 129.537 (April 2014), pp. 362-364, 386-387.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example: John Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context* (Maidenhead, 2011); Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*; Eileen Youngusband, *The Newest Profession: A Short History of Social Work* (Sutton, 1981); Youngusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1*; Philip Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain* (London and Boston, 1973). I should mention that these are excellent accounts of social work, but they are focused on the profession over its context.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example: Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (Baltimore, MD, 1997); Chris Jones and Tony Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State* (London and New York, 1999); Chris Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class* (London and Basingstoke, 1983). Although they did not deal with post-war social work, Foucault, Marx, and their interlocutors are key here. See particularly: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977); Michel Foucault, 'The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth-Century, in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), pp. 273-290.

professionalise.<sup>30</sup> Scholarship investigating the advent of disciplines such as psychology has proved particularly pertinent to social work,<sup>31</sup> and has helped to move the discussion beyond simplistic discussions of social control which fail to reflect the complexities of welfare work or the negotiations which took place between professionals and social work clients.<sup>32</sup> Recent work has also suggested that the care and control implicit with welfare theory and practice may have been intertwined rather than opposed, an argument which proves productive when applied to social work.<sup>33</sup>

I extend the discussion of social work's role with regards to welfare and social issues in Chapter 2, and Chapter 3 holds further analysis of social work and the psychological sciences. Throughout the thesis, however, I have tried to avoid reiterating stories of social work's professionalisation, but I have nevertheless found it useful to draw upon some exemplary conceptual work which has helped me to problematise its particular professional status. Key among these is Harold Perkin's *The Rise of Professional Society*, which suggests that social workers deployed many of the same techniques as other professions in their attempts to gain legitimacy, and that their particular path to professional status is unexceptional.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*; Roger Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', in John Clarke (ed.), *A Crisis in Care? Challenges to Social Work* (London, 1993), pp. 23-46.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example: Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self* (London and New York, 1990); Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006); Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*.

<sup>32</sup> The explanatory limitations of 'social control' are briefly but insightfully discussed in: Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832 – 1982* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 16, 87. More relevant to this thesis are attempts to analyse 'social control' as a contested concept and a practice of negotiation, such as can be found in: Martin Innes, *Understanding Social Control: Deviance, Crime and Social Order* (Maidenhead, 2003), esp. pp. 1-49; Stanley Cohen, *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment and Classification* (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example: Louise A. Jackson, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969', *The Historical Journal*, 46.3 (2003), pp. 623-648; Abigail Wills, 'Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950–1970', *Past and Present*, 187.1 (2005), pp. 157-185.

<sup>34</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (London and New York, 1989).

Particularly relevant to social work, however, are Chris Nottingham's discussion of 'insecure professionals' and Michael Lipsky's book *Street-Level Bureaucracy*.<sup>35</sup> The former examines those professions, such as teachers, nurses, and social workers, who have been neglected by an historiography focused on elite 'established professions' and the working-class.<sup>36</sup> It is particularly useful for interrogating the roles which 'insecure professionals' found for themselves within existing structures, and the ways in which these proved both productive and limiting. Lipsky's focus, meanwhile, is those workers who act as representatives for public agencies and who are tasked with interpreting and applying policy in the field. The scope of this work is extensive, with many insights applicable beyond the North America of the 1970s and 1980s which Lipsky discusses. In particular, he examines the 'discretion' which street-level bureaucrats have in their work,<sup>37</sup> and it is this aspect of the book which is most prevalent in the thesis to follow.<sup>38</sup> Considering discretion is also useful for considering the behaviour and motivations of welfare professionals, an area which has received increasing attention over the past decade.<sup>39</sup>

I have also found it necessary to engage with the emotions experienced by workers and clients, both implicit and explicit, during the everyday practice of welfare work. In this endeavour, I have found the nascent historiographical interest

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<sup>35</sup> Chris Nottingham, 'The Rise of the Insecure Professionals', *International Review of Social History*, 52.3 (2007), pp. 445-475. Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (New York, 2010, first published 1980).

<sup>36</sup> Nottingham, 'The Rise of the Insecure Professionals', p. 446.

<sup>37</sup> Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 11-14.

<sup>38</sup> Lipsky's work has already been applied to present-day social work concerns in: Tony Evans and John Harris, 'Street-Level Bureaucracy, Social Work and the (Exaggerated) Death of Discretion', *British Journal of Social Work*, 34.6 (September 2004), pp. 871-895. I am grateful to John Harris for insisting that I look at Lipsky's work seriously.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example: Alan Deacon, 'Different Interpretations of Agency within Welfare Debates', *Social Policy and Society*, 3.4 (2004), pp. 447-455; Julian Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy: Of Knights and Knaves, Pawns and Queens* (Oxford, 2003); John Welshman, 'The Unknown Titmuss', *Journal of Social Policy*, 33.2 (2004), pp 225-226; John Welshman, 'Knights, knaves, pawns and queens: attitudes to behaviour in postwar Britain', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 61.2 (2007), pp. 95-97.

in the ‘history of emotions’, with its focus on scientific conceptions of emotions, on the issues of ‘affect’ and response, and the attempt to show the historical construction (or universality) of emotions, to be of limited utility.<sup>40</sup> Since I have had to consider not only the emotions experienced by those involved in welfare, but also the ways in which these were managed, the literature on ‘emotional labour’ which has come out of the social sciences has proved particularly valuable.

The concept of emotional labour was first expounded by Arlie Russell Hochschild, in her 1983 text, *The Managed Heart*, who defines it as the requirement that one ‘induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others’.<sup>41</sup> From this rather dry premise, Hochschild offers a compelling analysis of those professions where ‘the *emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself*’.<sup>42</sup> She focuses on air-stewardesses and debt collectors, which she sees as the ‘two extremes of occupational demand on feeling’, respectively inflating and deflating the customer’s own sense of status.<sup>43</sup> The practice of social work in this period required both approaches to the emotions of clients and colleagues. Hochschild herself argues that the main issue facing social workers as emotional labourers is that they are expected to ‘feel concern, to empathize, and yet to avoid “too much” liking or disliking.’<sup>44</sup> Emotional detachment, even while one is utilising, even manipulating the emotions of others, is thus a key part of the social worker’s role *as a professional*.

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<sup>40</sup> See especially: Keith Oatley, *Emotions: A Brief History* (Malden, MA, 2004); William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2011); Barbara H. Rosenwein, ‘Worrying About Emotions in History’, *American Historical Review*, 107.3 (2002), pp 821-845. The current status of debates over the history of emotions is well described in: Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley, 2012, first published 1983), p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 5. Italics in the original.

<sup>43</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 150.

The concept of emotional labour has been utilised in the study of a number of the ‘caring’ professions, such as nursing and social work.<sup>45</sup> These accounts rarely consider emotional labour as a historical phenomenon, and, as I have already argued, work on the history of emotions does not consider emotional labour as an area of interest.<sup>46</sup> In fact, greater attention to the interface between these two literatures would be beneficial to historians of welfare and medicine.<sup>47</sup> In this thesis, I use the term ‘emotional labour’ to refer to two issues: first, the requirement that social workers manage and navigate both the emotions of others and their own emotional responses; and secondly, the strain experienced by welfare professionals in conducting themselves in a manner appropriate to their role. In this sense, I wish to examine both how social workers coped with emotions and how they utilised them as part of their everyday practice.

Such considerations are part of a broader interest in the issues which could emerge in welfare practice in post-war England, particularly the everyday negotiation which occurred between different professions, and between professionals

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<sup>45</sup> See for example: Benjamin Gray, *Face to Face with Emotions in Health and Social Care* (New York, 2012); Pam Smith, *The Emotional Labour of Nursing: Its Impact on Interpersonal Relations, Management, and the Educational Environment in Nursing* (Basingstoke, 1992). A good overview of this work, which includes a detailed discussion of Hochschild’s influence, can be found in: Catherine Theodosius, *Emotional Labour in Health Care: The Unmanaged Heart of Nursing* (Abingdon and New York, 2008), esp. pp. 11-48. Another approach to these issues is via the ‘myth of altruism’, which deals with the motives of welfare and health professionals. See: Henry Lawton, ‘The Myth of Altruism: A Psychohistory of Public Agency Social Work’, *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 9.3 (1982), pp. 265-308; Joy Bray, ‘Psychiatric nursing and the myth of altruism’, in Philip J. Barker and Ben Davidson (eds), *Psychiatric Nursing and Ethical Strife* (London, 1998), pp. 95-114; I.E.P. Menzies, *The Functioning of Social Systems as a Defence Against Anxiety* (London, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> There is, however, some very interesting consideration of the work and the psychological processes of the historian in dealing with the emotions of the past. See, for example: Michael Roper, ‘The Unconscious Work of History’, *Cultural and Social History*, 11.2 (2014), pp. 169-193; Barbara Taylor, ‘Introduction: How Far, How Near. Distance and Proximity in the Historical Imagination’, *History Workshop Journal*, 57.1 (2004), pp. 117-122.

<sup>47</sup> Two very different example of work which attempts to do this, with generally positive results, are: Monique Sheer, ‘Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion’, *History and Theory*, 51.2 (2012), pp. 193-220; Katherine Holden, *Nanny Knows Best: The History of the British Nanny* (Stroud, 2013).

and clients. There is a strong literature utilising social work as a way to examine such discussions, with the voluntary sector particularly well-represented.<sup>48</sup> More recent studies have offered new approaches to the history of social work. The most innovative of these has been Mark Peel's *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, which, aside from taking a highly-imaginative and constructive approach to case files, is the best analysis we have thus far of the complex dynamics involved in encounters between social workers and their clients.<sup>49</sup> With regards to the historiography of social work, both Carolyn Taylor and David Burnham have attempted to clear away some persistent and counterproductive orthodoxies, and have highlighted the need to move beyond elite accounts and familiar sources.<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere, Selina Todd has done sound work in considering how social work can help us untangle the relationship between discourse and experience, and between the generation and the application of policy, in the post-war period.<sup>51</sup>

Social work has begun to offer a way to examine the contradictions and complexities of everyday policy and practice within the welfare state and post-war society. Considerations of the everyday practice of social work and the discretion of the individual worker help us to appreciate the 'messiness' of welfare work and of the post-war settlements. It also allows us to trace the complexities of the changing

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<sup>48</sup> See, for example: Jane Lewis, 'Women, social work and social welfare in twentieth-century Britain: from (unpaid) influence to (paid) oblivion?', in Martin Daunt (ed.), *Charity, Self-Interest and Welfare in the English Past* (London, 1997), pp. 203-223; John Welshman, 'The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the 'Problem Family', 1940-1970', *British Journal of Social Work*, 29.3 (April 1999), pp. 457-476; Pat Starkey, 'Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945', in Anne Borsay and Peter Shapely (eds), *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: The Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c.1550-1950* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2007), pp. 245-261.

<sup>49</sup> Mark Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse: Social Work and the Story of Poverty in America, Australia, and Britain* (Chicago and London, 2012).

<sup>50</sup> David Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', *British Journal of Social Work*, 41.1 (2011), pp. 5-21; Carolyn Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', *British Journal of Social Work*, 38.4 (2008), pp. 680-696, esp. pp. 681-682.

<sup>51</sup> Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', pp. 362-387.



relationship between individual, state, and society in this period, since social workers operated on the front-line of welfare, where many of these issues were negotiated.<sup>52</sup>

In this regard, it is again the position of social workers (both physically and metaphorically) which gives them their analytic utility in rethinking post-war England.

### III A Brief History of Social Work

In order to comprehend social work's role in post-war England, it is worth considering its previous characteristics. We should note, however, that social work grew out of a number of different developments and a variety of organisations. This means that, as Carolyn Taylor has argued, attempts to locate the 'origins' of social work are ultimately fruitless.<sup>53</sup> Yet there are elements of the profession's fragmented history which do help us to understand the roles which it played in post-war society and in the welfare state, not least the development of social work's particular values, concerns, and methods.<sup>54</sup> Questions over how much attention we should give social work's past in assessing its present (and its future) have multiplied in recent years, and the sole answers which seem to have emerged are that it is a history which is sometimes uncomfortable and consistently patchy. There is insufficient space in this thesis to do justice to the insights and arguments which have arisen over the roots of

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<sup>52</sup> Two examples of existing accounts which consider this changing relationship are: W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition. Volume Three: A Much Governed Nation. Part 1* (London and New York, 1987), esp. pp. 2-4, 339-350; José Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950. Vol. 3, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 63-117.

<sup>53</sup> Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', p. 694. See also: Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 153.

<sup>54</sup> See especially: Bill Forsythe and Bill Jordan, 'The Victorian ethical foundations of social work in England: Continuity and contradiction', *British Journal of Social Work*, 32.7 (2002), pp. 847-862; Bill Forsythe, 'Discrimination in Social Work – An Historical Note', *British Journal of Social Work*, 25.1 (1995), pp. 1-16.

social work prior to 1940,<sup>55</sup> so the potted history which follows inevitably involves some simplification of what is a story still only partially illuminated.

Although some histories of social work look as far back as the Elizabethan Poor Laws,<sup>56</sup> the bulk of the profession's development is commonly seen as occurring in the nineteenth century, in response to industrialisation and the new visibility of the urban poor.<sup>57</sup> The Poor Law, which provided minimal subsistence and yet also sought to stigmatise welfare,<sup>58</sup> was the main statutory structure during this period. Its use of large-scale institutions and an emphasis on 'care through control' were both to prove important in the formation of social work's identity.<sup>59</sup> The Poor Law existed alongside a proliferation of charities, philanthropic organisations, and visiting societies,<sup>60</sup> and, with the addition of the networks of

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example: Ray Jones, 'The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment', *British Journal of Social Work*, 44.3 (2014), pp. 485-502; Caroline McGregor, 'History as a Resource for the Future: A response to 'Best of Times, Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment'', *British Journal of Social Work*, 45.5 (2015), pp. 1630-1644; Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', pp. 680-696; Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', pp. 5-21. Uncomfortable elements of social work's history include its history of discrimination, its involvement in eugenics and its complicity in human rights transgressions. See, for example: Karen Healy, 'Remembering, apologies and truth: Challenges for social work today', *Australian Social Work*, 65.3 (2012), pp. 288-294; Margaret F. Gibson, 'Intersecting Deviance: Social Work, Difference and the Legacy of Eugenics', *British Journal of Social Work*, 45.1 (2015), pp. 313-330.

<sup>56</sup> Malcolm Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change* (Basingstoke and New York, 2005), p. 21; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 25, 45; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 15; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 16.

<sup>58</sup> Terry Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work. Learning From The Past* (Bristol and Chicago, 2015), pp. 4-5; Forsythe and Jordan, 'The Victorian ethical foundations of social work in England: Continuity and contradiction', p. 858; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 31; Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', pp. 9-11; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 21-23.

<sup>60</sup> Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford and New York, 2006), p. 65; Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 6; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 26; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 149.

mutual aid and self-help which existed in most working-class neighbourhoods,<sup>61</sup> these two spheres constituted the welfare landscape of the nineteenth-century.<sup>62</sup>

Among these various factors, the Charity Organisation Society (COS), founded in 1869, is often given a central role in social work's history for its focus on investigation, personal contact, and attempts to coordinate existing services,<sup>63</sup> all characteristics which were evident in social work after 1940. The emphasis which the COS and other charities placed on the moral character of welfare applicants is a particularly common theme in the historiography. This revolved around a division between those who were 'deserving' of charitable assistance, and those 'undeserving' cases who demonstrated insufficient desire to reform themselves, and were thus left to the indignities of Poor Law provision.<sup>64</sup> Although such distinctions were more common in the rhetoric of those discussing social work than in the practice of those in the field,<sup>65</sup> it was partially from this personal focus on individual character that twentieth-century social work grew.

Even if the social philosophy of the COS was deeply traditional, it was, as Derek Fraser has argued, pioneering in its methods.<sup>66</sup> The 'scientific charity' of organisations like the COS, which sought to give a basis to the assessments of character integral to its task, was to play a formative role in the development of

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<sup>61</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 89.

<sup>62</sup> Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, pp. 4-6; Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', pp. 7-9; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 31-36.

<sup>63</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 36; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 10, 19; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 6; Forsythe, 'Discrimination in Social Work – An Historical Note', pp. 6, 12; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 155.

<sup>64</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 67; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 36; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 15; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 157; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>65</sup> Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 156-157.

‘casework’. This social work method, with its focus on the individual and their own capacity for self-help, was dominant, in the professional literature at least, for much of the first half of the twentieth century. Initially developed as a particular social work method in the USA at the end of the nineteenth century, the tenets of casework were fortified by the rise of psychological and psychodynamic ideas in the interwar period.<sup>67</sup> The values which lay behind casework, however, were already present in the emphasis of the COS and similar organisations on behavioural change over material aid.<sup>68</sup>

Commentators such as Burnham and Taylor have questioned the attention given to the COS as a major factor in the formation of social work,<sup>69</sup> pointing to its limited influence outside of London, where other organisations, such as the Guilds of Help in Bradford, contributed to the foundations of the profession.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the work of some philanthropists in prisons was laying the foundations for what would eventually become the probation service.<sup>71</sup> Such considerations underline the protean nature of social work’s development and the scattered influences on its identity and values, both of which are important themes in this thesis.

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<sup>67</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 38; Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 76; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 56.

<sup>68</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 25, 52; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 157; Harris, ‘State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past’, p. 677.

<sup>69</sup> The COS changed its name to the Family Welfare Association in 1946, and continued to have an influence on social work theory and practice. See: Jane Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain: The Charity Organisation/Family Welfare Association since 1869* (Aldershot, 1995).

<sup>70</sup> Taylor, ‘Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work’, p. 684; Burnham, ‘Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography’, pp. 7-9; David Burnham, *The Social Worker Speaks: A History of Social Workers through the Twentieth Century* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2012), pp. 34-36. See also: Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> Joan F. S. King, *The Probation and After-Care Service. Third Edition* (London, 1969), pp. 2-3; Forsythe, ‘Discrimination in Social Work – An Historical Note’, pp. 21-23; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 24; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, pp. 21-23.

Of particular note is the advent of the ‘settlement movement’, the first example of which, Toynbee Hall, was founded in the East End of London in 1884.<sup>72</sup> The principle behind settlements was that university students and pupils from public schools could live in deprived areas, and share their education with fellow residents, whilst also learning and publicising the realities of poverty.<sup>73</sup> An interest in environmental factors and a belief that the neighbourhood could, along with the individual and the family, be a useful point of intervention meant that the settlement movement was an important antecedent for post-war community work, which aimed to give local groups the resources and support to identify and address their own issues.<sup>74</sup> Along with casework and group-work, which used social workers to facilitate discussion and cooperation between people with similar needs and issues,<sup>75</sup> community work constitutes one of the three central social work methods discussed in this thesis.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the term ‘social worker’ was entering the parlance of those engaged in voluntary service or concerned with the organisation of relief.<sup>76</sup> In this sense, the phrase was, as Eileen Janes Yeo has argued, the old scientific philanthropy or practical social science ‘decked out in new

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<sup>72</sup> Mike Burt, ‘Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus’, *International Social Work*, 51.6 (2008), p. 751; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 37, 41; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 35, 38-41; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, pp. 11-13; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, pp. 32-34. On settlements established outside of London, see: Dorothy Keeling, *The Crowded Stairs, Recollections of Social Work in Liverpool* (London, 1961); Joyce Rimmer, *Troubles Shared: The Story of a Settlement, 1899-1979* (Birmingham, 1980).

<sup>73</sup> Ann Oakley, ‘The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method’, *Women’s History Review*, 24.2 (2015), p. 161; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 37; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 38.

<sup>74</sup> Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London, 1996), pp. 254-255; Forsythe and Jordan, ‘The Victorian ethical foundations of social work in England: Continuity and contradiction’, p. 860; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 41.

<sup>75</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 45.

<sup>76</sup> Burt, ‘Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus’, p. 752; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 29.

linguistic dress'.<sup>77</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century, 'social work' denoted a range of professions, including some, such as sanitary inspectors, which would not form part of the profession in the post-war period.<sup>78</sup> The fact that state intervention into people's lives was becoming increasingly acceptable meant that the focus of social work was changing, and that professional status was becoming a possibility.<sup>79</sup>

The first half of the twentieth century, and particularly the interwar period, is an area which has been neglected in the history of social work.<sup>80</sup> This is partially, I suspect, because economic and legislative matters became increasingly important for welfare, so that talk of pensions, insurance, and unemployment has taken precedence over the more interpersonal concerns of social work.<sup>81</sup> Yet this was a period when the profession was developing a more distinct identity and when, perhaps most importantly, specialisms were emerging within social work. This began at the end of the previous century, when the first almoners (or medico-social workers) were employed in hospitals. Their task largely consisted of ensuring that those who could pay for treatment did not abuse the services on offer, although they also considered those external factors which could have an effect on the patient's recovery.<sup>82</sup> Crucially, these almoners attempted to distance themselves from their charitable origins,<sup>83</sup> and, at a time when it seemed that staff equipped with expertise in social

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<sup>77</sup> Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, p. 247.

<sup>78</sup> Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', pp. 752-753.

<sup>79</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 54; Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', pp. 757, 759; Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 148; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 188; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, pp. 197-216; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 188-244.

<sup>82</sup> Andrew Sackville, 'Thomas William Cramp, Almoner: The Forgotten Man in a Female Occupation', *British Journal of Social Work*, 19.1 (1989), pp. 95-110; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 41-43; Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', pp. 751, 754; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 39.

<sup>83</sup> Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', p. 751; Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 11.

work would be needed to help operate the structures of the 1911 National Insurance Act,<sup>84</sup> chose to highlight their distinctive role as welfare workers.

The probation service was also working to demonstrate its contribution to welfare in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>85</sup> The Probation of Offenders Act in 1907 laid down the basic principles for a probation service, and the National Association of Probation Officers was formed in 1912.<sup>86</sup> The 1925 Criminal Justice Act made the appointment of probation officers compulsory, although many of these were only occasionally present in court, spending the rest of their time in the community.<sup>87</sup> Here they were mostly engaged in missionary work,<sup>88</sup> although their involvement in matrimonial cases and with families became a distinctive welfare contribution.<sup>89</sup> The increasing influence of psychological concepts on their practice saw probation workers moving further from their religious backgrounds and towards the welfare professions over the 1930s.<sup>90</sup>

During the interwar period, psychiatric social workers too would find an established niche, eventually becoming akin to the elite branch of social work.<sup>91</sup> Although the psychological effects of the First World War and the fate of those discharged from asylums were factors in this development,<sup>92</sup> it was principally their role within the nascent discipline of child guidance which allowed psychiatric social

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<sup>84</sup> Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>86</sup> Maurice Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community. A History of Probation Theory and Practice* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2004), pp. 12, 57; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 1, 8, 10-11, 34; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 28.

<sup>87</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 72-73; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, pp. 43-44, 57; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 74; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>89</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 15, 102-103; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>90</sup> Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, pp. 68-87.

<sup>91</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 54, 60-61.

<sup>92</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 43; Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', p. 758.

workers to gain prestige and influence.<sup>93</sup> As with other branches of social work, concerns over mental hygiene were also influential.<sup>94</sup> British psychiatric social workers travelled to the United States, under the aegis of the Commonwealth Fund, to observe the vanguard in social work theory and practice,<sup>95</sup> and a Diploma in Mental Health was established at the LSE in 1929 to offer recognised training.<sup>96</sup> Although they were still subordinate to the psychologists and psychiatrists who were their colleagues in child guidance clinics,<sup>97</sup> some psychiatric social workers were beginning to conduct their own research into topics of psychological relevance.<sup>98</sup> Social work was moving away from its basis in visiting societies and charities, and beginning to establish a role within medical settings.

In 1930, graduates from the Diploma in Mental Health at the LSE formed the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers.<sup>99</sup> Like the Institute of Almoners, which had its beginnings in 1905, the Association was concerned with protecting professional standards, often by restricting membership to those with recognised training.<sup>100</sup> There was also the attempt to establish a unified professional voice,

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<sup>93</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, pp. 51-57; Burnham, ‘Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography’, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Vicky Long, ‘“Often there is a Good Deal to be Done, but Socially Rather Than Medically”: The Psychiatric Social Worker as Social Therapist, 1945-1970’, *Medical History*, 55 (2011), p. 226; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 51, 54; Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, pp. 28-29, 79-80. More broadly, see: Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex. Psychology, Politics and Society in England, 1869-1939* (London et al., 1985); Mathew Thomson, *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy and Social Policy in Britain, c.1870-1959* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>95</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, pp. 16-17; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 58. Some probation officers also journeyed to the USA to engage with psychological ideas: Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 77.

<sup>96</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 57; Burt, ‘Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus’, p. 758; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 60. There were some criticisms of the course’s length and the balance struck between practical and academic training: Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>97</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 55.

<sup>98</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, pp. 53-54, 57.

<sup>99</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 43.

<sup>100</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 57, 61; Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 2* (London, 1978), p. 63.



which eventually led to the formation of the British Federation of Social Workers in 1936.<sup>101</sup> The BFSW brought together nine different occupational groups, all engaged in some form of social work,<sup>102</sup> in order to coordinate their various services.<sup>103</sup> The BFSW changed its name to the Association of Social Workers in 1951, and the ASW was then one of the founding bodies for the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) in 1970.<sup>104</sup>

The formal professionalisation of social work was disrupted by the outbreak of war, but this did not mean that social workers were suddenly without a role. As we shall see in the course of the thesis, social workers were able to contribute in a number of ways during hostilities, with issues around the evacuation and placement of children particularly suited to their skills.<sup>105</sup> By the end of the interwar period, there was disenchantment with the existing welfare system, the inadequacies of

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<sup>101</sup> Many histories of social work state that the BFSW was founded in 1935, see: Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 11; Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', p. 758. While it is clear that many of the discussions about forming a unified group for social workers took place in this year, the BFSW themselves reported that they were founded in 1936, see: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/10, Constitution and foundation, BFSW circular about 'Referendum on Constitution'.

<sup>102</sup> The nine occupations were: Conference of Children's Care Committee Organisers (London County Council); Association of Children's Moral Welfare Workers; College of Nursing (Public Health Section); Association of Mental Health Workers; Association of Metropolitan Relieving Officers; Association of Psychiatric Social Workers; National Association of Probation Officers; Standing Conference of Metropolitan Boroughs' Tuberculosis Care Committees; Women Public Health Officers' Association. This list is taken from: Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', p. 759. Note particularly the absence of the almoners, who were nervous about uniting with other social workers lest it disrupt their relationship with their medical colleagues: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/20, Constitution and foundation, Correspondence, Letter from Lady Almoner to Mrs Crosthwaite, April 4th 1940.

<sup>103</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/8, Constitution and foundation, First Report – to 31st December, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>104</sup> R. W. Stacey and Arthur T. Collis (ed.), *British Association of Social Workers Catalogue & Guide to the Archives of the Predecessor Organisations 1890-1970* (Birmingham, 1987); Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 2, pp. 165-170.

<sup>105</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 108; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 84, 87; Doris M. Thorton, 'Hospital Social Work in Wartime', in Joan Baraclough *et al.* (eds), *One Hundred Years of Health-Related Social Work, 1895 - 1995. Then...Now...Onwards* (Birmingham, 1996), p. 120; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 - 1955*, pp. 110, 114-115.

which had been exposed in the face of widespread unemployment over the 1930s.<sup>106</sup>

Social workers were confident that they would have a central role in the landscape of post-war welfare, especially after the Beveridge Report of 1942 gave some indication of how this might look.<sup>107</sup>

In the event, the Labour Party did pass a series of legislative measures related to social policy after they were elected in July 1945, but this gave only limited attention to social work.<sup>108</sup> It was not until the Children's Act of 1948, which made it compulsory for counties and county boroughs to establish children's committees responsible for the welfare of young people, that social work received specific legislative recognition outside of a medical setting.<sup>109</sup> Although this has occasionally been portrayed as a small revolution for social work, the majority of staff in the new departments were, as Burnham reminds us, 'old hands, most with old ideas and methods'.<sup>110</sup> John Harris, considering social work's absence from the initial programme of welfare legislation, as well as the expectation that the profession would adapt itself to the new structures and address the gaps left in provision,<sup>111</sup> has concluded that 'social work emerged as an afterthought'.<sup>112</sup> The fact that social work

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<sup>106</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 667; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 47; Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 202; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, esp. pp. 23-45; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 49.

<sup>108</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', pp. 667-668.

<sup>109</sup> Youngusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 1, pp. 24, 36; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 17; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>110</sup> Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 12.

<sup>111</sup> Kathleen Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830-1990* (London, 1991), p. 162; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 366; Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties*, p. 23.

<sup>112</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 668. See also: Noel Parry and José Parry, 'Social work, professionalism and the state', in Noel Parry *et al* (eds), *Social Work, Welfare and the State* (London, 1979), p. 38.

was not seen as one of the core services at the heart of the welfare state, but yet was heavily involved in its practice, is another important theme in this thesis.

The story of social work in the post-war period is examined in detail in the following chapters, but there are some major events beyond the arrival of the welfare state which should be illuminated from the outset. Firstly, there was much attention given to matters of training, manpower, and professional status in social work over the period, which resulted in a number of investigations into the state of the profession. In 1955, a Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services was formed to consider the existing need for social work in a changing population, which led to the publication of the Younghusband Report (named after its chair, Eileen Younghusband\*) in 1959.<sup>113</sup> The recommendations contained in the Report led to increasing numbers of social workers and higher standards of training,<sup>114</sup> but demand continued to outstrip supply.<sup>115</sup>

Questions over the suitability of social work for the needs of society persisted, however, and in 1965, a Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services, tasked with examining the existing organisation of social work services, was formed. From this came the Seebohm Report (again, named for

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<sup>113</sup> *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services* (London, 1959); Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 60-62. Younghusband also conducted investigations into social work on behalf of the Carnegie Trust in 1947 and 1951, although the 1959 Report was the most influential: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1*, p. 34.

<sup>114</sup> The recommendations of the Younghusband Report were implemented in the Health Visitors' and Social Workers' Training Act of 1962, which, for some reason, makes scant appearance in the primary and secondary literature. See: Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 164.

<sup>115</sup> Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 163-164, 172; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 17.

the Committee's chair, Frederic Seebohm) in 1968.<sup>116</sup> The main suggestion of the Report, a shift towards generic social work to improve efficiency, was included in the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act, with the result that the specialist branches of the profession were dissolved and replaced by unified social services departments.<sup>117</sup> These events in 1948, 1959, and 1968 are those which feature (with good reason) prominently in histories of the profession, and they are important reference points throughout the thesis. Other legislation which affected social work and general trends, such as the re-emergence of community and group-work alongside casework and the shift towards prevention, shall also be discussed.

#### **IV                      Defining Social Work**

As might be suggested by this short history, social work has proved persistently hard to pin down as a concept, and its role within the welfare state and society has often been, for better and worse, an ambiguous one. This goes some way to explaining why the profession has not received greater coverage from historians, sociologists, and others outside academic social work departments (many of which, I should add, are diminishing or disappearing altogether).<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Timmins excused his poor coverage of social work in his biography of the welfare state by stating that it was 'one of those subjects whereby if you scratch too far below the surface you fall into

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<sup>116</sup> *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cm. 3703 (London, 1968). On Seebohm, see also Chapter 5, section VII of this thesis.

<sup>117</sup> Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 172-174; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 1, pp. 233-238; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>118</sup> During my PhD, the Social Work Department at the University of Warwick was closed down, and the MA in Social Work moved to the Centre for Lifelong Learning. It remains to be seen if this will lead those working or formerly working in Social Work Departments to either look closer at or turn their backs on the history of the profession. For a recent debate on the future of social work historiography within the social worker community, see: Jones, 'The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment'; McGregor, 'History as a Resource for the Future: A response to 'Best of Times, Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment'', pp. 1630-1644.

an extremely large hole.’<sup>119</sup> This is a sentiment with which I agree, but few holes are quite as interesting, *pace* Peter Baldwin.<sup>120</sup> Much of Chapter 1 attends to the issue of how the social worker’s role was conceptualised, but a short discussion of the shifting definitions of social work is nevertheless useful as a framework for further discussion.

Unsurprisingly, definitions of what counted as ‘social work’, or who counted as a ‘social worker’ were liable to change. Throughout the period, the boundaries of the profession were confusingly porous, although it does seem that the notion of the social worker as a distinct entity seemed to appear during the 1940s,<sup>121</sup> and had become a more common designation than specialist titles by the mid-1960s,<sup>122</sup> although it was not until the reorganisation of the social services at the end of the 1960s that the term had any official currency.<sup>123</sup> Even by the end of the period, there were some who identified more with their specialist titles than with the ‘social worker’ label, or who faced incomprehension when presenting themselves as part of the social work profession.<sup>124</sup> Although the membership of the non-specialist Association of Social Workers grew throughout the period, so did the specialist

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<sup>119</sup> Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State*, p. 7.

<sup>120</sup> Peter Baldwin, ‘The Welfare State for Historians. A Review Article’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34.4 (1992), p. 695. The quote to which I am particularly referring is: ‘It takes a yardstick, not the pathologist’s caliper, to measure the thickness of the glaze that commonly descends over historians’ eyes when the topic of the welfare state is broached.’ It is perhaps time to stop treating the history of welfare as if it is a topic we study only with reluctance. It’s important.

<sup>121</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, pp. 71-72; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, p. 35; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 10.

<sup>122</sup> National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker* (London, 1970, first published 1964), p. 103; B. Butler (ed.), ‘The Group Discussions’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Administration* (London, 1966), p. 15; M. Penelope Hall and Ismene V. Howes, *The Church in Social Work. A Study of Moral Welfare Work undertaken by the Church of England* (London, 1965), p. 244.

<sup>123</sup> Pickney, ‘The Reshaping of Social Work and Social Care’, p. 255; A. H. Halsey, ‘The Idea of Welfare and the Justification For It’, *New Thinking About Welfare – Values and Priorities* (Wallington, 1969), p. 29.

<sup>124</sup> See, for example: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 2, p. 139; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 20; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 26.

Associations, albeit all at different rates.<sup>125</sup> The situation was complicated further by a distinction between social workers and the larger group of those whose professional roles contained some social work,<sup>126</sup> although sometimes social workers were defined simply as those who treated the whole person rather than just the disease.<sup>127</sup>

As much of the thesis will demonstrate, this ambiguity was not without its uses, and the fact that the exact nature of the profession was consistently under negotiation throughout the period meant that social workers could enjoy some flexibility as to their role.<sup>128</sup> Malcolm Payne has suggested that social work was ultimately defined largely by what it was not, which left much scope. It is therefore important to note that some of the characters who appear in this thesis as social workers would not necessarily have defined themselves as such, and that I have excluded some people, such as prison warders, who would still at the end of my period counted themselves amongst the ranks of the profession.<sup>129</sup> If this thesis lacks a rigid definition of ‘social work’ or ‘social worker’, then this is because such a statement would be artificial, and would undermine the central argument about the position of social workers on the gaps and in the margins, enabling the actions and

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<sup>125</sup> Andrew Sackville, ‘The Role and Influence of Professional Associations in the Development of Social Work as an Occupation 1900-1990’ (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1990), pp. 113, 116, 124-125. Compare the membership of the Association of Child Care Officers, a new social work role, which grew from 241 members in 1950 to 2968 in 1969, with the membership of the Institute of Almoners, the oldest social work role, which grew from 1391 in 1950 to about 2000 in 1970.

<sup>126</sup> See, for example: Anthony Forder, ‘Introduction’, in Anthony Forder (ed.), *Penelope Hall’s Social Services of England and Wales* (London, 1969), p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 23.

<sup>128</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 119. This is not to say that definitions did not appear, for official reports often necessitated them: see, for example: *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services*, para. 15. Even then, the Report states that other descriptions, either from the authors or from those who gave evidence, will appear throughout.

<sup>129</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 7.

interactions of other groups. I should make clear, however, that I have focused on the four strands of social work which were most prominent over the period, namely, child care, probation, almoning, and psychiatric social work.

Before we move on, it is worth returning to the definitions of the three major social work methods, namely, casework, group-work, and community work. There was some significant overlap between these three methods, which is explored in Chapter 3. Broadly speaking, however, group-work was the attempt to bring together people with similar problems in order to discuss their issues, with the social worker often acting as a facilitator. These groups could also be comprised of people from the same geographical area, and in that regard the method had much in common with community work, which sought to help communities to identify local problems and, with the help of social workers, to participate in their solution. Community work can thus be read as action *by* the community and *for* the community. Social workers, who would ideally be based within the communities with whom they were working, commonly attempted to be non-directive in their community work, but, as can be seen in section II of Chapter 2, this was not always the case.

Both group-work and community work involved a certain amount of interpersonal communication, and in this way they interacted with casework. The term ‘casework’ is particularly tricky, since it denoted both an approach to social problems (that is, dealing with them on an individual, case-by-case basis) and the social work method of using psychological and psychoanalytic ideas to construct a better understanding of welfare clients, their needs, and their family contexts. Casework played a significant role in the professional image of social work, to the extent that ‘casework’ and ‘caseworker’ were frequently used as synonyms for ‘social work’ and ‘social worker’. It can sometimes be difficult to ascertain from

sources which mention ‘casework’ whether it denoted that the social worker’s understanding of the issues and subsequent actions were informed by concepts from the psychological sciences (sometimes labelled as ‘dynamic casework’), or whether they simply judged that the particular incident required a focus on the individual ‘case’. This is complicated further by the consistent use of the term ‘family casework’, which, as one might expect, took the view that the social work needed to consider the relationships between different members of the family and between the family and the wider community. Throughout the thesis, I have expanded on the specific meanings of ‘casework’ when necessary, but it is a term only slightly less complicated than ‘social work’ to consistently define.

## V Counting Social Workers

One of the reasons why defining the social worker’s role could prove troublesome was that it was not a particularly large profession, and practitioners were often concentrated in cities rather than evenly distributed.<sup>130</sup> The number of statutory social workers was also small compared to the manpower available in the voluntary sector (one reason why the historiography of social work is dominated by analyses of voluntary work),<sup>131</sup> although we should note that both sectors were miniscule in

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<sup>130</sup> Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 373; David Marsh, *The Welfare State* (London, 1970), p. 24..

<sup>131</sup> Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 364. For examples of histories of voluntary social work, see: Pat Starkey, ‘Can the Piper Call the Tune? Innovation and Experiment with Deprived Families in Britain, 1940-1980s: The Work of Family Service Units’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 32.5 (August 2002), pp. 573-587; Pat Starkey, ‘The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968: The Case of Family Service Units’, *Social History of Medicine*, 11.3 (December 1998), pp. 421-41; Geoffrey Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990* (Oxford, 2002). In addition, a number of official histories of voluntary organisations exist: see, for example: Madeline Roof, *A Hundred Years of Family Welfare: A Study of the Family Welfare Association (formerly Charity Organisation Society), 1869-1969* (London, 1972).



comparison with the vast amount of informal care taking place in this period.<sup>132</sup> This does not, however, invalidate work on those in the statutory sector, especially if we use them as a way to study broader issues of welfare provision, social change, the social sciences, and teamwork within the welfare state. Nevertheless, it is worth attending to the numbers, since this is an important consideration in assessing the influence of social work.<sup>133</sup>

Despite the generally small numbers involved, it is difficult to obtain consistent figures on the number of social workers during this period. Although the reports into social work manpower gave a number of estimates, the lack of a widely-accepted definition means that the statistics are liable to vary according to whether unqualified or partially-qualified staff are included, and whether those working in institutions and in the field are conflated or not. Nevertheless, the Seebohm Report reported that in 1966, the local authorities employed 90,000 people in what the Committee defined as the social services. Of these, a sizeable proportion would have fallen into categories which bordered on social work, such as organisers of home-help, but the Report does mention that 7700 of these were child care officers and health and welfare workers.<sup>134</sup> We can also look at the growth of specific branches of social work, but again, consistent figures can be illusive. The following table shows some figures given for the number of social workers in certain branches of the profession, showing a general expansion over the period under discussion.

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<sup>132</sup> Paul Johnson, 'Introduction: Britain, 1900-1990', in Paul Johnson (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change* (London, 1994), p. 12; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 295-296; Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 291.

<sup>133</sup> On the importance of considering 'how many', see: Mathew Thomson, 'The Psychological Sciences and the 'Scientization' and 'Engineering' of Society in Twentieth-Century Britain', in Kerstin Brückweh *et al.* (eds), *Engineering Society: The Role of the Human and Social Sciences in Modern Societies, 1880-1980* (Basingstoke, 2012), p. 144.

<sup>134</sup> *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cm. 3703, para. 29.

Table 1: The growth of different branches of social work in England and Wales over the course of the post-war period

| Branch of social work                 | 1940s                        | 1950s           | 1960s        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Almoners                              | 921 (1949)                   | 1165 (1956)     | 1684 (1967)  |
| Child care workers (field-staff only) | No consistent data available | 1037 (1959)     | 4014 (1970)  |
| Probation officers                    | 750 (1945)                   | 1656 (1959)*    | 3352 (1970)  |
| Psychiatric social workers            | 239 (1950)                   | 505 (1956/1957) | 857 (1969)** |

Data from: Sackville, 'The Role and Influence of Professional Associations in the Development of Social Work as an Occupation 1900-1990', p. 109; *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services*, para. 808; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1*, pp. 188-189, 288, 296.

\* This figure does not include 80 part-time officers.

\*\* This figure does not include trained psychiatric social workers employed in teaching roles or working for voluntary organisations.

Even if we cannot be precise on all the figures, we can proceed with the rough estimate that there were somewhat less than a thousand social workers at the beginning of the period, and around ten thousand by the end. This relative growth, which went alongside the increasing welfare and social roles which the profession adopted, is a central theme within the thesis.

## VI Sources

Even if their precise role was ambiguous, and even if their numbers were relatively diminutive, social workers did produce a healthy professional literature. The issue I have faced is not one of palaeography, notwithstanding Younghusband's terrible handwriting. Although I had to acquaint myself with some social work jargon, the language was only a minor barrier, and I deliberately steered myself away from a project which would rely on sensitive and inaccessible case reports. Rather, the main

problem which I have faced has been the volume of material, and the challenge of acquainting myself with an extensive professional literature.

I have accessed much of this literature in academic libraries and in the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, which houses the papers of those organisations which would eventually make up BASW. The most important collection for this thesis was the papers of the ASW, especially their publications, although the records kept by the various specialist branches of post-war social work (such as the APSW) have also proved useful. This included a wide range of monographs, as well as the proceedings of conferences, where, as Alan Jacka recalled, the professional identity of social work ‘took shape and acquired meaning.’<sup>135</sup>

The professional literature also included a range of periodicals, of which I have largely restricted myself to the two non-specialist journals. These were *Social Work: A Quarterly Review of Family Casework*, published throughout the period, and *Case Conference, A Professional Journal for the Social Worker and Social Administrator*, established by Kay McDougall\* in 1954. Of the two, *Case Conference* was the more progressive and livelier journal, and was frequently a mouthpiece for McDougall’s emphasis on professionalisation,<sup>136</sup> while *Social Work* maintained greater links with the voluntary sector. *Case Conference* also published figures on its circulation: in 1959, it stood at just over 1100, which increased to 3600

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<sup>135</sup> Alan Jacka, *The ACCO Story: A Personal Account of the History of the Association of Child Care Officers from its Formation in 1948 to 1970, When It Joined with Other Associations Representing Social workers to Form the British Association of Social Workers* (Birmingham, 1974), p. 92.

<sup>136</sup> On *Case Conference*, see: Pauline C. Shapiro, ‘The Caseworker, the Welfare Officer and the Administrator in the Social Services: I’, in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), p. 82; David Donnison, *Case Conference*, 16.12 (April 1970), p. 499; Clare Winnicott, ‘Early One Morning’, *Case Conference*, 16.12 (April 1970), p. 503.

by 1970.<sup>137</sup> Many of these issues went to offices and departments, so the actual number of readers was somewhat higher.<sup>138</sup> We can safely assume that *Social Work* had a similar reach, and it is notable that the two journals occasionally referred to articles from the other. *Case Conference* and *Social Work* are particularly valuable in following discussions as they evolved, and getting a sense of initial reactions to new legislation and social changes.<sup>139</sup> From July 1959, *Case Conference* also began to contain *The A.S.W News*, the association's newsletter, which has been referenced by the relevant month.

Despite the impressive amount of printed material available to historians of social work, it does tend to speak to a narrow range of topics, predominantly matters of training and education, of method and theory, as well as welfare policy and research within social work.<sup>140</sup> This literature was, after all, one aspect of social work's attempts at self-promotion, and its presence in the Modern Records Centre, an archive established to preserve documents pertinent to modern British social, political and economic history, and especially records of trade unions,<sup>141</sup> reflects the professional concerns of BASW. Nevertheless, the collections of the predecessor organisations offers a way of examining the niche which social workers formed for themselves within the welfare state and post-war society: nothing has proved so

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<sup>137</sup> 'Editorial', *Case Conference*, 6.6 (November 1959), pp. 138-139; Rosemary Armitage, 'Case Conference Subscribers', *Case Conference*, 16.12 (April 1970), p. 493.

<sup>138</sup> 'Editorial', *Case Conference*, 1.11 (March 1955), p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> I have used such a high number of articles from these two journals that, to maintain clarity, they are referenced in full throughout the thesis. For reasons of clarity and space, they are not included in the bibliography.

<sup>140</sup> This reflected the fact that academics were more likely to write reflections on social work than those in the field, a situation which irked the editors of the professional journals no end. See, for example: 'Editorial', *Case Conference*, 1.3 (July 1954), p. 3; 'Editorial. Sad News', *Case Conference*, 4.8 (February 1958), pp. 217-218; 'The Association of General & Family Caseworkers', *Social Work*, 15.3 (July 1958), p. 508.

<sup>141</sup> Modern Records Centre, 'Main Archive Collections', Modern Records Centre, 21 August 2015 <[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/holdings/main\\_archives/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/holdings/main_archives/)> (16 September 2015).

useful for determining how social workers set their own agenda and were led by those of others. It is crucial to remember, however, that much of what lies in the pages of conference reports and journals is reflective of an idealised practice. Even when social workers and social work academics dwell on the issues facing social work, there is nevertheless the sense that one is privy to a professional self-justification. Despite the sheer volume of material available, one must on occasion focus on what is missing or remains unspoken, however minor it may seem.

In this endeavour, I have been assisted by the oral testimonies of social workers, many of which were only made fully accessible during the course of my research. As Paul Thompson argued in 2000, oral histories are greatly valuable for our understanding of some hitherto neglected welfare professions, including social work, and also allow us to consider topics, such as ‘the hidden informal culture of work’, which are otherwise inaccessible.<sup>142</sup> I have not conducted my own interviews, but have relied on the results of completed projects. Especially useful has been an oral history project conducted by Alan Cohen, himself a social worker, in the early-1980s, where he interviewed twenty-six social workers who were practising during the war and in the first decades of the welfare state.<sup>143</sup> David Burnham’s history of the profession, *The Social Worker Speaks*, has also provided a useful array of personal accounts, and the fact that he did not employ any of Cohen’s material makes it more useful still for this thesis.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Paul Thompson, ‘Introduction’, in Joanna Bornat *et al.* (eds), *Oral History, Health and Welfare* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 3-4.

<sup>143</sup> The cassette recordings from these interviews are currently housed at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, and have been made accessible with their transcripts online. Helen Ford, ‘Social Workers Speak Out’, Modern Records Centre, 22 December 2014. <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explore/speakingarchives/socialwork/>> (16 September 2015).

<sup>144</sup> David Burnham, *The Social Worker Speaks: A History of Social Workers through the Twentieth Century* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2012).

There has been a great deal of heated discussion amongst historians and social scientists about re-using qualitative data such as oral histories. Some contend that our ignorance of the contextual factors (when compared to the initial researcher) seriously undermines any conclusions we may offer; others, meanwhile, have argued that the data are only constructed within the research project, and that reflective re-use can prove hugely valuable.<sup>145</sup> Perhaps predictably, I lean rather heavily towards the latter view, not least because Alan Cohen, who trained during the period I study, proves just as interesting as his interviewees. Looking at these records proved particularly useful in considering the ways in which social workers went about their everyday practice, and the many informal arrangements which existed alongside the official structures of the welfare state. Many social workers recalled a process whereby they could pick and choose from the methods, theories, and rationales available to them, and could fashion them into their own approaches to clients and fellow professionals.

This alternate view of social work and its context prompted me to look into some of the autobiographical and semi-autobiographical writings available around social work. Some of these, such as Ken Powls' *Many Lives*,<sup>146</sup> were simple memoirs which happened to mention social work, while others, such as Helen Anthony's *Medical Social Work*, were written to educate readers on what a career in the social services might involve.<sup>147</sup> Others read like confessions and attempts to come to terms with the experiences of the field.<sup>148</sup> As with the oral histories and the

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<sup>145</sup> For an overview of this debate, and a new contribution, see: April Gallwey, 'The Rewards of Using Archived Oral Histories in Research: The Case of the Millennium Memory Bank', *Oral History*, 41.1 (2013), pp. 37-50, esp. pp. 37-39, 49.

<sup>146</sup> Ken Powls, *Many Lives: A Memoir* (Howden, 2010).

<sup>147</sup> Helen Anthony, *Medical Social Work: A Career in Hospital and Community* (Reading, 1968).

<sup>148</sup> Here I am thinking particularly of: Ruth Evans, *Happy Families: Recollections of a Career in Social Work* (London, 1977); Bronwen Rees, *No Fixed Abode* (London, 1965).

professional literature, analysis of this literature required some diligence, since considerations of ethics and entertainment meant that details and names were often tweaked. However, as Joan Lawson confessed, the essence of the profession proves almost impossible to conceal, and even John Stroud's fictional account of new child care officer Charles Maule has a clear basis, Rob Hardy has argued, in the author's own experiences.<sup>149</sup> The image we get of social work is much more detailed, nuanced, more colourful, and certainly more useful for the inclusion of oral testimonies and auto-biographical musings alongside the professional literature.

## **VII Social Work, and Issues of Class, Gender, and Race**

Since they frequently operated at an individual level, establishing personal relationships, issues of class, gender, and, to an extent, race carried much significance for social workers. The theory and practice of social work was deeply affected by shifts in the identities not only of welfare clients, but also of the workers themselves. Given the personal nature of these categories, tracing their influence in the everyday experience of welfare work can be something of a quagmire, but there is fortunately a healthy literature to help us identify trends. One of the most useful aspects of this work has been the argument that these three categories were interrelated, that the experience of class, for example, was not untouched by issues of

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<sup>149</sup> Joan Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy. Life as a Child Care Worker in the Social Services* (London, 1973), p. 97. John Stroud, *The Shorn Lamb* (London *et al.*, 1960); Rob Hardy, 'Doing Good and Winning Love: Social Work and Fictional Autobiographies by Charles Dickens and John Stroud', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 35.2 (2005), pp. 207-220. Another of Stroud's books, *Touch and Go*, appears on a handful of occasions in the thesis. I have utilised it much less because it seems much less personal, and because it is disappointingly dull, nothing like the well-observed, irreverent, and occasionally rather racy prose of *The Shorn Lamb*. John Stroud, *Touch and Go* (Bath, 1974).

race and gender.<sup>150</sup> The next section treats these three aspects in turn, but this should not be taken to mean that they were discrete categories.

## VII.i Social Work and Class

The theory and practice of social work, both before and after the advent of the welfare state, were closely interwoven with issues of class. Much of the existing social work and welfare historiography for the post-war period shows a keen awareness of changing class identities, especially the ways in which certain implicit preconceptions about welfare clients survived in the welfare state.<sup>151</sup> The notion, for example, that social workers were well-meaning people, often female, drawn from the upper echelons of society, and that they worked with those members of the working-class who were both poor and deserving of assistance, was an enduring and persistent one.<sup>152</sup> During the immediate post-war period, many of the class connotations of social work were shifting. Social work's inclusion in the welfare state meant that its client base became much more diverse: as almoner Mary

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<sup>150</sup> Stephen Brooke, 'Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s', *Journal of Social History*, 34.4 (2001), pp. 774, 789; Selina Todd, *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010* (London, 2014), pp. 5-7, 189, 291; Roberta Bivins, *Contagious Communities: Medicine, Migration & the NHS in Post War Britain* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 6, 119; Bille Melman, 'Changing the Subject: Women's History and Historiography 1900-2000', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 25-26; Angela Davis, *Modern Motherhood. Women and Family in England, c. 1945-2000* (Manchester and New York, 2012), pp. 1, 43; Beverley Bryan *et al.*, *The Heart of the Race. Black Women's Lives in Britain* (London, 1985), p. 112.

<sup>151</sup> Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, pp. 45, 49; Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945*, p. 6; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 31-37; Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, pp. 36-37; Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', pp. 664-666.

<sup>152</sup> See, for example: Eileen Janes Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London, 1996), pp. 246-276; Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly, "'Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type': Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963", *Twentieth Century British History*, 18.4 (2007), pp. 431, 432-434; Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, *passim*; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*, *passim*; Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*; Peter Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State 1875-1975* (Cambridge *et al.*, 1990). These final two texts are slightly different, insofar as they explore the role of class interests in the formulation of welfare policy.



Sherlock reported, ‘everyone from the consultant’s wives to the tramp’ (*sic*) became a target for social work intervention.<sup>153</sup> This was also, however, a period when social understandings of class and its role within the identity of the British population was undergoing significant changes. Although there has been some detailed analysis of the role of class in the formation of the welfare state,<sup>154</sup> this broader story is, given its importance, underrepresented in the historiography of social work.<sup>155</sup>

In recent decades, especially those at the end of the last century, the explanatory power of class as a concept has been questioned.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, argues David Cannadine, ‘to write class out of British history...is to disregard or misunderstand one of its central themes.’<sup>157</sup> Many scholars, Cannadine included, have noted the power of perceptions of class: how people felt about the hierarchy implied by such a system, and how this was articulated, was as important as how class functioned in practice.<sup>158</sup> The post-war period was one when the negotiation of such issues was particularly complex: for Selina Todd, ‘the ‘people’s peace’ was riven by class.’<sup>159</sup> Working-class people were, as a result of broadening education

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<sup>153</sup> MRC, Papers of Alan Cohen, social worker, Recordings of interviews with social work pioneers, Interview with Mary Sherlock, p. 18. Page number refers to transcript, accessible online at: <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/explorefurther/digital/socialwork/interviews/>>. All references to the oral histories conducted by Alan Cohen are referenced by: MRC, Cohen Interviews, [name of interviewee], [relevant page or pages of the transcript].

<sup>154</sup> See, for example: Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*; John Harris, *The Social Work Business* (London, 2003); David Vincent, *Poor Citizens: The State and the Poor in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London and New York, 1991); Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*; John Clarke and Allan Cochrane, ‘The Social Construction of Social Problems’, in Esther Saraga (ed.), *Embodying the Social: Constructions of Difference* (London, 1998), pp. 3-42.

<sup>155</sup> The clear exception here being: Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, pp. 362-387.

<sup>156</sup> David Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (London, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 23.

<sup>158</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, pp. 22-23, 166-171; Brooke, ‘Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s’, pp. 775-776, 786, 789; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 2, 22-24, 242; José Harris, ‘Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945-2001’, in Kathleen Burk (ed.), *The British Isles since 1945* (Oxford, 2003), p. 99.

<sup>159</sup> Todd, *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class, 1910-2010*, p. 169. See also: Kenneth O. Morgan, *Britain Since 1954: The People’s Peace* (Oxford, 2001), p. 61; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 242.

and welfare, beginning to gain a new sense of self-worth,<sup>160</sup> while their middle-class counterparts were increasingly defining themselves by ‘the ethic of service, of intelligence and expertise in pursuit of humanitarian ends’.<sup>161</sup> In the post-war period, the delineations which structured society became ‘vague, malleable and contradictory’,<sup>162</sup> although many working-class people still treated the upper echelons of society with deference.<sup>163</sup> Such a relationship was justified, the middle-classes believed, by their ‘pursuit of good causes’ and ‘their position as experts’.<sup>164</sup>

A similar balance of change and continuity was happening within social work. The profession was becoming comprised of people from an increasingly diverse array of backgrounds, although the majority were still drawn from the middle-classes.<sup>165</sup> Reg Wright\* reported that when he trained, he was acutely aware that his humble beginnings put him in a minority amongst the students, most of whom, he noted, came with ‘a sense of what I can only call a kind of *noblesse oblige* for which I’ve a very great respect’.<sup>166</sup> It is little surprise, then, that some vestige of the pre-war image of the ‘Lady Bountiful’, of social workers as well-intentioned ladies of leisure remained.<sup>167</sup> When Joan Lawson informed her well-to-do godmother that she intended to become a social worker, she noted that: ‘“Your colleagues will be such ladies and gentlemen!”’<sup>168</sup> Social work was, we should note, becoming part

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<sup>160</sup> Todd, *The People*, pp. 150, 365.

<sup>161</sup> Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 247.

<sup>162</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 150.

<sup>163</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, pp. 157-158.

<sup>164</sup> Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 245, 247.

<sup>165</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 5; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, pp. 7, 29-31.

<sup>166</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 29.

<sup>167</sup> Joan L. M. Eyden, ‘The Professional Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 246; Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method* (Oxford, 2010), p. 170; Roy Bailey and Mike Brake, ‘Introduction: Social Work in the Welfare State’ in Roy Bailey and Mike Brake (eds), *Radical Social Work* (London, 1975), p. 5.

<sup>168</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 27.

of the professional classes in its own right, albeit at a time when this was a status declining in prestige.<sup>169</sup>

One result of this changing class dynamic was that social workers, as part of their increasing focus on relationship difficulties and personal issues as opposed to poverty and material need, portrayed their role as no longer determined by matters of class or income.<sup>170</sup> In practice, however, this largely meant that such considerations moved into the background. As Mark Peel has convincingly argued, even when class did not constitute the central theme of social workers' descriptions of their practice, it is present as a framework for such narratives.<sup>171</sup> José Harris, meanwhile, reminds us that even while traditional class identities are being challenged, the language of class conflict can still be present within social and political debate.<sup>172</sup> As much as they tried to avoid undertones of classism, social workers still felt that they and the welfare state as a whole could improve the lives of the workers,<sup>173</sup> and especially those being raised in households characterised by squalor, idleness, and want.<sup>174</sup> They did, however, become much more reflective about the often-middle-class principles and norms which they enforced or promoted,<sup>175</sup> judging that applying such standards was not only unjust, but actually detrimental to their work.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 246.

<sup>170</sup> Great Britain Central Office of Information, *Social Work and the Social Worker in Britain* (London, 1951), p. 6; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 27; Terence Morris, 'The Social Worker and the Study of Society', *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 164; Jessica Seth-Smith, 'Modern Trends in Social Work – The Family Caseworker', *Social Work*, 17.3 (July 1960), p. 69; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 10.

<sup>171</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 1.

<sup>172</sup> Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', p. 108.

<sup>173</sup> Bailey and Brake, 'Introduction: Social Work in the Welfare', p. 8; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 7-8, 78; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 12-13, 31; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 27; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 3; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 99-101.

<sup>174</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 7-8, 78; David Webb, 'A Certain Moment: Some Personal Reflections on Aspects of Residential Childcare in the 1950s', *British Journal of Social Work*, 40.5 (2010), p. 1393.

<sup>175</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 82.

<sup>176</sup> See particularly: Peter Leonard, 'Casework and Social Class', *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), pp. 188-191; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 14. Other examples include: Kathleen R. Ovens, 'Interpretation of the Social Services', *Case Conference*, 1.6 (October 1954), pp. 18-20; Noel

This was a process accelerated by a decline in social deference beginning in the 1960s,<sup>177</sup> but was not necessarily a reflection of age: some young social workers found that their senior colleagues were happy to allow familiar clients some leeway.<sup>178</sup> The profession was thus characterised in this period both by a new reflexivity with regards to discussions of class difference, and by a well-worn pragmatism which helped social workers to successfully engage with clients from a range of backgrounds. We should not assume, however, that this meant that social workers always had a progressive interpretation of class identity. Social work's position in the gaps and on the margins means that it is particularly susceptible to the influence of the social and political context in which it is embedded. In this way, it can simultaneously facilitate challenges to existing structures and reinforce social norms.<sup>179</sup> This is indeed true for any welfare state, which invariably acts, as Gøsta Esping-Andersen has identified, 'as a system of stratification' and 'an active force in the ordering of social relations.'<sup>180</sup> Even when social workers implicitly rejected the class hierarchies of society, they and their welfare colleagues might still apply structures of their own devising onto themselves and their clients.

## **VII.ii Social Work and Gender**

While social workers' attitudes to class were characterised by a mixture of chance and continuity, the role of gender within the profession was largely unchanged in the

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Timms, 'Social Standards and the Problem Family', *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), pp. 2-10; E. T. Ashton, 'Perception, Communication and Casework', 2.10, March 1956, p. 3; Joyce Warham and Sheila McKay, 'Working with the Problem Family', *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), p. 127; Titmuss, 'Foreword', p. v; E. Matilda Goldberg and June E. Neill, *Social Work in General Practice* (London, 1972), p. 42; Noel Timms, 'Social Standards and the Problem Family', *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), pp. 2-10.

<sup>177</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 159; Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 111.

<sup>178</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 14-25; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>179</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 2.

<sup>180</sup> Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 23.

welfare state. As Vivienne Cree has powerfully argued, 'If social work is a sexist and oppressive institution, then it has largely been an oppression carried out by women on women.'<sup>181</sup> It is clear that, even if more men did become social workers in the post-war period,<sup>182</sup> the profession was dominated by women, with Mike Savage estimating that in the late 1950s, ninety-five percent of social workers were female.<sup>183</sup> The particular hierarchy of the profession, with men disproportionately represented among positions of management and academic research, means that the particular gender balance of social work is not reflected in the remaining sources.<sup>184</sup> Of the articles, books, and oral histories which we use to access the history of social work, considerably more than five percent were produced by men. Nevertheless, there was a perception amongst some that social work, with its focus on emotions and relationships, had a distinctly feminine character.<sup>185</sup>

The predominance of women amongst social work clients also continued throughout the period. Even when the authorities took an interest in the children or in

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<sup>181</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, pp. 156-157. See also: Jane Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945: Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-War Years* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA, 1992), p. 8; Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, p. 249.

<sup>182</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, October 1962, p. i.

<sup>183</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 170. See also: Harriet Jones, 'The State and Social Policy', in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001) p. 329; Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 65; David Gladstone, 'Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945', in Helen Fawcett and Rodney Lowe (eds), *Welfare Policy in Britain: The Road from 1945* (Basingstoke and New York, 1999), p. 39; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 248.

<sup>184</sup> For example, of the 140 Children's Officers appointed by 1951, 92 were women and 48 were men: Great Britain Central Office of Information, *Social Work and the Social Worker in Britain*, p. 24. This issue has received exemplary analysis in: Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', pp. 154-173. See also: Jennifer Dale and Peggy Foster, *Feminists and State Welfare* (London, 1986), p. 96; Jones, 'The State and Social Policy', p. 329; Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*, p. 9; David Gladstone, 'The welfare state and the state of welfare', in David Gladstone (ed.), *British Social Welfare: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1995), p. 24.

<sup>185</sup> See, for example: Hugh Bowden, 'Words and Actions in Casework', *Case Conference*, 7.1 (May 1960), p. 10. Jane Lewis has in fact argued that female social workers were more likely to go for psychological approaches to welfare, while their male colleagues were keener on structural solutions: Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, p. 116. See also: Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 170.

the family as a whole, the mother was still their main contact. Although this was partially due to the practical fact that the mother was often at home when social workers were paying visits to clients,<sup>186</sup> it was also a result of the extraordinary emphasis placed on the role of the mother by post-war childcare discourse.<sup>187</sup> This was a period full of contradictions for women, living in a strongly-gendered welfare state which expected them to be dependent on husbands and fathers,<sup>188</sup> whilst also increasingly participating in the employment market and enjoying the freedoms of a more permissive society.<sup>189</sup>

As both Stephen Brooke and Selina Todd remind us, however, the experience of gender is closely entwined with that of class.<sup>190</sup> Amongst working-class households in the 1950s, conventional associations between femininity, the household, and motherhood, and between masculinity and the workplace may have been weakened,<sup>191</sup> but social workers and the welfare system they represented propagated a traditional gender role of unpaid care and domesticity alongside limited opportunities for autonomy.<sup>192</sup> Issues of parenting, especially mothering, and the

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<sup>186</sup> Marcus Collins, *Modern Love: An Intimate History of Men and Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London, 2003), p. 100.

<sup>187</sup> Davis, *Modern Motherhood: Women and Family in England, c. 1945–2000*, *passim.*; Stefania Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe: Britain and Italy Compared* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 61–66; Jordanna Bailkin, 'The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State', *The Journal of Modern History*, 81.1 (March 2009), pp. 91, 107, 109; Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate* (Bristol, 2003), pp. 138–140; Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*, p. 8.

<sup>188</sup> Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 161–163; Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880. Second Edition* (Basingstoke and New York, 2013), pp. 127–128; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 2, 190; Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*, p. 9.

<sup>189</sup> Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880*, pp. 149–159; Collins, *Modern Love*, pp. 172–186; Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*, pp. 40–64; Gladstone, 'The welfare state and the state of welfare', pp. 24–25.

<sup>190</sup> Brooke, 'Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s', pp. 774, 789; Todd, *The People*, pp. 5–7.

<sup>191</sup> Brooke, 'Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain during the 1950s', pp. 774, 781, 786.

<sup>192</sup> Gillian Pascall, *Gender Equality in the Welfare State?* (Bristol, 2012), pp. 81–84; Jane Lewis, 'Gender and Welfare in Modern Europe', in Ruth Harris and Lyndal Roper (eds), *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450–2000: Essays in Honour of Olwen Hufton* (Oxford and New York, 2006), p. 41.

changing conception of the child are explored in depth in Chapter 2's section on the family. We shall also see in Chapter 5 how female social workers could experience gender-related issues in attempting to work with established male professionals such as doctors.

### **VII.iii Social Work and Race**

While the experiences of gender and class in post-war England both had a dose of continuity for social workers, considerations of race and ethnicity presented a series of new issues. As Roberta Bivins makes clear, the issue of immigration in post-war Britain was one rife with complexities,<sup>193</sup> interacting with the concept of 'race', which was at this time 'hotly contested and politically sensitive'.<sup>194</sup> For social workers in this period, it was those travelling from the Commonwealth, predominantly the West Indies and South Asia, which gave them particular cause for concern. Working with these groups took up more time, and took on greater importance for social workers, as their numbers increased. While Chris Waters reminds us that precise figures on immigration are elusive, it is clear that what began as a trickle of around 1000 arrivals a year in the 1940s became a steady stream of 20,000 a year by the mid-50s, with a final rush of 100,000 in 1961 before the restrictions ushered in by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act.<sup>195</sup> At the end of the 1960s, there followed a second wave of immigration as, in a move particularly important for social workers,<sup>196</sup> a number of immigrants were joined by families and

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<sup>193</sup> Roberta Bivins, 'Immigration, Ethnicity and 'Public' Health Policy', in Catherine Cox and Hilary Marland (eds), *Migration, Health and Ethnicity in the Modern World* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 132.

<sup>194</sup> Bivins, *Contagious Communities*, p. 7.

<sup>195</sup> Chris Waters, "'Dark Strangers' in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963', *Journal of British Studies*, 36.2 (1997), p. 209.

<sup>196</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 2, pp. 201-202.

children.<sup>197</sup> At the beginning of the post-war period, the non-white population of Britain constituted around 30,000 people, barely a tenth of a percent; by 1961, this had become one percent, and three percent by 1971.<sup>198</sup>

The growth of an immigrant community (or, more accurately, immigrant communities) contributed to a number of problems, many of which concerned the social and medical services. Especially at the beginning of the 1960s, a number of local authorities found balancing the demands of hosts and newcomers to be an overwhelming task.<sup>199</sup> There were also concerns about the familial culture of immigrants, as well as issues regarding health and housing.<sup>200</sup> In response to this, social workers argued that they needed to develop a better understanding of the new arrivals.<sup>201</sup> As well as the resulting investigations into the culture and experiences of immigrants, many became employed within the social services.<sup>202</sup>

This was not, however, without its issues: many reported an implicit yet persistent racism within their departments,<sup>203</sup> and there is a notable tendency in some

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<sup>197</sup> Todd, *The People*, p. 278.

<sup>198</sup> Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford and New York, 2000), pp. 3, 5; Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, 1997), p. 113; Todd, *The People*, p. 290.

<sup>199</sup> Shamit Sagar, 'Immigration and Economics: The Politics of Immigration in the Postwar Period', in Helen Fawcett and Rodney Lowe (eds), *Welfare Policy in Britain: The Road from 1945* (Basingstoke and New York, 1999), p. 194.

<sup>200</sup> See, for example: Bivins, 'Immigration, Ethnicity and 'Public' Health Policy', pp. 126-150; Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkley et al., 2012), *passim*, but esp. pp. 37-45, 132-201; John Welshman, 'Tuberculosis and Ethnicity in England and Wales, 1950-1970', *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 22.6 (2010), pp. 858-882; Robert Miles, 'The Riots of 1958: Notes on the Ideological Construction of 'Race Relations' as a Political Issue in Britain', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 3.3 (1984), pp. 252-275; Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, p. 120; Todd, *The People*, pp. 185-189.

<sup>201</sup> See, for example: Kay MacDougall, 'Future Clients and Colleagues', *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 16; Bessie Kent, 'The Social Worker's Cultural Pattern as it Affects Casework with Immigrants', *Social Work*, 22.4 (October 1965), pp. 15-16. This creation of knowledge about immigrant populations is covered in detail in section IV of Chapter 4.

<sup>202</sup> 'Miss B. E. Drake', p. 9. This section, written in the third person, mentions the work of two child care officers, one from China and one from India, in the East End of London. John W. Davies, "'Thursday's Child has Far to Go'", *Case Conference*, 14.8 (December 1967), p. 300. This is a reference to Birmingham North, where Davies was Area Children's Officer, employing two child care officers from the West Indies and a West African of unspecified role.

<sup>203</sup> E. R. Braithwaite, *Paid Servant* (London, 1963), *passim*, but esp. pp. 9-10, 32; Shama Ahmed, 'Is racial matching sufficient?', *Community Care*, November 29, 1978, p. 38.



of the personal accounts from the period to portray immigrants as exotic and mysterious creatures.<sup>204</sup> This was complicated further by the persistence of class distinctions amongst the West Indian population,<sup>205</sup> and the fact that, Marcus Collins contends, the men ‘were characterized as essentially unassimilable deviants while at the same time being expected to assimilate to white gender norms.’<sup>206</sup> In fact, social workers’ attempts to ignore the racial identities of clients could be just as damaging as explicitly acknowledging them. In *The Heart of the Race*, a discussion of the experiences of ‘coloured’ women in post-war Britain, the authors argued that it was the repeated attempts to squeeze the ‘coloured’ woman into the ‘white’ institution which had the greatest negative effect.<sup>207</sup>

The different factors which constituted the identities of social workers, their clients and their colleagues were all shifting over this period. It was, however, class which persisted as their dominant framework for social work thought and practice. With regards to gender, the welfare encounter was often a meeting of two females, one middle-class, mobile, and increasingly professional, the other working-class, in the home, and struggling to meet economic demands and social expectations. These factors were all liable to shift according to the point of intervention and the methods utilised, but these dynamics were a familiar foundation. Issues of race and immigrant culture complicated the matter, to the extent that social workers tried to fit these new developments into old frameworks of class difference. As Daniel Walkowitz has

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<sup>204</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 56; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 72-75; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 110; Jane Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker* (London, 1978), p. 62.

<sup>205</sup> Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, p. 74.

<sup>206</sup> Marcus Collins, ‘Pride and Prejudice: West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 40.3 (July 2001), p. 412. See also: Elspeth Huxley, *Back Street New Worlds: A Look at Immigrants in Britain* (London and Toronto, 1964), p. 62.

<sup>207</sup> Bryan *et al.*, *The Heart of the Race*, pp. 112-120. See also: Michael Banton, *White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People Towards Coloured Immigrants* (London, 1959), p. 189.

argued in his influential study of social work in North America, while the influence of gender and race is never negligible, ‘social workers patrol the borders of class.’<sup>208</sup>

## **VIII                    Thesis Outline**

Within this thesis, I have two particular concerns. On one hand, I am interested in the everyday dynamics of welfare work, how individual workers navigated the particular personal and professional challenges which they faced. However, I also address the broader question of what the role of social workers tells us about the nature of the welfare state and post-war society, and reactions to social, political, and demographic change. As we shall see, these two scales of work, the professional and political obligations of social work at one end and the personal, everyday experiences of the individual worker or the social work team at the other, could easily clash. Balancing these different aspects was a treacherous task, and I am particularly interested in how social workers chose to engage with this issue.

Over the course of five chapters, I examine in greater depth some of the ideas, arguments, and questions broached in this introduction. The first two chapters are about the welfare, social, and political roles which social workers adopted, and the benefits and issues which arose. In Chapter 1, I discuss the roles which social workers adopted in the post-war welfare state. Some of these were practical, such as guiding people through the social and medical services. Some of them were therapeutic, and concerned helping individuals, families, and communities address or adjust to the issues they faced. There was also a strong symbolic component to social work, whereby it represented society’s concern for its most vulnerable members,

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<sup>208</sup> Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity* (Chapel Hill and London, 1999), p. xi.

although the elements of authority implicit in the social work role acted as a counterweight. In Chapter 2, we examine the social and political role of the profession, particularly with regards to social change and shifting social attitudes. In a society where change had become part of the fabric of everyday life, social workers helped to ensure that such change continued in a constructive fashion, but also sought to mitigate the effects of a shifting society on those who were adversely affected. This therapeutic intervention had social and political significance. The role of social workers within matters of policy and social change was not, however, without its pitfalls, as can be observed in two case-studies, one on the family and the child, and the other on the ‘rediscovery of poverty’.

Chapters 3 and 4 concern the attempt of social workers to construct a body of knowledge with which to underline their professional status. In Chapter 3, we consider the particular disciplines which constituted the social worker’s ‘toolkit’. This was comprised of ideas from the social and psychological sciences, but also incorporated a range of other influences, as well as practical skills which were commonly passed between generations of social workers in a kind of oral tradition. This helped new social workers to act and talk in a manner befitting their profession. In Chapter 4, we investigate social work’s role in post-war social research. Here we find that, although social workers were on the front-line of the social and medical services and thus constituted a useful tool in the practice of social research, they were themselves more concerned with a form of practically-focused ‘action research’. This sought to identify issues and generate solutions, rather than to produce sociological knowledge and description.

In Chapter 5, many of the themes in previous chapters are brought together to consider some issues of social work practice. This is done through an examination of

the role of professional collaboration within the welfare state, and the particular contribution of social work. Here we see that attempts to formally coordinate the work of different social and medical services were often less successful than the informal cooperation which existed between different professionals. The fact that social workers often existed across two teams, their specialist teams in hospitals, courts, and child care services and their smaller social work teams, meant that they were able to make a significant contribution to the practice of teamwork.

In the end, we discover that, for all the ambiguity of the social worker's role, their curious position in the gaps and on the margins helped the welfare state to function. This involved acting as signposts around the social and medical services, focusing on the broader needs of individuals, families, and communities, and mediating between professional expertise and bureaucracy and between practitioners and clients. These tasks and their implications form the focus of the next chapter.

## 1 The Role of the Social Worker in the Post-War Welfare State

*The social worker had at various points during the Conference been called the handmaid, agent, and conscience of society; the client's representative, mediator, and champion; a liaison, link, and channel between the client and the specialist, an enlightener and educator of public opinion, and by implication a moral example – A comment from the discussion groups at a 1959 conference on moral issues in social work.*<sup>1</sup>

### I Introduction

In the landscape of post-war England, social work may be characterised by its location in the gaps and on the margins of the welfare state, but its function in this position was still open to debate. The opening quote, taken from a 1959 conference on the moral issues facing the social worker, shows that there was no shortage of suggestions. The profession had been included as part of the statutory welfare structures almost as an afterthought, and social workers found themselves having to carve a niche amongst the more established branches of the social and medical services, in the gaps left in provision by welfare legislation.<sup>2</sup> Even if the specific roles of the various specialist branches of social work were often similar to those in the interwar period, and clearly demarcated by the professions around them, the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Reports from the Discussion Groups', *Morals and the Social Worker, A Report of the Conference September 18th – 20th, 1959* (London, 1959), p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 51; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 366; Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties*, p. 23.

search for a unifying identity for social workers, what Lady Cynthia Coleville labelled the ‘umbrella of common purpose’, remained a central concern.<sup>3</sup> My focus in this chapter is the collection of roles which constituted this collective identity, and although it shall be necessary to consider some of the more specialised functions of particular forms of social work, my interest in this chapter is nevertheless the tasks and skills which were felt to be shared, more or less, across the profession.<sup>4</sup> This has two purposes. The first is to sketch out the role of social work in order to lay the foundations for some of the later discussions in the thesis. The particular responsibilities and attitudes of social workers will be revisited throughout the coming chapters. The second, more pressing purpose is to consider how the case of social work helps to illuminate our understanding of the welfare state. Since social work was only added as an afterthought, it had to position itself in relation to the existing services and structures, so the functions which it came to perform give us a new insight into the nature of post-war welfare, and especially its gaps and deficiencies in its first few decades.

Such an objective places this chapter firmly in the historiographical discussions over the post-war settlements. As I indicated in the introduction, this concept, and the consensus which it implies, has been roundly criticised and re-thought. This has led Gordon Hughes to label the post-war settlements as ‘a

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<sup>3</sup> ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach, A Report of the Conference, 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1954* (Wallington, 1954), p. 3. Lady Cynthia Colville was at this time the President of the Association of Social Workers.

<sup>4</sup> For descriptions of the roles of specific social workers, see: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/1, Publications, A survey of the conditions of service of social workers in the constituent organisations of the Federation, undated, [1939]; Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]); Great Britain Central Office of Information, *Social Work and the Social Worker in Britain; Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services*; Noel Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice* (London, 1964), pp. 96-236; Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott (eds), *The Social Workers* (London, 1965); *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cm. 3703; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1*, pp. 36-217.

complex, contested and fragile set of arrangements' within which compromises could take place,<sup>5</sup> and it was, I shall argue, these complexities and fragilities which social work sought to address. It has become clear that the post-war settlements were indeed incomplete and contradictory, but the practical ramifications of this have received less attention.<sup>6</sup> Social work was, I argue, a solution to many of the problems which arose from the tension between the ideal of a comprehensive welfare system and the fragmented, sometimes labyrinthine structures which were the reality.

Two particular approaches taken to the post-war settlement are especially pertinent to this chapter, and it is these which form the basis for my consideration of social work's welfare roles. The first is the notion of an organisational settlement, as identified by Janet Newman and John Clarke in their text of 1997, *The Managerial State*.<sup>7</sup> Newman and Clarke posit two spheres within the construction and operation of the welfare state: professionalism, which 'promised disinterested service', and bureaucratic administration, which 'promised impersonal fairness'.<sup>8</sup> Social work existed in the gaps between these two spheres, and as much as social workers strove to be recognised as professionals in their own right, it was nevertheless a professionalism based upon supporting (and receiving the approval) of other professions. Social work's efforts to help clients access other welfare professionals, and to enable communities, families, and individuals to address their own social issues, had a clear foundation in bureaucracy and administration. Literature within

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<sup>5</sup> Hughes, 'Picking over the Remains': the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK', p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>7</sup> Clarke and Newman, *The Managerial State*, *passim.*, but esp. p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Clarke and Newman, *The Managerial State*, p. 7.

social work has already identified this curious position, characterising social work as an example of ‘bureau-professionalism’.<sup>9</sup>

The second approach is Mathew Thomson’s allusion to ‘an emotional and social dimension to the post-war settlement’.<sup>10</sup> In his own work, this pertains to issues such as psychological well-being and the welfare of children, but it also points to a wider issue of the experience of welfare. There were certain emotional and social issues which arose or continued within the welfare state, and social workers were part of efforts to alleviate these problems. In addition, we need to be aware of the symbolic importance of welfare provision and welfare work. This is a subject which represents an underexplored yet significant issue for the historiography,<sup>11</sup> and where James Vernon’s work on, for example, memories of the ‘hungry thirties’ in the welfare state has offered some direction.<sup>12</sup> As a personal social service, social work was concerned as much with how people felt about their individual and social circumstances as with the reality of their situation. As we shall see in the next chapter, this was a period when social workers focused on the therapeutic aspects of their role, and where their social and political responsibilities were frequently an extension of their welfare work.

One of the themes which unites these two approaches to the post-war settlement is the magnitude of the welfare state. For clients unsure how to proceed,

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Bureau-profesisonalism’ is a central term in: Parry and Parry, ‘Social work, professionalism and the state’, pp. 21-47. It has also been utilised in: Hughes, ‘“Picking over the Remains”: the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK’, pp. 32-33; John Harris, ‘State Social Work and Social Citizenship in Britain: From Clientelism to Consumerism’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 29.6 (1999), pp. 918-920.

<sup>10</sup> Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 13. For a similar formulation regarding children, see: Webb, ‘A Certain Moment: Some Personal Reflections on Aspects of Residential Childcare in the 1950s’, p. 1393.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2007), pp. 236-271. Lynn Frogett, despite writing from the very different viewpoint of social policy and psychoanalysis, has done similar work on the emotional value of welfare. See: Lynn Frogett, *Love, Hate and Welfare. Psychosocial Approaches to Policy and Practice* (Bristol, 2002), esp. pp. 49-63.



the social and medical services could constitute an intimidating structure. To an extent, it was the role of professions like social work to address this, and social workers could alleviate the effects of professional specialisation by considering the client as a whole, and could act to personalise what were frequently impersonal administrative and bureaucratic structures. In this way, they sought to resolve some of the emotional and social issues which the post-war settlement not only failed to cover, but sometimes caused. This was not just, we should note, for the benefit of the clients. The gaps in provision, knowledge, and culture which were evident throughout the welfare state could also affect the performance of the professionals who worked within it, so the intervention of social workers could also be valuable in facilitating good practice. With both clients and fellow professionals, social workers could help to provide, or at least to give the impression, of a joined-up service, even when the social and political context in which welfare was provided and experienced was tense with contradictions.

## **I.i                      Discussions of the Social Work Role**

It is worth noting, as Eileen Youngusband did in her analysis of the period, that social work engaged in a great deal of introspection during the post-war decades.<sup>13</sup> Discussions amongst social workers and their welfare colleagues about the role of the profession and its practitioners occurred throughout the period, so that although some particular roles were more prevalent or more widely-discussed at certain points, they were ongoing debates. Nevertheless, there were particular conferences, texts, and pieces of legislation which especially sparked debates on the place of the

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<sup>13</sup> Youngusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 1, p. 26.

social worker. There were noticeable points, then, when discussions of the social work role became particularly heated, when disparate conversations were brought together in the same conference hall or the same journal pages. Although I attempt to infer how these debates evolved over the period, the spread of the materials means that we can say more about some years than others. Nevertheless, the question of what the place of social work can tell us about the welfare state and its social context remains central.

I should also note that this is by no means the first study of the role which social workers found in the welfare state and in society. As I discussed in the introduction, much of the existing historiography on social work has focused on issues of professionalisation, and part of that analysis has involved an interrogation of the functions which social workers performed.<sup>14</sup> The fact that this research was focused on questions of professional status has, however, meant that the wider social context of social work has often been neglected. Even those accounts which begin with broader issues of post-war welfare politics and culture have often stopped short of expansive discussions of social work because of its peripheral status.<sup>15</sup> It is, however, this very status which makes social work such an informative case-study. The chapter which follows seeks, therefore, to address questions which have been frequently discussed before, but to do so in greater depth, and with an eye to both the specific details of social work and the broader social, cultural, and political shifts which shaped the profession's role in post-war England.

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<sup>14</sup> Examples include: Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*; Younghusband, *The Newest Profession: A Short History of Social Work*; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*; Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', pp. 23-46.

<sup>15</sup> The notable exception here is: Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, pp. 273-291.

The professional introspection to which Younghusband alluded also involved debates about why certain roles evolved, the purpose they served, and how they might need modification. Some commentators noted that certain issues reflected wider social issues, and that social workers, by providing temporary solutions rather than wider structural change, were neglecting their duties: this is a theme covered in the next chapter, on the political context of social work. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the roles discussed in this chapter were consistently under discussion and in flux.

## **I.ii                      Expanding and Combining Social Work Roles**

As social workers gained further influence, they found and reported further issues amenable to their intervention, a phenomenon which has been described by Harold Perkin as characteristic of the rise of professionalism and expertise within British society since 1880. Recognising social work's use of this 'feedback principle' is crucial to our understanding of their role in the welfare state and in society, not least because a number of the tasks which they took on were interlinked. If some of the roles which I describe seem contingent on or precipitated by others, then this is part of the manner by which social work, and a multitude of other professions, gained prominence in society.<sup>16</sup> An excellent example of this was the growing opportunity afforded social workers to determine the needs of clients, since, as Mary Langan has argued, once social workers were 'given powers to assess need – whether for community care provision, compulsory psychiatric admission, or for child protection

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<sup>16</sup> Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, p. 15.

intervention', they soon 'acquired new status as professionals.'<sup>17</sup> Some roles allowed more purchase than others, and the profession was not unaware of this, with probation worker Joan King describing at a 1969 conference the increasing suspicion that social workers were 'inventing new needs to justify their own existence.'<sup>18</sup>

The six roles which I will discuss were not discrete functions, and some descriptions of the social worker's task incorporated two or more of them. This is a point which will be reiterated in the chapter on social work methods, where I argue that distinguishing between different methods and methodologies (that is, psychological and sociological ways of viewing society and individuals) is a futile task, since social workers actively sought to deploy a pragmatic mixture of the tools available to them. Some of these roles were more prevalent than others, and some were tied to specific specialisms within social work. As we shall see, some aspects of these roles were deeply practical, whilst others were of a more metaphorical nature: moreover, social workers actively embraced and highlighted some elements of their professional territory, whilst remaining quieter about other responsibilities.

Furthermore, some of the roles which I will describe were also factors in the social and political functions which the profession came to perform, such as social work's relationship with social change. Other roles were, in theory at least, part of social workers' cooperation and coordination with other groups (professional and otherwise) in the welfare state. One of the aims of this chapter is to describe these roles so that they can be problematised later (and problematised they will be). Of these six roles, two were explicitly related to the nature of the welfare state. The first

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Langan, 'The Contested Concept of Need', in Mary Langan (ed.), *Welfare: Needs, Rights and Risks* (London and New York, 1998), p. 10. See also: Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets. Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 2013), p. 223.

<sup>18</sup> Joan King, 'First Things First', in ASW, *New Thinking About Welfare – Values and Priorities* (London, 1969), p. 10.

was promoting the well-being of clients, which might involve helping them draw on their own individual capacities or marshalling the local resources of the community and the family. The second role which social workers performed within the welfare state was that of guidance. This involved directing clients to and through the relevant and available social and medical services, but also helping different groups in the welfare state to understand each other by interpreting different languages, expectations, and views. They were, respectively, reflections of social work's professional identity and its bureaucratic contribution.

We also examine the symbolic value of social work, principally its role as the 'conscience of society' and as a particular form of authority. Both these functions straddled the role of social work within the welfare state and within society; they are included in this chapter because they were a particular solution to the presence of a personalised service within a collective welfare system. The remaining two functions, where social work offered practical aid and assistance and acted as moral and civil examples towards their clients, were continuations of former roles, although they took on new significance within the context of the welfare state. We start with perhaps the most prominent post-war role for social work, that of promoting well-being and enabling adjustment.

## **II                      Promoting Well-Being and Enabling Adjustment**

All branches of social work had an interest in the well-being of their clients.

Although social work was influenced by the diagnostic medical model during this period, whereby practitioners attempted to identify and isolate and then treat specific

maladies, rather than enacting broader social or structural change,<sup>19</sup> the profession was nevertheless characterised by the significance it placed on overall welfare.<sup>20</sup> Even when social workers were concerned with a particular client group or with a specific element of their clients' lives, they usually emphasised holistic approaches. Child care officers worked with the family or the relevant institution as a whole, even when their primary focus was the welfare of the child, while psychiatric social workers were more focused on the material and environmental well-being of their clients than other professions based in mental health. The holism which characterised social work,<sup>21</sup> as well as the specific ways in which social workers attempted to ensure the physical, psychological, and social well-being of their clients, was at the heart of a number of discussions about the role of the profession.

When the welfare state emerged, social workers noted that their profession had recently expanded to focus on the individual as a whole, partly as a result of the influence of psychoanalysis on casework.<sup>22</sup> Over the course of the period, social workers would also emphasise the importance of the profession's emphasis on the whole of the family or the whole of the community.<sup>23</sup> In fact, they viewed this as

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<sup>19</sup> Margaret Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis* (Wokingham et al., 1980), p. 133; Langan, 'The Contested Concept of Need', pp. 9-10. On the limitations of understanding social work through the medical model, see: Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 202.

<sup>20</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>21</sup> On holism in British medicine, see: Christopher Lawrence and George Weisz (ed.), *Greater Than The Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950* (Oxford and New York, 1998); David Cantor, 'The NAME and the WORD: Neo-Hippocratism and Language in Interwar Britain', in David Cantor (ed.), *Reinventing Hippocrates* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 280-301.

<sup>22</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/16, Constitution and foundation, A Memorandum for the Consideration of the Social Workers' Group, What is a Social Worker?, 12<sup>th</sup> March [1940]; Lydia Rapoport, 'Towards a Definition of Social Case-Work', *Social Work*, 11.2 (April 1954), p. 912; Joan L. M. Eyden, 'The Professional Social Worker', *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 247; A. V. J. Lochhead, 'Action by Community Groups', in National Council of Social Service Inc., *People and Work: Co-Operation for Social Welfare in Industrial Communities* (Bristol, 1960), p. 60; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 22; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Noel Timms, 'Notes from English Journals', *Case Conference*, 6.2 (June 1959), p. 57; Joyce Warham and Sheila McKay, 'Working with the Problem Family', *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), pp. 128,130; Muriel A. Cunliffe, 'Family Casework', *Social Work*, 17.1 (January 1960), p. 6;

their distinctive contribution to the network of welfare professionals, many of whom were more specialised or more qualified than social workers, a theme which began in the war-time planning of the welfare state.<sup>24</sup> Clare Winnicott, for example, described the social worker as ‘perhaps the only person in the child’s life who represents his real self, and who tries to be in touch with the whole of him, and not just with the part that shows.’<sup>25</sup> As part of this role, social workers sought to view people within their social context and help them understand their connections to family and community, whilst also attempting to avoid defining them by such external factors.<sup>26</sup> Even by the end of the period, social workers were still emphasising the value of their focus on the individual as worthwhile in and of themselves.<sup>27</sup> In fact, social workers often endeavoured to help the client to view themselves as a whole, particularly in areas such as medicine where other professionals would focus on specific issues.<sup>28</sup>

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Jessica Seth-Smith, ‘Modern Trends in Social Work – The Family Caseworker’, *Social Work*, 17.3 (July 1960), p. 66; E. R. Gloyne, ‘The Social Focus of Medical Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 8.5 (October 1961), p. 135; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 26; Letter from K. R. Ovens, *Case Conference*, 15.4 (August 1968), p. 143.

<sup>25</sup> Winnicott, ‘Face to Face with Children’, p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Una Cormack and Kay McDougall, ‘Case-Work in Social Service’, in Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]), p. 27; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work* (Wallington, 1953), p. 2; Anthony Forder, ‘Towards a Social Policy’, in Anthony Forder (ed.), *Penelope Hall’s Social Services of England and Wales* (London, 1969), p. 304.

<sup>27</sup> King, ‘First Things First’, pp. 7-8; Zofia Butrym, *Social Work in Medical Care* (London, 1967), p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 116; Kathleen M. Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen* (London, 1966), p. 213; Zofia Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action. A Report of a Study of Medical Social Work at Hammersmith Hospital* (London, 1968), p. 13; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 109-110.

## II.i Beyond the Presenting Problem

This attempt to promote self-awareness linked to another facet of the social work role, that of determining the unconscious motivations and needs of the client. Many clients, social workers argued, sought help for one issue, usually practical, when what they actually sought (even if they did not know it) was emotional or psychological assistance in another area of their life.<sup>29</sup> Social workers believed that they had sufficient insight to look beyond the ‘presenting problem’ and ‘interpret the individual to himself’.<sup>30</sup> They were thus tasked with identifying the ‘real’ problem,<sup>31</sup> and then helping those involved to understand this interpretation, although there were some who urged caution in this final step.<sup>32</sup> These interpretations ranged from practical insights about relationships and anxieties to more complex accounts utilising psychoanalytic concepts.<sup>33</sup> This aspect of the social worker’s role was

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<sup>29</sup> See, for example: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, pp. 38, 46-47; Louise Cochrane, *Social Work for Jill* (London, 1954), p. 130; Margaret L. Ferard and Noël K. Hunnybun, *The Caseworker’s Use of Relationships* (London and Springfield, Illinois, 1962), p. 38; O. Stevenson, ‘Welfare: Problems and Priorities’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Welfare – Values and Priorities* (London, 1969), p. 87.

<sup>30</sup> Marilyn Gregory and Margaret Holloway, ‘Language and the Shaping of Social Work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 35.1 (2005), pp. 42-43. For examples of the use of the term ‘presenting problem’, see: Sidney I. Briskin, ‘Casework and Present Day Trends’, *Social Work*, 15.4 (October 1958), p. 525; John Rea Price, ‘West Indian Immigrants: Assimilation and Casework’, *Case Conference*, 12.2 (June 1965), p. 38; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*, p. 81.

<sup>31</sup> Eileen Younghusband, ‘The Past and Future of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 9.4 (October 1952), p. 721; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 77; Noel Timms, *The Language of Social Casework* (London, 1968), pp. 3-4.

<sup>32</sup> Evelyn H. Davison, ‘Therapy in Casework’, *Social Work*, 12.3 (July 1955), p. 85; W. J. O. Jordan, ‘Preventative Casework and the Disturbed Family’, *Case Conference*, 14.12 (April 1968), pp. 470, 473.

<sup>33</sup> On the former, see: Robert J. N. Tod, ‘Why Visit?’, *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), pp. 402-405; Brenda Dickeson, ‘A Case History from a Family Agency’, *Social Work*, 11.3 (July 1954), p. 960; Clare Britton, ‘Casework Techniques in the Child Care Services’, *Case Conference*, 1.9 (January 1955), p. 8; Anne Hudson, ‘Mrs. X and her Rent Arrears’, *Social Work*, 12.3 (July 1955), p. 75-80; Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 160; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Enid Warren, p. 15. On the latter, see: Ferard and Hunnybun, *The Caseworker’s Use of Relationships*, pp. 49-108; Angela Hamblin, ‘The World of the Fair. Casework with a Schizophrenic Client and His Wife’, in Barbara Butler (ed.), *The Voice of the Social Worker. Papers written by members of the professional social work staff of the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1970), pp. 8-9; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Irvine, pp. 17-18; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 10. In general, see: Betty Joseph, ‘Psychoanalysis and Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 8.4 (October 1951), pp. 589-599; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, pp. 7, 24-25.



prominent within the professional literature, and has become akin to the trademark of social work in the welfare state.

This use of psychological and psychoanalytic techniques to garner insights into the client's issues was not, however, as common as has often been supposed,<sup>34</sup> and such methods existed alongside a myriad other influences on social work methods.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, we must recognise that the emphasis of social work on treating the individual as a whole also involved encouraging clients to understand themselves and their surroundings, and the problems which arose, in new ways. The ability of social workers to look beyond the presenting problem, even when that presenting problem was being addressed by other branches of the welfare state, was another contribution which they portrayed as distinctive.

## II.ii Preventative Work

We should also note that, insofar as they identified potential cases of breakdown as well as treating those which had already occurred, there was a preventative element to the social worker's ability to analyse the 'real' needs of their clients.<sup>36</sup> In this sense, it was part of a larger shift within social work and the welfare services towards preventative work. Indeed, the adage that a fence at the top of the cliff was

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<sup>34</sup> Kathleen Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (London and Toronto, 1962), *passim.*; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 112-115; Kenneth McLaughlin, *Social Work, Politics and Society: From Radicalism to Orthodoxy* (Bristol, 2008), p. 12; Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', pp. 23-46.

<sup>35</sup> This is explored further in Chapter 3.

<sup>36</sup> ASW, *Children Neglected or Ill-Treated in Their Own Homes*, A Pamphlet prepared by the A.S.W. Care of Children Committee, January, 1953 (London, 1953); ASW, *Children Away From Home*, A Pamphlet prepared by the A.S.W. Care of Children Committee, March, 1954 (London, 1954), p. 3; 'The Neglectful Mother, By the Southampton Discussion Group', *Social Work*, 12.2 (April 1955), pp. 55-60; W. J. O. Jordan, 'Preventative Casework and the Disturbed Family', *Case Conference*, 14.12 (April 1968), pp. 470-473; A.F. Robinson *et al.*, 'The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers', *Social Work*, 16.2, (April 1970), pp. 3-4; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, p. 3; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jack Hanson, pp. 18-19;

preferable to an ambulance at the bottom was almost a cliché by the end of the period.<sup>37</sup> Preventative work was predominantly done with families to prevent break-up and maintain a stable environment for children: these aims were reinforced by the 1961 Ingleby Report, which, although flawed, emphasised the need for prevention,<sup>38</sup> and the 1963 Children's Act, which actually allowed social workers greater resources and freedoms to plan for future work.<sup>39</sup>

The aim of preventing future issues required coordination and cooperation with other bodies who visited families, such as NSPCC officers and housing managers,<sup>40</sup> and this created issues of planning and responsibility.<sup>41</sup> Since social workers felt that they had the best overview of the family, they often endeavoured to organise these preventative and reactive interventions, to ensure that all forms of social work, whether 'in the field, in the open community, in the church, the club, the pub...should have pattern and coherence, knit together.'<sup>42</sup> This was partially a response to the poor coordination of services in the welfare state, as we shall see in the discussion of multi-professional approaches to 'problem families' in Chapter 5.<sup>43</sup> It was also, however, a reaction to the decline in those networks of neighbourly help and support which had once been a primary source of welfare, especially in working-

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<sup>37</sup> Judith Niechcial, *Lucy Faithfull: Mother to Hundreds* (London, 2010), p. 80; Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work*, p. 25; Eileen Younghusband, 'Postscript', in Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott (eds), *The Social Workers* (London, 1965), p. 185; Marsh, *The Welfare State*, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Committee on Children and Young Persons, *Report of the Committee on Children and Young Persons*, Cmnd 1191 (London, 1961); Kenneth Brill, 'Preventative Work by Children's Departments: Two Points of View. Part 1. – A Countryman's View', *Social Work*, 18.1 (January 1961), pp. 13-18; B. J. Kahan, 'Preventative Work by Children's Departments: Two Points of View. Part 2', *Social Work*, 18.1 (January 1961), pp. 18-23; Somerville Hastings and Peggy Jay, *The Family and the Social Services* (London, 1965), p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Ursula Berhr, p. 19; Hastings and Jay, *The Family and the Social Services*, p. 9; Julia Parker, *Local Health and Welfare Services* (London, 1965), pp. 180-185; Elizabeth Pugh, *Social Work in Child Care* (London, 1968), p. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 15; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Olive Stevenson, 'Co-ordination Reviewed', *Case Conference*, 9.8 (February 1963), p. 211.

<sup>42</sup> ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> It is customary in discussions of the 'problem family' to use quotation marks to highlight the constructed nature of the concept.

class neighbourhoods.<sup>44</sup> It is clear that, within multi-professional discussions, it was medical officers of health who ultimately wielded the most influence,<sup>45</sup> while attempts to infiltrate established networks of mutual support proved more troublesome than social workers had predicted.<sup>46</sup> We should note, however, that social workers were nevertheless able to establish themselves a particular niche with regards to developing measures for prevention.

### II.iii Facilitating Adjustment

When social workers were unable to prevent issues, they often took it as part of their professional duty to help those involved. In particular, their holistic view of their clients meant they were keen to help them ‘adjust’ to difficult situations, tumultuous relationships, and the challenges of social change,<sup>47</sup> a view of social work imported from America.<sup>48</sup> Joan Collins argued as late as 1967 that, even if preventative work was increasing, the adage that “‘What can’t be cured must be endured” is

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Roberts, ‘The Recipient’s View of Welfare’ in Joanna Bornat *et al.* (eds), *Oral History, Health and Welfare* (London and New York, 2000), p. 224; Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 206; Vernon, *Hunger*, p. 269.

<sup>45</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/8, Publications, The Relation of the Social Worker to the Beveridge Report, Report of Study Group, p. 17; Hastings and Jay, *The Family and the Social Services*, p. 11; Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 82.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Willmott, ‘Social Administration and Social Class’, *Case Conference*, 4.7 (January 1958), p. 196; Taylor and Rogaly, ‘“Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type”: Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963’, p. 451; Collins, *Modern Love*, p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, esp. p. 38; Elizabeth Howarth, ‘The Scope of Social Casework in Helping the Maladjusted’, *Social Work*, 6.3 (July 1949), pp. 326-332; Harriett C. Wilson, ‘Problem Families and the Concept of Immaturity’, *Case Conference*, 6.5 (October 1959), p. 118; Letter from Mary Kitchin, *Case Conference*, 8.6 (November 1961), p. 151; Florence Mitchell, ‘Social work today’, in Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott (eds), *The Social Workers* (London, 1965), p. 27; George F. Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work* (London, 1969), p. 14; London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter: LMA), Family Welfare Association (formerly Charity Organisation Society), A/FWA/GL/B2/2, Case Records, Application and Decision Book December 1956 to May 1960. One of the categories used in this book to refer to assistance provided is ‘family re-adjustment’. See also: Taylor and Rogaly, ‘“Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type”: Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963’, p. 431.

<sup>48</sup> A. T. M. Wilson, ‘A Note on Some Current Problems of the Social Services’, *Social Work*, 8.1 (January 1951), p. 508; David Donnison, ‘The Social Work Profession’, *Case Conference*, 3.3 (July 1956), p. 65.

unfortunately still true'.<sup>49</sup> Given that social workers sought to consider the person as a whole, they were often also concerned with psychological and social adjustment in response to physical or material change. Disabled or seriously ill clients, it was argued, would not only receive help on living with their condition, but also with housing, their own emotions, and their changing personal relationships.<sup>50</sup> In addition, social workers sought to enlist the help of other members of the client's family and community to facilitate continuing adjustment,<sup>51</sup> and aimed to provide support, emotional and practical, for those tasked with caring for ill or maladjusted family members.<sup>52</sup> Sometimes, simply helping families understand and work through their tensions, or giving the individual the feeling that he or she was worthy of help, was therapy enough.<sup>53</sup>

Examples abound of English social workers placing adjustment at the centre of their practice: Edwin Packer labelled it the 'first objective of social work',<sup>54</sup> and at one conference, it was even argued that the 'social worker's claim to professional status centres upon being a specialist in human relationships, an individual trained and disciplined in human adjustments.'<sup>55</sup> The onus was placed firmly on the capacity of every individual to adjust to their circumstances, with social workers acting to

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<sup>49</sup> Joan Collins, *A New Look at Social Work* (London, 1967), p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Howarth, 'The Scope of Social Casework in Helping the Maladjusted', *Social Work*, 6.3 (July 1949), p. 328; Great Britain Central Office of Information, *Social Work and the Social Worker in Britain*, pp. 38-49; E. M. Goldberg, *Welfare in the Community* (London, 1966), p. 10; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, pp. 141-143; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 110-111; Butrym, *Social Work in Medical Care*, pp. 56-60.

<sup>51</sup> Barbara N. Rogers, 'The Administrative Setting of Social Service, Some Practical Implications', *Case Conference*, 1.3 (July 1954), p. 10; F. Roy Dennison, 'Does the Social Worker have a Therapeutic Role?', *Case Conference*, 12.3 (July 1965), p. 90; Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>52</sup> William Jordan, *Client-Worker Transactions* (London, 1970), pp. 6-8; E.M. Goldberg, 'Working in the Community: What Kind of Help do People Need?', *Social Work*, 22.2-22.3 (April and July 1965), p. 13; Peter Willmott, 'Social Administration and Social Class', *Case Conference*, 4.7 (January 1958), p. 198; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, pp. 48-49, 168.

<sup>53</sup> Pugh, *Social Work in Child Care*, p. 110; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, pp. 121-127

<sup>54</sup> Edwin Packer, *Social Work* (London, 1964), p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 4.

enable change in those who needed help to do so.<sup>56</sup> Again, social workers portrayed their profession as distinct in this aim, a product of their awareness of the client as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

This notion of adjustment did, however, come under some critical scrutiny, and exposed social work to accusations of ignoring wider social factors. By situating issues and, more importantly, solutions at an individual level, social workers, it was alleged, were neglecting their duty to challenge social norms.<sup>58</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that these criticisms still emphasised the importance of adjustment and the centrality of the individual, but reversed the relationship, so that society and social structures became the site for intervention.<sup>59</sup> There were some who argued that social workers were limited by their position within the welfare state. For instance, Anthony Forder admitted that even if social workers were guilty of ‘attempting to adjust their clients to an intolerable environment’, this was more down to the place of social workers in the structure of the services than to the actual methods of the profession.<sup>60</sup> In the interviews conducted by Cohen, there is little use of the term ‘adjustment’, indicating that it was either a formal phrase to be found mainly in publications or that it fell out of usage after 1970. There are still references, however, to social workers performing the ‘adjustment’ role, usually involving

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<sup>56</sup> ASW, *Children Away From Home*, p. 5 John Rea Price, ‘West Indian Immigrants: Assimilation and Casework’, *Case Conference*, 12.2 (June 1965), p. 40; George Newton, ‘Adapting to Change’, *Social Work*, 25.1 (January 1968), p. 3; Peter Kuenstler, ‘What is Social Group Work?’ in Peter Kuenstler (ed.), *Social Group Work in Great Britain* (London, 1960), p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Brill, *Children, not Cases. Social Work for Children and their Families* (London, 1962), p. 19; George Newton, ‘Adapting to Change’, *Social Work*, 25.1 (January 1968), p. 3; Margaret Thomas, ‘Role Understanding is a Function of Good Communication? An Examination of Roles in the Personal Social Services’, *Social Work*, 27.3 (July 1970), p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> This hints at the question of whether social workers were agents of social change or of social stability, an issue which is explored in depth in the next chapter.

<sup>59</sup> T. S. Simey, ‘Social Work and Social Purpose’, *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 7; Roger Moody, ‘The social worker’s dilemma’, *Peace News*, February 25 1966, p. 6.

<sup>60</sup> Anthony Forder, ‘Social Work in the Social Services’, in Anthony Forder (ed.), *Penelope Hall’s Social Services of England and Wales* (London, 1969), p. 192.

formulations like ‘help the client to manage’ or ‘helping them to come to terms with’.<sup>61</sup> This was not dissimilar to the view of Charles Maule in *Shorn Lamb* that sometimes you simply had to enable people to cope until the issue solved itself.<sup>62</sup> Adjustment thus had both a short- and a long-term dimension.

## II.iv Analysing the Focus on Well-Being and Adjustment

While it is unlikely that social workers’ focus on the client as a whole was as distinctive as they said, not least because general practitioners and some (mostly female) police officers would come to see their task in a similar way,<sup>63</sup> it is nevertheless noteworthy that the profession chose to promote this aspect of their work. It is likely that it was partially a reaction to the lack of training which social workers had when compared to their colleagues in the social and medical services, although it is notable that as the profession expanded its influence through more specialist training, there emerged increasing calls from other professionals and from policy-makers for a more generalist approach.<sup>64</sup> There was also the sense that the sheer number of different professions present in the welfare state, many of which had grown separately and then become artificially coordinated, meant that uncoordinated intervention due to overspecialisation was a serious danger.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jack Hanson, p. 13; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 28; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 18.

<sup>62</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 112, 190. On buying time, see also: Margaret Robinson, ‘The Family as the Client’, *Case Conference*, 14.9 (January 1968), pp. 338-342; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 118.

<sup>63</sup> James F. Fisher, ‘General Practice Outmoded?’, *The British Medical Journal*, 15344 (Jun. 8, 1963), p. 1541; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 24; Jackson, ‘Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969’, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 625, 631, 637. See also: Lawrence and Weisz (ed.), *Greater Than The Parts: Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950*.

<sup>64</sup> Olive Stevenson, ‘Specialisation Within a Unified Social Work Department’, *Case Conference*, 15.5 (September 1968), pp. 184-189; Harris, ‘State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past’, p. 669; Mary Langan, ‘The Rise and Fall of Social Work’ in John Clarke (ed.), *A Crisis in Care? Challenges to Social Work* (London, 1993), p. 50; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 115; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 75.

<sup>65</sup> Eileen Youngusband, ‘The Past and Future of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 9.4 (October 1952), p. 723; ‘Editorial’, *Social Work*, 12.3 (July 1955), p. 73; *The A.S.W. News*, April 1968, p. i.

Social work thus helped to personalise an impersonal welfare state, where a series of specialists emphasised specific aspects of health and illness, by focusing on general well-being.<sup>66</sup> It is clear that the experience of welfare could be stressful and impersonal. Julian Le Grand has noted that, in the NHS, ‘patients were supposed to live up to their appellation and be patient’ and when they did receive treatment, they were expected to accept ‘being treated by doctors too busy, or too elevated, to have time to explain what was happening to them.’<sup>67</sup> Clinical settings were commonly cited as particularly difficult for nervous clients, with the white coats and strict routines a particular bugbear.<sup>68</sup> If professionalism, as Clarke and Newman have argued, tempered the influence of bureaucratic administration,<sup>69</sup> then social work helped temper the impersonal application of professional knowledge.

In addition, by helping clients to adjust to medical, psychological, and social change, social workers also contributed to the effectiveness of this professional intervention.<sup>70</sup> In particular, the compiling of social histories helped to ensure that specialists were well-informed about the specific details and the broader picture.<sup>71</sup> It is also likely that a number of clients who might have otherwise made their way to busy professionals were treated (or at least placated) at an early stage by the efforts of social workers, who could also identify issues which might complicate later treatment in those who were referred to other branches of the welfare state.

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<sup>66</sup> Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 53; Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, pp. 47, 75.

<sup>67</sup> Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy*, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Rona Ferguson, ‘Support Not Scorn: The Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s’, *Oral History*, 31.2 (2003), p. 46; Noel Timms, ‘Social Standards and the Problem Family’, *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), p. 6.

<sup>69</sup> Clarke and Newman, *The Managerial State*, p. 6; Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 99-101;

<sup>70</sup> The role of social workers in supporting other welfare professionals is examined in more depth in the chapter on teamwork.

<sup>71</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 111; ASW, *Children Away From Home*, p. 4.

This aspect of social work, the focus on adjustment, had a strong therapeutic element, and was thus a continuation of the profession's former roles.<sup>72</sup> Even when it employed quasi-scientific ideas, as in casework, the importance of building relationships with clients remained. Its position in the welfare state, however, changed the context in which social workers attempted to help their clients cope with their own problems and those which emerged around them. Social workers were now on the frontline of much wider welfare structures, characterised by a mobility which few other professions had, present on public streets, in private homes, and in state institutions.<sup>73</sup> In all three locations, their focus on the emotional, social, and physical well-being of clients and patients was a necessary corrective to both the impersonal bureaucracy and the specialist professionalism encountered elsewhere.

This aspect of the social work role was thus a reflection of the growing size of the state social and medical services and their increasing specialisation. It was relatively consistent throughout the period, although changing conceptions of what constituted a client meant that social workers might apply their holistic approach to families and communities as well as individuals. Some form of social work was present throughout the client's engagement with the services which he or she required, and social workers ensured that the client and their context were considered as a whole from the stages of diagnosis and treatment through to recovery and their return home. Faced with daunting welfare structures and a succession of unfamiliar professional faces, the social worker and their focus on the individual could alleviate the otherwise impersonal experience of being a patient or a welfare client. The presence and the wider focus of social work was not just of potential benefit to

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<sup>72</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 46

<sup>73</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 153.



clients and patients, however, but also to other professionals in the social and medical services. It was the intermediary position of social workers, allowing them to operate between the consumption and provision of welfare, which was crucial. The position of social workers on the frontline of the welfare state enabled them to guide people to and through the relevant services, and it is this professional role which we examine next.

### III The Guidance Function

Since social workers operated between the welfare state and the public which it sought to serve, a natural part of their role was guiding people to and through the social services. During the war, when social workers had begun to discuss the possible appearance of post-war provision, the role of helping people navigate the services had already emerged.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, one of the self-proclaimed aims of the BFSW was to ‘promote greater efficiency in the conduct of the social services’,<sup>75</sup> indicating that this guidance role was designed to benefit both the client and the professionals providing the service. Social workers had been employed in such a role throughout the war, coordinating evacuation and helping those injured or made homeless by the hostilities to use the resources available to them.<sup>76</sup> For this reason,

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<sup>74</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/16, Constitution and foundation, A Memorandum for the Consideration of the Social Workers’ Group, What is a Social Worker?, 12<sup>th</sup> March [1940]; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, esp. p. 42; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/3/1/5, Annual Reports, BFSW Fifth Annual Report, 1941, p. 2. See also: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B3/1/20, Annual Reports, BFSW Thirteenth Annual Report, 1949, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 108; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 84, 87; Thorton, ‘Hospital Social Work in Wartime’, p. 120; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/2, Publications, Agnes Crosthwaite, The Social Services and the Professional Social Worker, c. 1940, p. 2. On evacuation in general, see: Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Basingstoke and New York, 2004), pp. 285-286.

they expected that their role in the post-war welfare services, whose outline was made more apparent by the Beveridge Report, would require them to act as a simple link between need and provision.

In the event, social workers did indeed take on this role, but the post-war landscape of welfare was more complex than they had predicted.<sup>77</sup> From the early days of the welfare state, social workers realised that determining which services people needed whilst maintaining the client's independence presented a challenge. This was because their clients were sometimes reluctant to engage with the array of organisations on offer, so that social workers had to become 'a lens focusing all the rays of help available from the voluntary and statutory agencies',<sup>78</sup> or, in another formulation, 'a channel through which appropriate community resources meet the presenting need'.<sup>79</sup> On other occasions, social workers were tasked with helping the client to recognise the services available to them, and removing obstacles which might prevent them from using such resources.<sup>80</sup> In addition, social workers stressed the independence of those with whom they worked, so that the decision was ultimately that of the client.<sup>81</sup> This was a clash between the professional integrity of social work and the practical necessities of working with those who lacked awareness of the range of statutory and voluntary services. Many of these individuals

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<sup>77</sup> Stella Penley, 'How Far the Welfare State?', *Social Work*, 7.1 (January 1950), pp. 396-398; B. E. Astbury, 'Some Observations of the Impact of the New Social Services on Family Life', *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), pp. 408-418; Roger Wilson, 'Social Work in a Changing World', *Social Work*, 7.4 (October 1950), pp. 465-479.

<sup>78</sup> W. G. Minn, 'Probation Work' in Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]), p. 141.

<sup>79</sup> ASW, *Recent Developments in Case-Work, A Report of the Seminar, 22nd -25th September, 1956* (Wallington, 1959), p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Joan L. M. Eyden, 'The Professional Social Worker', *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 248; Barbara N. Rogers and Julia Dixon, *Portrait of Social Work, A Study of Social Services in a Northern Town* (London, 1960), p. 11; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 115, 135; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 373.

<sup>81</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 9; Terence Morris, 'The Social Worker and the Study of Society', *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 164; Forder, 'Social Work in the Social Services', p. 202.

and families presented cases of extraordinary need, yet social workers found that helping clients to retain a sense of normality and control proved therapeutic in times of exceptional stress.<sup>82</sup>

Despite these issues, which would re-emerge on occasion, the practice of social workers was characterised by the giving of advice and the referring of clients to other services. Rose Mary Braithwaite\* told Alan Cohen that, despite her shortcomings in other areas of social work, she got by because ‘I understood the system, I understood the context, I understood the legislation, I understood the resources.’<sup>83</sup> In a 1959 article, almoner Madge Dongray insisted that a sound knowledge of the services available was part of the social worker’s basic equipment, and in addition, workers were required to have a keen sense of how services actually functioned. As with the BFSW’s focus on efficiency, Dongray emphasised how this work assisted welfare recipients and professionals alike, indicating that the new services could be confusing for a range of people.<sup>84</sup> As early as 1950, Kay McDougall and Una Cormack noted that the complexity of the new welfare structures necessitated intervention to assist ‘the exceptions who do not automatically fit into the general regulations.’ Social work, they noted, was ‘to the social services of the future what the drop of oil is to the bicycle. The earlier bone-shaker needed some but it is vital for the modern motor bicycle.’<sup>85</sup> This was still a fitting depiction of the role of social work come the end of the 1960s.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>83</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 24.

<sup>84</sup> Madge Dongray, ‘Social Work in General Practice’, *Case Conference*, 6.2 (June 1959), p. 39.

<sup>85</sup> Cormack and McDougall, ‘Case-Work in Social Service’, p. 30.

<sup>86</sup> Shelia Kay *et al.*, ‘From Psychiatric Social Work to Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 23.2 (April 1966), pp. 18; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 114.

### III.i Development of the Guidance Function

As the period progressed, and knowledge of the services became more widespread, social workers focused less on providing guidance, and more on their role in coordinating services, especially when individuals and families were in touch with a number of agencies.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, it is evident that social workers, both in their specialist and their general functions, continued to direct people to the appropriate services and help them to effectively utilise them.<sup>88</sup> A training in social administration was crucial here, since it helped social workers to understand the design and operation of services. Although it struggled to establish itself as an academic discipline, it was an integral part of many social work courses.<sup>89</sup> In addition, social workers sometimes needed to actively enable people to use the services, since there existed those who, as Sidney Briskin noted in a 1958 article, ‘found it so hard to assert themselves that they were unable to make good use of the available social services.’<sup>90</sup> Whether this was a well-recognised function of social work is debatable: in a 1958 critique of the welfare state, Brian Abel-Smith noted that there were ‘two noble professions at hand to assist in tax fiddling, but no

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<sup>87</sup> Sidney I. Briskin, ‘Some Aspects of Family Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 10.6 (November 1963), pp. 157, 159; Olive Stevenson, ‘Social Work and Training: The Next Phase’, *Case Conference*, 12.7 (January 1966), p. 236; *The A.S.W. News*, July 1962, p. i; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, pp. 96-97; Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, p. 25. We shall look at the way in which social workers linked services in more depth in the chapter on teamwork in the welfare state.

<sup>88</sup> Linda Dennis, *Families Are My Concern: The Career of a Health Visitor* (Reading, 1973), p. 76, p. 109; Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 121; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 27; J. A. S. Forman and E. M. Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice. A Report on an Experiment Carried Out in a General Practice* (London, 1968), p. 82; Forder, ‘Social Work in the Social Services’, p. 184.

<sup>89</sup> Philippe Fontaine, ‘Blood, Politics, and Social Science: Richard Titmuss and the Institute of Economic Affairs, 1957-1973’, *Isis*, 93.3 (2002), p. 403; Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 2* (London, 1978), pp. 44-45; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, p. 23; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> Sidney I. Briskin, ‘Casework and Present Day Trends’, *Social Work*, 15.4 (October 1958), p. 522

profession is yet established which will tell you how to get the best out of the Welfare State.’<sup>91</sup> Social work was surely the closest thing to such a profession.

The guidance function became particularly important with immigrant populations, who not only needed assistance in properly utilising welfare services, but might also require help in comprehending the particular culture of welfare they encountered upon arrival. R. B. Davison, presenting his research on recently-arrived West Indians to a social work audience, reported that ‘Form-filling and the production of documents were alien to them’. He also noted, like many others engaged with immigrants, their suspicion of ‘official’ services.<sup>92</sup> Once they realised the scope of welfare provision, however, their expectations could be significantly higher than those of British families,<sup>93</sup> and they might continue to supplement their use of state welfare with local networks of mutual support.<sup>94</sup> This issue, and especially the strain it put on child care services, caused trepidation amongst welfare professionals and policy-makers alike. The fact that these new arrivals were deemed to possess insufficient ‘inner spirit’ and ‘cultural capital’ to navigate the complex cultures of their host nation meant that social workers sometimes had to lay foundations to prepare them for the experience of welfare.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Brian Abel-Smith, ‘Whose Welfare State?’, in Norman McKensie (ed.), *Conviction* (London, 1958), pp. 69-70.

<sup>92</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, July 1963, p. iv; Albert Hyndman, ‘The West Indian in London’, in S. K. Ruck (ed.), *The West Indian Comes to England. A Report Prepared for the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities by the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1960), pp. 121-122.

<sup>93</sup> Anneliese Walker, ‘Coloured Family + White World = Stress’, *Mental Health*, Spring 1969, pp. 13-14; Katrin Fitzherbert, *West Indian Children in London* (London, 1967), pp. 41-42; Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>94</sup> Clifford S. Hill, *Black and White in Harmony. The Drama of West Indians in the Big City, from a London Minister’s Notebook* (London, 1958), p. 71; Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers. A Sociological Study of the Absorption of a Recent West Indian Migrant Group in Brixton, South London* (London, 1963), pp. 262-263.

<sup>95</sup> A Hyndman, ‘The Welfare of Coloured People in London’, *Social Work*, 15.3 (July 1958), pp. 492-496; ‘Miss I. Harrison’, in London Council of Social Service (ed.), *Immigrants in the New London. Report of a evening (sic) at the Kingsley Hotel, W.C.1 on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1965* (London, 1965), p. 13; Audrey K. Arnold, ‘The Newcomers and their Problems in Finsbury, London’, *Midwife and Health*

### III.ii Protecting and Enabling the Individual

In their endeavours to help people utilise the resources of the welfare state, social workers found that they had to act as advocates for those clients who were lost in or neglected by the large state structures they encountered. Social workers realised that the issues which caused people to turn to the social and medical services could be exacerbated by the difficulties of negotiating them. Joan Eyden was particularly concerned with this issue. Early in the period, she wrote in *Social Work* that the increasing number of services, many of them specialist in nature, 'leads to considerable confusion in the public mind. The resultant bewilderment may have unfortunate consequences.'<sup>96</sup> A few years later, having switched her allegiance to the freshly-minted *Case Conference*, she lamented that not only had 'the complexity of modern society...thrown up problems of mental ill-health', but that 'the vast increase in the number and extent of the social services' had further 'complicated the social pattern.'<sup>97</sup> The response of social workers to the issues posed by the complexities of the welfare services ranged from simple cases of advocating for the rights of patients, as Cecil French\* and Ken Powls both did in their roles as mental welfare officers,<sup>98</sup> to more complex situations where clients with multiple needs required long-term assistance in navigating several welfare departments, or where institutions were failing.<sup>99</sup>

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*Visitor*, 2.7 (July 1966), p. 298; Waters, "'Dark Strangers" in Our Midst', p. 232; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 105.

<sup>96</sup> Joan L. M. Eyden, 'The Professional Social Worker', *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 248.

<sup>97</sup> Joan Eyden, 'Health Visiting To-day', *Case Conference*, 3.5 (October 1956), p. 148.

<sup>98</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 22; Powls, *Many Lives*, p. 63.

<sup>99</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 23; WISEArchive, Social Care, In the Forefront of Children's Care since World War II, 2015 <<http://www.wisearchive.co.uk/story/in-the-forefront-of-childrens-care-since-world-war-ii/>> (16 September 2015).

This role gave rise to some evocative imagery: Margaret Simey described to Cohen the sensation that ‘you needed to defend the individual against this vast machinery’, while Joan Eyden, pitching in once again, commented that in some cases ‘we see ourselves as a St. George, rescuing our clients from being swallowed alive by the dragon of bureaucracy.’<sup>100</sup> As the period progressed, many social workers felt that they needed not only to protect clients from this dragon of bureaucracy, but actively enable them to fight back by acting as ‘facilitators’ and ‘advocates’.<sup>101</sup> This was tied to a political context in which the responsibility of the individual was becoming increasingly important,<sup>102</sup> and where popular psychology was emphasising personal growth and the importance of a client’s self-determination.<sup>103</sup>

One way in which social workers protected their clients from the dangers of the welfare state was by encouraging them to not only identify and address their own problems, but also to take an interest in local action in their community. The particular role of the community had already been discussed by social workers as part of their planning for the post-war period.<sup>104</sup> Miss Shaw, whose background was in mental health, argued that the profession needed ‘to enable our patients to make use of community resources and existing facilities and offer to help them to make

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<sup>100</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Margaret Simey, p. 14; Joan Eyden, ‘The Reorganisation of the Social Services from the Caseworker’s Point of View’, *Case Conference*, 3.10 (April 1957), p. 302; Kuenstler, ‘What is Social Group Work?’, p. 24.

<sup>101</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 19; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 31.

<sup>102</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 96.

<sup>103</sup> Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*, pp. 49, 62; Roy Porter, ‘Two Cheers for Psychiatry! The Social History of Mental Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain’, in Hugh Freeman and German E. Berrios, *150 Years of British Psychiatry, Volume II: the Aftermath* (London, 1996), p. 388.

<sup>104</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/16, Publications, A Memorandum for the Consideration of the Social Workers’ Group, What is a Social Worker?, 12<sup>th</sup> March [1940]; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/2, Publications, Agnes Crosthwaite, The Social Services and the Professional Social Worker, c. 1940, p. 7; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, p. 19; Tom Stephens (ed.), *Problem Families, An Experiment in Social Rehabilitation* (London, 1945), p. 1;

articulate their demand for more and better facilities': for her, however, the enemy was not bureaucracy, but apathy.<sup>105</sup> Other workers had emphasised that the resources of the community were useful for preventing family breakdown, and were indeed a useful resource for individuals suffering from personal problems. Social workers, they argued, should seek to support such existing systems.<sup>106</sup>

This aspect of social work had, in addition to its therapeutic objectives, social and political connotations, and in fact traversed the position of the social worker in the welfare state and in society as a whole. We will revisit these social and political elements of the social worker's role in the next chapter, but for now, it is important to emphasise that such work also had a clear therapeutic component, for individuals and families as well as for the community as a whole. For a start, this aspect of social work was an integral part of the community work which emerged as a social work method alongside the wider turn to community care in the 1960s.<sup>107</sup> It also sought to promote personal growth, and enable clients to better navigate the resources of the local community and state provision.<sup>108</sup> Even before community work became

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<sup>105</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 27.

<sup>106</sup> 'The Changing Nature of Family Case-Work Problems', *Social Work*, 10.1 (January 1953), p. 746; Barbara N. Rogers, 'The Administrative Setting of Social Service, Some Practical Implications', *Case Conference*, 1.3 (July 1954), p. 10; ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, p. 3; ASW, *Recent Developments in Case-Work*, p. 5; R. C. Wright, 'A Profession of Reformers', *Case Conference*, 3.7 (January 1957), p. 193; Jessica Seth-Smith, 'Modern Trends in Social Work – The Family Caseworker', *Social Work*, 17.3 (July 1960), pp. 62, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 66; David N. Thomas, *The Making of Community Work* (Hemel Hempstead et al., 1983), pp. 18-19; Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2* (London, 1978), p. 249. On community care more generally, see: Peter Bartlett and David Wright (eds), *Outside the Walls of the Asylum: The History of Care in the Community, 1750-2000* (London, 1999); Porter, 'Two Cheers for Psychiatry! The Social History of Mental Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain', pp. 383-406, esp. pp. 398-403; Peter Barham, *Closing the Asylum: The Mental Patient in Modern Society* (London, 1997); Joan Busfield, 'Restructuring Mental Health Services in Twentieth-Century Britain', in Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra and Roy Porter (eds), *Cultures of Psychiatry* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1998), pp. 9-28.

<sup>108</sup> John Rea Price, 'The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work', *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), p. 416; MRC, Association of Child Care Officers, MSS.378/ACCO/C/16/1/24a, Work of the Association, SCOSW (Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers), Letter to Secretaries of Constituent Organisations of SCOSW from Thomine (sic.) E. Sutton, Secretary of



commonplace, Barbara Rogers noted that social work was essentially ‘the art of helping people to make the best use of their own capacities and of all the community resources available’.<sup>109</sup> Enabling clients to identify and address their own issues fostered their self-determination, and went some way to ensuring that existing welfare structures could adapt to new issues.

### **III.iii Social Workers as Bridges and Interpreters**

As we have already seen, the provision of welfare did not on its own solve social problems. It was clear to social workers that the bureaucratic and professional cultures of welfare could be daunting and impenetrable to those who needed them most, such was their size and the byzantine ways in which they operated; even the professionals behind the provision of these services were not immune to the slow and confusing nature of the welfare state. Although social workers could guide their clients to the services they needed, it was still possible that they might end up lost, powerless, or voiceless, or that welfare might operate too slowly to be of any use. Social workers could not perform the functions of other welfare professionals themselves, and were often reluctant to decide for their clients the most appropriate path through the services available, but they could endeavour to ensure that such decisions and interventions were sufficiently efficient. In this way, their role was like the ‘drop of oil’ which McDougall and Cormack posited, or, in another formulation,

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Committee on Public Participation in Planning, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1968: attachment; *The A.S.W. News*, April 1969, p. i; Editor, ‘Comment: The Politics of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 26.2 (April 1969), p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Barbara N. Rogers, ‘The Administrative Setting of Social Service, Some Practical Implications’, *Case Conference*, 1.3 (July 1954), p. 10.

social work acted as a ‘catalyst’.<sup>110</sup> This was one of the ways in which social work came to occupy a particular territory between state and citizen.<sup>111</sup>

However, offering assistance in the practicalities of welfare was not always in itself enough. In many instances, the welfare process required mediation between the groups involved, usually welfare professionals and clients, in order to function effectively and efficiently. This reflected less the complex structures of the welfare state than the different cultures and specialist languages embedded within it. Social workers, who operated in the gaps and on the margins, were able to address this issue by using their broad knowledge of these cultures and languages, as well as of the client’s particular environment, to interpret the expectations and needs to each party involved in the welfare process.

There were a number of terms for this. In its simplest form, that of imparting information, the social worker was described as a bridge or as a link. In its more complex guise, that of representing the relationship between state and individual, it was commonly denoted as the ‘dual function’. I collectively refer to these elements as the ‘interpreting’ function.<sup>112</sup> It was an extension of the guidance function, but it was often much more complex than the task of guiding clients to and through the relevant services. As we see in Chapters 3 and 5, it required social workers to have

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<sup>110</sup> ASW, *Recent Developments in Case-Work*, p. 20; Winnicott, ‘Face to Face with Children’, p. 36; P. D. Ashley, ‘Group work in the probation setting’, *Probation*, 10.1 (1965), p. 7, quoted in: Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 116.

<sup>111</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 109; W. H. Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition. Volume Three: A Much Governed Nation. Part 1* (London and New York, 1987), p. 350.

<sup>112</sup> The ‘interpreting’ function is not to be confused with the idea of interpretation in psychoanalysis, where the therapist ‘interprets’ the meaning of the patient’s actions and words. This distinction is crucial because it was, as we shall see, part of the ‘interpreting function’. Some social workers, as part of their caseworker method, did indeed seek to engage in this kind of interpretation. For two excellent examples of this, see: Ferard and Hunnybun, *The Caseworker’s Use of Relationships* (London and Springfield, Illinois, 1962), pp. 49-108; Angela Hamblin, ‘The World of the Fair. Casework with a Schizophrenic Client and His Wife’, in Barbara Butler (ed.), *The Voice of the Social Worker. Papers written by members of the professional social work staff of the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1970), pp. 8-9.

an eclectic understanding of medical, legal, and bureaucratic concepts, and it was a crucial yet delicate part of their role in wider welfare teams.

We can observe the roots of this function in the interwar period, especially amongst psychiatric social workers involved in child guidance. It was they, John Stewart has noted, who represented the clinical team in the family home, helping them to understand psychological diagnoses, and who also interpreted the impact of the home environment on the child for their colleagues.<sup>113</sup> The social worker was thus embedded in both contexts, and was fluent in the language of both psychological and environmental factors. This notion that the social worker helped different groups to understand each other, usually by moving between institutions and homes, was emphasised in social workers' response to the Beveridge Report,<sup>114</sup> and indeed became a profession-wide endeavour in the welfare state. Jack Hanson reported that one of the main tasks of social workers in the first years of the welfare state was identifying in families and communities the need for medical and social intervention and explaining this need to those concerned,<sup>115</sup> while both child care officers and psychiatric social workers acted to liaise between children and their families, or between families and welfare agencies or institutions.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> John Stewart, 'I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home': Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain', in Mark Jackson (ed.), *Health and the Modern Home* (New York and Abingdon, 2007), pp. 117-122. See also: Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 57.

<sup>114</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 39.

<sup>115</sup> Jack Hanson, p. 13.

<sup>116</sup> Eileen L. Younghusband, 'Conclusion', in Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]) pp. 194; Arthur Collis, 'Casework in a Statutory and Voluntary Setting', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 454; Elisabeth Hunter, 'The Relationship between the Public Health Nurse and the Social Worker', *Social Work*, 16.1 (January 1959), pp. 5-6; N. M. Gately *et al.*, 'Parent, Child and Therapeutic Team in a Hostel Setting', *Case Conference*, 7.4 (September 1960), p. 95; Olive Reiner, 'Naught for Your Comfort', *Case Conference*, 15.11 (March 1969), p. 432; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, *passim*.

Social workers also worked as bridges and links between those in institutions and their communities,<sup>117</sup> and were identified with both, a conception which E. M. Goldberg\* referred to as 'a sort of half-way house'.<sup>118</sup> Joan Eyden, writing in 1957 when she was Vice-Chairman of the ASW, noted how the social worker was becoming ever more important as 'the point of contact between the service and the customer'.<sup>119</sup> In addition, social workers found that they had to translate the specialist language of different branches of the social and medical services into terms comprehensible to their clients,<sup>120</sup> although the development of their own professional jargon undermined this aim.<sup>121</sup> They also advised these professionals as to how their clients and patients expressed deeper needs through off-hand remarks, translating their non-direct communication and providing information on their background.<sup>122</sup> The need for interpretation was as great in community work as in casework and group-work, perhaps because there was a greater number of people

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<sup>117</sup> I. B. Spackman, 'The Mentally Ill in Hospital', in ASW, *Mental Health and Social Work, A Symposium* (London, [1961]), p. 31; Christopher Holtom, 'The Role of the Professional Caseworker in a Residential Setting', *Case Conference*, 5.6 (November 1958), p. 145; E. Pepperell, 'Other Forms of Action', in National Council of Social Service Inc., *People and Work: Co-Operation for Social Welfare in Industrial Communities* (Bristol, 1960), p. 63; Ruth V. Smith, 'Social Work in a Residential Unit for Mentally Handicapped Children', *Case Conference*, 5.8 (February 1959), p. 203; Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, p. 62.

<sup>118</sup> E. M. Goldberg, 'The Social Worker in the Sixties', *Social Work*, 18.4 (October 1961), p. 22.

<sup>119</sup> Joan Eyden, 'The Reorganisation of the Social Services from the Caseworker's Point of View', *Case Conference*, 3.10 (April 1957), p. 304.

<sup>120</sup> Kay McDougall and Una Cormack, 'Case-Work in Practice', in Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]), p. 35; Kathleen R. Ovens, 'Interpretation of the Social Services', *Case Conference*, 1.6 (October 1954), p. 19; E. T. Ashton, 'Perception, Communication and Casework', *Case Conference*, 2.10 (March 1956), p. 2; Kay Wells, 'Administrative Work – Notes from a Project in Casework Administration', *Social Work*, 17.4 (October 1960), p. 106; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>121</sup> David Donnison, 'Jargon', *Case Conference*, 1.10 (February 1955), pp. 9-10; 'Editorial', *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), p. 109; Barbara Butler, 'On the Use of Casework Jargon', *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), pp. 185-187; Malcolm Ford, 'Financial Help as a Social Work Technique: Some Emotional and Organisational Problems', *Social Work*, 24.1 (January 1967), p. 24; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Geraldine Aves, pp. 22-24; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, pp. 17-18.

<sup>122</sup> Madge Dongray, 'Social Work in General Practice', *Case Conference*, 6.2 (June 1959), p. 40; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 76-82; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, pp. 35-95; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 70.

involved: George Goetschius, writing on community development, defined interpretation as ‘the attempt to bring about understanding between the various elements in the field-work situation.’<sup>123</sup> ‘Understanding’, of course, covered a wide range of social and individual needs.

### **III.iv            The Dual Function**

Over the post-war period, the ‘interpreting’ function became broader and took on more symbolic importance, especially with regards to matters of authority. In a 1956 lecture, F. E. Waldron, who described the social worker as akin to Janus, the two-faced Roman god, detailed how the social worker had the role of interpreting to the client the expectations of the society and of the community. The unnamed chair of Waldron’s paper offered another facet to the role, arguing that the social worker interpreted the social services to the public and aided in communication between groups.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, Noel Timms\*, also using Janus as a metaphor for the social worker, described how the client and the professional both needed to be instructed on how to play their specific roles in the welfare encounter.<sup>125</sup> For the client, this might mean acclimatising them to deal with those in positions of administrative or professional power, which required some clients to address their issues with authority figures. As part of this process, social workers could represent specific

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<sup>123</sup> George W Goetschius, *Working with Community Groups: Using Community Development as a Method of Social Work* (London, 1969), p. 101.

<sup>124</sup> ASW, *Recent Developments in Case-Work*, pp. 11, 20.

<sup>125</sup> Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 103; Noel Timms, ‘The role of the social worker’, *New Society*, 3 September 1964, p. 20. See also: Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 129; Vicky Long, ‘Changing public representations of mental illness in Britain 1870-1970’ (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2004), pp. 160-161.

authority figures with whom clients had unresolved issues, usually parents,<sup>126</sup> an ability which was a crucial part of their therapeutic effectiveness.<sup>127</sup>

There are also examples of social workers interpreting the needs of the community to their agencies,<sup>128</sup> interpreting between charitable funds and those seeking material assistance,<sup>129</sup> and interpreting the needs of the patient to their family so that they too could understand and assist in the recovery process.<sup>130</sup> This latter case might also require the almoner to interpret to the family its specific responsibilities, as well as helping child care officers to understand the complications connected to a child's illness and treatment.<sup>131</sup> Social workers not only represented the interests of the state and the individual, but also helped different groups in the social services to efficiently interpret themselves to each other.

Once again, the position of social workers in the gaps could help the welfare system to function. This time, however, the role which social work came to perform was a reflection not of the magnitude of the welfare state, but of the variety of professional languages, forms of knowledge, and values which were present. There was a number of ways in which the different groups engaged in welfare, whether as professional or client, could misunderstand or remain ignorant of each other. Social workers, who were present in many spheres of the welfare state and who had an

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<sup>126</sup> John Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate, A Study in Action Research* (London, 1964), p. 78; Herschel A. Prins, 'Authority and the Casework Relationship', *Social Work*, 19.2 (April 1962), p. 21; Florence Mitchell, 'Client's Expectations of a Family Casework Agency', *Social Work*, 20.1 (January 1963), p. 11.

<sup>127</sup> D. M. Dyson, *No Two Alike. Some Problems of Children in Care* (London, 1962), p. 137; Winnicott, 'Casework and Agency Function', p. 184; Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 136; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, p. 99.

<sup>128</sup> Alan Cohen, in: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, p. 22.

<sup>129</sup> Joan E. Kirkpatrick, 'The Use of Material Help in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 6.4 (September 1959), p. 85.

<sup>130</sup> Kathleen Heasman, *Christians and Social Work* (London, 1965), p. 72.

<sup>131</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 16; 'Temporary Breakdown in a Family', *Case Conference*, 9.6 (November 1962), p. 168.

understanding of the sociological and psychological ideas which lay behind a number of welfare policies and practices, were thus well-equipped to help social work clients navigate the complexities of the social and medical services. By the same token, their presence in communities and family homes meant that they could offer similar assistance to their colleagues in those services.

#### **IV                      The ‘Conscience of Society’**

The interpreting function was a versatile one, with both practical and more metaphorical elements. In its most metaphorical form, it offered a solution to a problem faced by social workers over this period, namely, the individualised nature of their work in a generally universalist welfare structure.<sup>132</sup> Although social work was in theory a service concerned with all citizens, a notion which social workers tried to cultivate,<sup>133</sup> it was in practice a much more focused endeavour. This was pithily summed up by *The A.S.W. News* of October 1968, which argued that ‘unlike the health and education services, the personal social services always seem to be for “the other fellow”, the unfortunate few who just can’t make it, and not for the ordinary hardworking citizen.’<sup>134</sup> The question remained, then, of what social work could offer to society as whole, how it might contribute to post-war citizenship. The answer, it seems, was an extension of the interpreting function. Social workers, adept at translating language and sentiment between groups, could embody the care of society for those who remained excluded. Although this notion had a number of

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<sup>132</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 82.

<sup>133</sup> Social workers’ attempts to develop political roles involving the population as a whole are discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>134</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, October 1968, p. ii.

formulations, the ‘conscience of society’ was the one which best expressed its complex form.

The idea that social workers represented the ‘conscience of society’ was one which did not receive attention evenly across the period, but nevertheless seems to have played a large role in how social workers perceived their place within the welfare state. The manner in which social workers embodied the concerns of the many for the unfortunate few, and that their intervention could act as an expression of wider social concern for the plight of their clients, was a crucial aspect of the symbolic value which social work had at this time.<sup>135</sup> This was particularly noticeable in child care,<sup>136</sup> not least because of the complex meaning which the image of the child took on during this period.<sup>137</sup> This highly abstract aspect of social work’s role in society was partially a facet of the ‘interpreting’ function, and partially a reflection of the way in which the welfare state reconfigured the nature of citizenship in post-war Britain.<sup>138</sup> It was also, more practically, necessitated by the limited sympathy available for those who fell outside of social norms, both in local communities and within society as a whole.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 57. For a fine discussion of the value of metaphors such as the ‘conscience of society’ in studying welfare, see: Andrea Elkind, ‘Using Metaphor to Read the Organisation of the NHS’, *Social Science and Medicine*, 47.11 (1998), pp. 1715-1727. On the welfare state as itself a metaphor for the ‘good’ or the ‘bad’ society, see: Hughes, ‘Picking over the Remains’: the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK’, pp. 3, 7; John Clarke *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, in Gordon Hughes (ed.), *Imagining Welfare Futures* (London, 1998), pp. 1-4; Martin Gorsky, ‘The British National Health Service 1948-2008: A Review of the Historiography’, *Social History of Medicine*, 21.3 (2008), p. 438.

<sup>136</sup> Clare Britton, ‘Child Care’, in Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]), p. 169; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 51.

<sup>137</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 1-16.

<sup>138</sup> Harris, ‘State Social Work and Social Citizenship in Britain: From Clientelism to Consumerism’, pp. 927, 930, 934; Raymond Plant, ‘Social Rights and the Reconstruction of Welfare’, in Geoff Andrews (ed.), *Citizenship* (London, 1991), p. 58; T. H. Marshall, *The Right to Welfare and Other Essays* (London, 1981), pp. 134-135.

<sup>139</sup> Forder, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-2; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 82.



The idea that social work might be akin to a ‘conscience of society’ was evident from the early years of the welfare state. Joan Eyden, writing in 1949, described modern social work as different to Victorian philanthropy insofar as it was ‘an expression of the community’s concern for the welfare of its members carried out by citizens for fellow citizens.’<sup>140</sup> The notion of a social conscience behind the presence of social workers in communities was also present during the early 1950s,<sup>141</sup> although it was not until a conference on morals and the social worker in 1959 that the nature of this role was explicitly discussed, with the Reverend G. R. Dustan offering the evocative argument that social work gave ‘expression both to society’s concern for the naturally unfortunate, and to society’s moral obligation to the victims, albeit involuntarily, of its own corporate action.’<sup>142</sup> Throughout the 1960s, social work’s role as the ‘conscience of society’ was depicted as both an extension of the ‘interpreting’ role, usually as part of the mediation between individuals and social expectations,<sup>143</sup> and also as part of social work’s therapeutic value.<sup>144</sup> Psychiatric social worker Michael Power, for example, argued that by ‘protecting his clients from the standards and expectations of an uncomprehending society’, the social worker was aiding in the personal recovery of the client.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Joan L. M. Eyden, ‘The Professional Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 246.

<sup>141</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, pp. 2, 17, 34; *The A.S.W. News*, April 1970, p. v.

<sup>142</sup> G. R. Dustan, ‘The Ethical Warrant for Social Work’, in ASW, *Morals and the Social Worker, A Report of the Conference September 18th – 20th, 1959* (London, 1959), p. 5. See also: E. P. Corner, ‘Moral Problems Met in Social Work’, in ASW, *Morals and the Social Worker, A Report of the Conference, September 18th – 20th, 1959* (Wallington, 1959), p. 26; S. Russell, ‘The Selection of Students’, in ASW, *Morals and the Social Worker, A Report of the Conference September 18th – 20th, 1959* (London, 1959), p. 42.

<sup>143</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, 1960, p. xx; ‘Generic Conference, 1962’, *Case Conference*, 9.8 (February 1963), p. 215; Letter from E. Roche, *Case Conference*, 13.2 (June 1966), p. 53; *The A.S.W. News*, January 1967, p. i.

<sup>144</sup> Goldberg, *Welfare in the Community*, p. 10; Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, p. 152; Clare Winnicott, ‘Casework and Agency Function’, *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), p. 182; Wellcome Library Archives and Manuscripts (hereafter: Wellcome), Winnicott, Clare, GC/148/5/5/2, Lectures, (Untitled) to LCC Children’s Committees, and ACO, Feb 1956, p. 21.

<sup>145</sup> Michael Power, ‘Varieties of Casework’, *Social Work*, 19.4 (October 1962), p. 19. This article was a review of Ferard and Hunnybun’s *The Caseworker’s Use of Relationships*.

#### IV.i Issues with the ‘Conscience of Society’

By the end of the decade, however, greater experience of community work had exposed some wider problems with this role: at an ASW conference, Olive Stevenson\* reported that attempts to ‘mobilise community good will towards its less fortunate members’ had the potential to actually incite ‘feelings of resentment, anger, envy and all the rest’.<sup>146</sup> Likewise, looking back on the period from the 1970s, Jane Sparrow complained that “‘society”, having strained itself towards slightly greater tolerance of the recipients of the social services, is now hypercritical of its own representatives who mediate between it and its less fortunate members.’<sup>147</sup> Social workers found it difficult to embody the care and concern of wider society without also clearly demonstrating the control and authority which was also vested in their role.

The association of social workers with the ‘conscience of society’ threatened to become a burden, partially because the expectations placed on social work were so vast that there was no chance of success, only resolute failure.<sup>148</sup> These expectations stemmed from an increasing public awareness that there were a great many social problems which had continued under the welfare state.<sup>149</sup> This fractious relationship between social workers, the clients they were meant to help and the public which

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<sup>146</sup> Stevenson, ‘Welfare: Problems and Priorities’, p. 78.

<sup>147</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p.

<sup>148</sup> Kay MacDougall, ‘Future Clients and Colleagues’, *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 9; *The A.S.W. News*, October 1968, p. i; Olive Reiner, ‘Naught for Your Comfort’, *Case Conference*, 15.11 (March 1969), pp. 433-434; Wellcome, Winicott, Clare, GC/148/5/5/5/5, Lectures, Child Care Service in the Local Authority Setting, in *Local Authorities and Child Care*, ACO 14th Annual Conference, Sep 1963, p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 308, 317; Harris, ‘Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain’, p. 64; Rodney Lowe, ‘Modernizing Britain’s Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964’, in Lawrence Black and Hugh Pemberton (eds), *An Affluent Society? Britain’s Post-War ‘Golden Age’ Revisited* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2004), p. 36.

expected the resolution of these enduring problems was part of the complex political landscape which the profession had to navigate, which will be examined in depth in the next chapter.

#### **IV.ii            Explaining the ‘Conscience of Society’**

The question remains, however, of quite why this role, with its new conception of the relationship between individual and state, emerged at this time. Whereas the social work roles already discussed in this chapter were often results of practical issues precipitated by the size of the welfare state and the variety of professions, languages, and forms of knowledge within it, this notion of the ‘conscience of society’ seems much more elusive. One possibility is that it was simply the traces of an older arrangement: Enid Harrison, for example, saw the notion that social work was an expression of the ‘socially concerned citizen’ as a development from the turn of the century, while Asa Briggs’ classic discussion of the welfare state made reference to the emergence of a ‘liberal conscience’ from this point.<sup>150</sup> It is certainly noteworthy that social work came to occupy similar territory to religion,<sup>151</sup> and that social workers commonly drew upon Christian values in the discussion and justification of their role.<sup>152</sup> Social work was also rooted in the Victorian

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<sup>150</sup> Enid Harrison, ‘The Changing Meaning of Social Work’, in A. H. Halsey (ed.), *Traditions of Social Policy: Essays in Honour of Violet Butler* (Oxford, 1976), p. 82; Asa Briggs, ‘The Welfare State in Historical Perspective’, *European Journal of Sociology*, 2.2 (1961), p. 224. See also: Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, GC/148/5/5/5/5, Lectures, Child Care Service in the Local Authority Setting, in Local Authorities and Child Care, ACO 14th Annual Conference, Sep 1963, p. 2.

<sup>151</sup> King, ‘First Things First’, p. 17; Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, p. 135.

<sup>152</sup> See, for example: Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work and Social Change* (London, 1964), p. 23; Margaret Tilley, ‘Religion and the Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 19.2 (April 1962), p. 8; Mary Richardson, ‘A Letter of Work Amongst Problem Families’, *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), p. 431; Cormack and McDougall, ‘Case-Work in Social Service’, p. 27; Timms, *Social Casework: Principles and Practice*, pp. 53-68; ‘The Neglectful Mother, By the Southampton Discussion Group’, *Social Work*, 12.2 (April 1955), pp. 59.

development of what Bill Jordan has termed a ‘new style of charitable compassion’,<sup>153</sup> so it is little surprise that the profession might link itself to a certain public sentiment for the less fortunate.<sup>154</sup>

Yet it is perhaps more relevant that the welfare state seemed to reconfigure the relationship between the individual and the state, or at least prompt discussion of such a relationship.<sup>155</sup> Such an intention was clear in the Command Papers on social insurance which set out the foundations of welfare, the first of which noted that ‘the unity and solidarity of the nation...will be its guarantees of success in the fight against individual want and mischance.’<sup>156</sup> Even if a welfare state meant that risk was collectivised, however, this could never be entirely inclusive, especially not when issues of class complicated the arrangement.<sup>157</sup> Commentators on social work have recognised the existence of clients who refuse or who are excluded from the welfare system, and how work with this group is characterised by humanistic values rather than structural change, even if they do not expand on the political and practical issues this presents.<sup>158</sup> It is possible, then, that social workers’ presentation of themselves as the ‘conscience of society’ was an attempt at a comprehensiveness which individualised welfare could not possibly hope to achieve, and was thus a reflection of the tensions caused by instituting state-backed welfare.

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<sup>153</sup> Bill Jordan, *Invitation to Social Work* (Oxford, 1984), p. 35.

<sup>154</sup> Mark Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 3; Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States*.

<sup>155</sup> Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 252-285; Harris, ‘Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain’, pp. 93-96, 102-106; Vernon, *Hunger*, pp. 236-238, 256; Lowe, ‘Postwar Welfare’, pp. 358-359; Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity*, pp. 107-108; Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, pp. 112-116.

<sup>156</sup> Ministry of Reconstruction, *Social Insurance Part 1*, Cmd. 6550 (London, 1944), para. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity*, pp. 1-2, 5, 232-234.

<sup>158</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 46; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 109.

There are two further offshoots from this new relationship between the state and the individual (or, indeed, the family, or the community). One consequence was that it reconfigured the role of the social worker as a figure of authority, which will be addressed shortly. The other issue was that it highlighted the tension between the individualised focus of social work and the increasingly impersonal nature of welfare when it was offered as a collectivised state service. For example, W. R. Watkinson, writing in 1955 after forty years as a relieving officer, recalled his fear that the mechanical nature of the new welfare legislation would be incompatible with the humanity once embodied in his profession.<sup>159</sup> Likewise, moral welfare worker Jessie Higson wondered whether the scientific methods of social work in the welfare state meant that her profession might be ‘in danger of forgetting the human personal needs of those needing our help, of losing the “passion for souls”’.<sup>160</sup> This was not a concern limited to older social workers, or even just to social workers: Olive Stevenson, at a conference on the values and priorities of welfare, spoke of ‘a fear, shared by many people in society and sometimes expressed quite openly, that the caring process is in some sense depersonalised when offered by the state.’<sup>161</sup>

The conception of the social worker as the ‘conscience of society’ can be understood as a response to this fear. Social work was, of course, partially included in the welfare state to alleviate the effects of these shifts, to personalise often impersonal services, and to ensure that clients and patients were treated ‘as a whole’. Nevertheless, if social workers felt that the humanitarian aspect of their work with individuals had been lost, they may have sought the metaphorical value of their

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<sup>159</sup> W. R. Watkinson, *The Relieving Officer Looks Back: The Last Years of the Poor Law in Holderness* (Withernsea, 1955), quoted in: Burnham, *The Social Worker Speaks*, p. 176.

<sup>160</sup> Jessie E. Higson, *The Story of a Beginning. An Account of Pioneer Work for Moral Welfare* (London, 1955), p. 142.

<sup>161</sup> Stevenson, ‘Welfare: Problems and Priorities’, p. 77.

intervention elsewhere. Again, the next chapter extends these themes of social work's role in the welfare culture of post-war society. It is worth noting for the moment, however, that both the nature of this 'conscience of society' and the reason for its emergence as a concept were indistinct and open to interpretation. It is difficult to entangle the aspects of this role, if any, which were distinct to social work in the welfare state from those which remained from former associations with religion and charity.

#### **IV.iii            The Authority of the Social Worker**

The authoritarian aspects of their role, such as their power to remove children from families or to admit people to institutions such as mental hospitals, gave social workers much cause for anxiety,<sup>162</sup> largely because it threatened to undermine their role as a caring profession. Many social workers, however, rationalised such powers on account of their responsibility to society as a whole as well as to their clients.

This was not an uncomplicated matter. Probation worker Beatrice Pollard, for example, identified the 'tension between "the one and the many" in social work' as one of the profession's most complex problems, while Marion Whyte, a lecturer in psychiatric social work, argued that 'being a social worker... presents the ever-recurring dilemma of how to reconcile the interest of the client with that of

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<sup>162</sup> On elderly clients' mistrust of social workers, see: Kathleen R. Ovens, 'Interpretation of the Social Services', *Case Conference*, 1.6 (October 1954), p. 19; Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, pp. 105-107. On removing children, see: Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 28; Joyce Warham and Sheila McKay, 'Working with the Problem Family', *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), p. 128; Elizabeth A. Sheldon, 'An Experiment in Group Work with Children', *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 198; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 48. On anxieties over dealing with the mentally-ill, see: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 14; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 23; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, pp. 10, 13; Kathleen Jones, 'The Development of Institutional Care', in ASW, *New Thinking About Institutional Care* (London, 1967), p. 9

society.’<sup>163</sup> In a context, however, where an individual’s attempts to reform themselves were seen as healthy for the client and for wider society,<sup>164</sup> social workers needed to find a way, as Elizabeth Gloyne, a former almoner, neatly described it in her Cohen interview, to be ‘both the political regulating agency and the profession who cares and heals’.<sup>165</sup>

The specific issue of balancing care and control was approached in two ways, both with strong overtones of the symbolic value of welfare. The first, devised by Clare Winnicott,<sup>166</sup> was the notion of ‘agency function’, which was held in high esteem by fellow social workers.<sup>167</sup> This concept saw the social worker as part of a process whereby the community looked to accept the client and the client looked to accept their place and their integration in the community. The willing cooperation of every party in this process was necessary, highlighting independence and self-determination, while social control was reconfigured as a form of social care.<sup>168</sup> The

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<sup>163</sup> Beatrice E. Pollard, *Social Casework for the State, A Study of the Principle of Client Independence in the Matrimonial Work of Probation Officers* (London and Dunmow, 1962), p. 8; Marion B. H. Whyte, ‘Experiments in Social Work Education – Leeds’, *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 205.

<sup>164</sup> Wills, ‘Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950-1970’, pp. 159-160.

<sup>165</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 22.

<sup>166</sup> Foren and Bailey find traces of agency function earlier than the 1960s, and it is clear that it was being discussed in the States in the 1950s. See: Robert Foren and Royston Bailey, *Authority in Social Casework* (London *et al.*, 1968), pp. 67-70; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 34. The oral histories, however, show that Winnicott was the figure most closely associated with the concept in British social work.

<sup>167</sup> On the influence of the concept of agency function, see: D. W. Winnicott, ‘The Mentally Ill In Your Caseload’, in Joan F. S. King (ed.), *New Thinking for Changing Needs* (London, 1963), p. 63; John Rea Price, ‘The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), p. 413; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 22; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, p. 22; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 25; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 17. It is notable, however, that ‘agency function’ is mentioned in neither volume of Younghusband’s *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study*, although she does offer a very similar formulation in: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 100.

<sup>168</sup> Clare Winnicott, ‘Casework and Agency Function’, *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), pp. 178-184. This article was based on a paper read at the conference of past students of Applied Social Studies courses, in London in December 1961, and had been previously given to the Sheffield branch of the ASW in May 1961. ‘Agency’ in this context simply means the organisation or institution in which the social worker is based. See: Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*, pp. 7-8.

social worker was thus an expression of society's need for order and conformity, but also of their desire to rehabilitate those who breached its standards. The notion of 'agency function' was designed to be distinctive to social work, one reason for its popularity.<sup>169</sup> In this guise, social work was symbolic of the desire to resolve tensions between the interests of the individual and of the community and society in which he or she was embedded: the casework encounter was, as Winnicott said when she discussed it with Cohen, 'where society and the individual meet.'<sup>170</sup>

This was a variant, it would seem, of the interpreting function, where the social worker could represent the interests and expectations of one group to another. In fact, one of the tenets of agency function was that social workers could assist the client by representing other important figures. The extent to which these were figures of authority depended on the specific setting of the social worker. Probation workers, argued Winnicott, unequivocally took on the role of authority figures towards their clients,<sup>171</sup> even if other accounts show us that they also helped support the client in their encounters with more recognisable forms of authority, particularly magistrates and the police.<sup>172</sup> An almoner, since he or she was a 'healing person' and a representative of the general medical team, did not need to overtly use authority,<sup>173</sup> although there was some debate over the course of the period as to whether such action might be occasionally justifiable.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Letter from Diana Macdonald, *Case Conference*, 21.4 (October 1964), p. 27; Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 34; Kay McDougall, p. 35; Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*, pp. 8-10; Joan Eyden, 'Social Services in the Modern State', *Case Conference*, 1.10 (February 1955), pp. 18-19.

<sup>170</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 17.

<sup>171</sup> Clare Winnicott, 'Casework and Agency Function', *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), p. 184.

<sup>172</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 34-37, 83; Stroud, *Touch and Go, passim*; Foren and Bailey, *Authority in Social Casework*, pp. 84-88.

<sup>173</sup> Clare Winnicott, 'Casework and Agency Function', *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), p. 184.

<sup>174</sup> For a review of the discussions around the balance between 'permissiveness' and authority in medical social work, see: Foren and Bailey, *Authority in Social Casework*, pp. 196-225.



Agency function was an extension, albeit it a deft and well-received one, of the more common solution to the issue of authority. This was to accept that, since it was what gave the worker access to the client in the first place, it was an integral part of the social worker's identity.<sup>175</sup> Social workers had to accept that there was a measure of control implicit in the role, although even then this might be explained as simply a 'concern for the rights of others'.<sup>176</sup> In a topic which was particularly relevant to their work with children and families, and which will be revisited later, social workers also portrayed the authoritarian aspects of their role as therapeutic, as necessary for the client's recovery. As Reg Wright reminded Cohen, questions of authority were not about whether or not it was necessary, but about how much of a role it should have. For Wright, dismissing the authoritarian aspects of social work, as students were wont to do, was to neglect one's responsibility to both the client and to society.<sup>177</sup> Louise Jackson has noted in her analysis of child welfare and the police that, in both legal frameworks and in social work, "care' and 'control' existed as symbiotic rather than potentially competing elements within policy frameworks."<sup>178</sup> The authoritarian aspects of social work were not just part of the profession's wider responsibility to those who conformed to accepted standards, but were also symbolic of the care and acceptance extended to those who found themselves on the wrong side of these values.

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<sup>175</sup> Dustan, 'The Ethical Warrant for Social Work', p. 12; Herschel A. Prins, 'Authority and the Casework Relationship', *Social Work*, 19.2 (April 1962), p. 21; Pollard, *Social Casework for the State*, p. 21; Stevenson, 'Summing Up', p. 79; D. V. Donnison, 'Seebohm: The Report and its Implication', *Social Work*, 25.4 (October 1968), p. 6.

<sup>176</sup> King, 'First Things First', p. 15.

<sup>177</sup> Reg Wright, p. 10.

<sup>178</sup> Jackson, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969', p. 647.

It is worth noting, however, that the attempts of social workers to rationalise the authoritarian aspects of their role, and to present it as a necessary part of their caring functions, were not necessarily successful. Stories still circulated of elderly couples, fearful of the workhouse, hiding from visiting social workers,<sup>179</sup> while families were known to both fear the removal of their children and to actually use the figure of the social worker as a threat to the younger generation.<sup>180</sup> Especially when the social worker was connected to other figures of authority, such representations proved very difficult to circumvent.<sup>181</sup> The view of Lynne Segal and her fellow feminist activists that social workers were ‘the repressive ‘soft cops’ of the system’ was probably widespread.<sup>182</sup> For all their attempts at using care to balance out their authority, social workers were unable to escape their association with ‘the system’.

Social work’s status as the ‘conscience of society’ and the ways in which social workers attempted to find symbolic value in their role as figures of authority both show how long-term characteristics could be reconfigured in the post-war context. Both of these were, however, roles which operated at a broader cultural, almost metaphorical level, concerned with the meaning of social work and its intervention in personal matters. There were also more practical elements of social work which persisted into the welfare state, such as the provision of material and

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<sup>179</sup> Kathleen R. Ovens, ‘Interpretation of the Social Services’, *Case Conference*, 1.6 (October 1954), p. 19.

<sup>180</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 28; Joyce Warham and Sheila McKay, ‘Working with the Problem Family’, *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), p. 128; Elizabeth A. Sheldon, ‘An Experiment in Group Work with Children’, *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 198; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 48; Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, GC/148/5/5/5/5, Lectures, Child Care Service in the Local Authority Setting, in Local Authorities and Child Care, ACO 14th Annual Conference, Sep 1963, p. 3.

<sup>181</sup> D. E. G. Plowman, ‘The Role of the Social Worker. A Psychologist’s Comments’, *Case Conference*, 4.6 (November 1957), p. 171; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 101.

<sup>182</sup> Lynne Segal, ‘A Local Experience (1979)’, in Sheila Rowbotham *et al.*, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (London, 2013), p. 258.

practical aid, and the notion of the social worker as some form of example for the client. These roles were also reconfigured according to the new values of social work and society in post-war England, and it is to them which we now turn.

## V Practical Aid and Assistance

In the early years of the welfare state, and even during the war, social workers had noted that since the state now provided for the material needs of their clients, they would become free to work on psychological and emotional issues.<sup>183</sup> However, social workers still routinely encountered cases of deprivation, to which there were a number of different responses. Some chose to work on the psychological issues and refer the families elsewhere for their material needs,<sup>184</sup> some, usually older workers, chose to actively focus on the poverty they found,<sup>185</sup> whilst others sought to emphasise the link between the condition of the family and their emotional maturity.<sup>186</sup> Jean Snelling\* noted in her interview with Alan Cohen that the tendency of many social workers to resort to emotional assistance rather than material aid during this period was partially a hangover from the interwar and war-time period, when relief had been limited, and the fact that applying for and obtaining material resources in the early welfare state was such a torturous process.<sup>187</sup> Increasingly, social workers came to the conclusion that poverty was still an endemic issue

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<sup>183</sup> Paul Halmos, 'The Training of Social Workers and the Teaching of Psychology', *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 257; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, esp. pp. 46-47; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 5; 'Editorial', *Social Work*, 15.4 (October 1958), p. 515.

<sup>184</sup> Noel Timms, 'Problem Family Supporters', *Case Conference*, 1.7 (November 1954), pp. 29-30.

<sup>185</sup> Mary Richardson, 'A Letter of Work Amongst Problem Families', *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 426.

<sup>186</sup> Corner, 'Moral Problems Met in Social Work', p. 22.

<sup>187</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 28.

amongst their client groups and that they were well-placed and expected to address this.<sup>188</sup>

More common, however, and less problematic, was the offer of practical support. This could cover a number of tasks, from keeping people company, helping them find employment, or assisting them with housework.<sup>189</sup> We should note that such activities were mostly co-operative, so as not to violate the client's self-determination. Although this was a topic little mentioned in the professional literature, many of those interviewed by Alan Cohen were keen to emphasise that much of their everyday work in the welfare state was related to practical help. This was partially a reaction against the heavy emphasis placed on casework by those entering the profession after 1948: as Winnicott told her students, 'The deepest casework you'll do is making good provision for somebody.'<sup>190</sup> Social workers were also aware that material aid and practical assistance could act as a precursor to or be incorporated into sound work on relationships and emotions with individuals and families, both those suffering deprivation and those suffering illness, and was in fact a good way to engage clients in the first place. Once simple practical issues were resolved, the social worker could focus on the more complex personal issues.<sup>191</sup> This

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<sup>188</sup> The changing views of poverty amongst social workers is something I shall discuss in the next chapter.

<sup>189</sup> See, for example: Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, pp. 105-107; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 99-102; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 99; Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, p. 67.

<sup>190</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 19. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 22; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, pp. 23-24; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 17.

<sup>191</sup> King, *The Probation and After-Care Service. Third Edition*, pp. 229-230; Margaret Whale, 'Problem Families: The Case for Social Casework', *Social Work*, 11.1 (January 1954), p. 886; Terence Morris, 'The Social Worker and the Study of Society', *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 164; Joan E. Kirkpatrick, 'The Use of Material Help in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 6.4 (September 1959), pp. 83-86; Kay MacDougall, 'Future Clients and Colleagues', *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), pp. 8-9; Denise H. Ziman, 'Medical Social Work', in Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott (eds), *The Social Workers* (London, 1965), pp. 118-120; Malcolm Ford, 'Financial Help as a Social Work Technique: Some Emotional and Organisational Problems', *Social Work*, 24.1 (January 1967), pp. 20-24; Roderick Ballard, 'Social Action and the Local Authority Social Worker', *Case*

is perhaps why social workers also seemed to admire their volunteer forebears, whose work had been predominantly practical, an indication that they appreciated that such assistance could have an impact.<sup>192</sup>

Although the task of combating poverty and want, long a defining characteristic of social work, remained a crucial one throughout the post-war period, social workers were able to combine this with their newer functions. A focus on the environmental and the financial fell into the remit of their holistic practice, while the role of guiding clients through the services helped them access the provision for material needs, a task which indicates that freedom from want was only theoretically ensured by the establishment of the welfare state.<sup>193</sup> In addition, social workers portrayed their practical work with clients as an important part of the ‘interpreting’ function, since such issues could exacerbate or conceal the emotional and social problems in which they were primed to intervene. Even if the social worker’s role in helping people with practical issues was little discussed, we should appreciate that it remained part of their professional toolkit.

## **VI The Social Worker as Example**

The notion that social workers knew how to solve such issues was related to the other established aspect of social work which continued into the welfare state, that of acting as an example to their clients. This view was common amongst older workers

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*Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), p. 169; Elizabeth Irvine, ‘Psychiatric Social Work: Training for Psychiatric Social Work’, in Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1* (London, 1978), p. 177.

<sup>192</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 2 Jessica Seth-Smith, ‘Modern Trends in Social Work – The Family Caseworker’, *Social Work*, 17.3 (July 1960), p. 62; T. S. Simey, ‘Social Work and Social Purpose’, *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 5; Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, p. 67.

<sup>193</sup> Political and Economic Planning, *Family Needs and the Social Services* (London, 1961), p. 208.

such as Mary Wilkinson, who told Alan Cohen after the period that ‘you must always remember you’re there for them to look up to. ...you pull them up to you, and set them out, and make a bad life good, or a poor life good.’<sup>194</sup> This idea was presented in a number of ways during the period itself. Discussions during the war and the 1950s tended to focus on the idea of the worker as an example of a well-adjusted, respectable citizen. One wartime commentator noted that if clients were to use the social worker like a mirror, to discover hitherto unseen aspects of themselves, it was crucial that the mirror was ‘true and undistorted, so that it may be trusted.’<sup>195</sup> At the 1952 conference on ethics, meanwhile, it was argued that ‘Education in ethics...should enter into all contacts between the social worker or social services and the public. Example is the social worker’s most effective method’.<sup>196</sup>

By the end of the decade, the idea that social work was, as David Donnison knowingly termed it, ‘a professional form of saintliness’,<sup>197</sup> had come under debate. The former focus on the moral integrity of the worker was increasingly challenged by the scientific approach of casework, which supposedly removed issues of the worker’s own personality from consideration.<sup>198</sup> In the 1960s, social workers began to feel that the personality could be a therapeutic tool, and that their own experiences of overcoming difficulties might prove instructive in their discussions with clients. This notion, that a touch of empathy was just as advantageous as a dose of virtue,

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<sup>194</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Wilkinson, p. 8.

<sup>195</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, p. 38.

<sup>196</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 12.

<sup>197</sup> David Donnison, ‘The Social Work Profession’, *Case Conference*, 3.3 (July 1956), p. 67

<sup>198</sup> Cyril S. Smith, *People in Need* (London, 1957), p. 141; Russell, ‘The Selection of Students’, pp. 43-46; A. L. Laycock, ‘Ethics and Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 8.6 (November 1961), p. 153.

was not an entirely new one, with antecedents throughout the 1950s.<sup>199</sup> At the same time, the social worker needed to have a personality sufficiently stable to weather the storms of the casework relationship, to become involved and to attempt to understand the situation from the position of the client, but also to remain detached, objective, and non-judgemental.<sup>200</sup> Social workers, it was stressed, should be relatable examples of how to manage the strains of everyday life: in a letter to *Social Work* in 1969, a B. Fletcher argued that while doctors did not need to suffer a disease to effectively treat it, he 'would question the validity of a statement which allowed us to believe that the social worker is completely free from the human condition which causes hardship to the client.'<sup>201</sup>

## **VI.i The Social Worker as a Model Citizen**

In tune with the turn towards the community and the focus on 'enabling' social action towards the end of the period, the social worker also became increasingly portrayed as an example of good democratic citizenship.<sup>202</sup> While social workers had to demonstrate an understanding of the client's situation and their feelings about it, they also had to stand as a model of what the client, with the right help, could

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<sup>199</sup> Russell, 'The Selection of Students', p. 46; Albert Philip and Noel Timms, *The Problem of 'The Problem Family', A Critical Review of the Literature Concerning the 'Problem Family' and its Treatment* (London, 1957), p. 140; 'The Neglectful Mother, By the Southampton Discussion Group', *Social Work*, 12.2 (April 1955), p. 59; Keeling, *The Crowded Stairs, Recollections of Social Work in Liverpool*, p. 140.

<sup>200</sup> E. M. Goldberg, 'Working with the Family in the Child Care Field: Concepts, Methods and Practice', *Social Work*, 25.1 (January 1968), p. 14; A.F. Robinson *et al.*, 'The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers', *Social Work*, 16.2, (April 1970), p. 3; F. Roy Dennison, 'Does the Social Worker have a Therapeutic Role?', *Case Conference*, 12.3 (July 1965), p. 90; Brill, *Children, not Cases*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>201</sup> Letter from B. Fletcher, *Social Work*, 26.1 (January 1969), p. 25.

<sup>202</sup> G. M. Carstairs, 'New Tasks for Community Care in our Changing Society', *Social Work*, 22.2-3 (April and July 1965), p. 5; Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, p. 144; Francis M. Yanney, 'The Case for "Pressure Politics" in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), p. 165.

achieve.<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, the emotional labour of welfare work meant that the social worker had to be seen as a model of resilience or recovery.<sup>204</sup> As Bill Jordan has argued, this meant that the Victorian image of the social worker as ‘a different kind of being, on a higher plane’ lingered into the post-war period, one particularly striking example being social worker *cum* philosopher Peter Nokes’ assertion that ‘we are little bags of gold dust and as we go through the world we influence our clients through contact, a little bit of the dust rubbing off here and a little bit there’.<sup>205</sup> I would contend, however, that over the post-war period, the social worker went from being intrinsically superior to instead existing on a ‘higher plane’ of self-awareness and self-control.<sup>206</sup>

When we consider the versatility required of social workers, not least the ability to switch between practical assistance and negotiating issues of authority, citizenship, and emotional turmoil, it is little surprise that such emphasis was placed on their personality. In fact, Rhodri Hayward has noted a similar phenomenon amongst doctors at the time, with discussions of medical practice harking back to ‘an older moral discipline, in which the doctor perfects his personality in order to maintain his status as a therapeutic instrument.’<sup>207</sup> Even if the notion that the social worker was of such moral integrity as to be a beacon in the client’s muddled life diminished over this period (although we can observe occasional snatches of it in the

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<sup>203</sup> Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, p. 78; Robert K. Gardiner and Helen O. Judd, *The Development of Social Administration* (London, 1959), p. 195.

<sup>204</sup> Russell, ‘The Selection of Students’, pp. 44-46; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 206.

<sup>205</sup> Bill Jordan, *Freedom and the Welfare State* (London, *et al.*, 1976), p. 168; Peter Nokes, *The Professional Task in Welfare Practice* (London, 1967), p. 34.

<sup>206</sup> For a useful discussion of where this aspect of social work stood at the end of the period, see: King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>207</sup> Rhodri Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880-1970* (London and New York, 2014), p. 115.



literature),<sup>208</sup> he or she still had to be careful to remain a relatable figure, able to elicit the trust of the public and the professional alike. Since one of the roles of the social worker was to ‘humanise’ the welfare services and to personalise the professionalism and bureaucracy which clients would encounter,<sup>209</sup> a certain integrity and consistency was important for maintaining good relationships.<sup>210</sup> This aspect of post-war social work, as well as being a link to the profession’s history, underlines the roles of guiding people through the services, addressing their problems as a whole, and having the ability to interpret attitudes to and from clients. All of this had to be done using the worker’s primary tool, his or her own personality.

## **VII Conclusions**

The role which social workers took on in the post-war welfare state was characterised in a number of ways. They acted as information points to facilitate people’s actions, telling their clients how to carry out the course upon which they had decided. Their knowledge of the social services and their ability to share it was in this way their major contribution to the welfare state. Yet they also helped people to adjust to a number of changes, such as in their relationships, their environment, or their health, so that they might use the social and medical services more effectively. Sometimes, the intervention of social workers on the front-line meant that these clients would not have to use further, more specialist services at all.

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<sup>208</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Geraldine Aves, p. 24. A humorous example of how social workers might raise the spirits of their clients through bright clothing can be found in: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work*, p. 53; Parry and Parry, ‘Social work, professionalism and the state’, p. 43.

<sup>210</sup> Brill, *Children, not Care*, p. 36.

Over the course of this chapter, we have seen how social work's position in the gaps and on the margins of the welfare state saw it taking on certain roles. The development of these facets of the social work task reflect the growth of specialism in the welfare state, the disparate languages and forms of knowledge used, the complexity of the services offered, as well as lingering ideas about the inadequacy of the often-working-class people who received welfare assistance. Social work certainly had its practical side, insofar as it helped the welfare state, sprawling behemoth that it was, to function. However, there was also a symbolic value to social work's contribution, with its focus on the client as a whole, its presence as the 'conscience of society', and the way in which it humanised impersonal services. As Barbara Rogers contended, social workers were 'representatives...of the whole concept of a welfare state',<sup>211</sup> and this was a role rife with complexities. Furthermore, while social work was supposedly client-centred, it also sought to assist other professions in the welfare state with their tasks. All of these roles were, at some point, challenged and re-negotiated, and it is unlikely that the symbolic aspects of social work were as intelligible as the profession would have liked, but they formed the basis of the territory which social work occupied.

### **VII.i Assessing the Social Work Contribution**

The simple fact that these roles existed does not, however, give us a clear indication of whether or not they worked. If social work was indeed included as an afterthought, then we should also ask what it added to the welfare state. In many cases, it was a matter of efficiency, of guiding people to and through the services,

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<sup>211</sup> Barbara N. Rogers, 'The Administrative Setting of Social Service, Some Practical Implications', *Case Conference*, 1.3 (July 1954), p. 12.

and of assessing need both before and after the interventions of other professions. This meant that social work was often limited by the services in which it was embedded, and for that matter, it is worth emphasising that different branches of social work were often constrained by the spheres and institutions in which they operated. Almoner and psychiatric social workers may have been able to move from hospitals to the community, but their work was still bounded by the work of medical professionals. Child care workers may have been able to move between Children's Homes, family households, schools, and a host of other facilities, but they still relied on state provision for young people. If social workers were to operate in the gap between service provision and service users, those services had to exist. As we shall see in the next chapter, it was sometimes necessary for social workers to address the absence of necessary or useful services, either by communicating the issue to policy-makers or by encouraging people and communities to make their own provision.

Although different branches of social work had different emphases, it is still clear that social work as a profession took on a wide range of functions. Increasingly over the period, functions which were specific to certain branches became common across the profession, so that work in the community, once the preserve of health visitors and child care workers, became part of the remit of probation workers and almoners. This often self-perpetuating growth in the social work role led Bill Jordan to deliver the damning verdict in 1976 that 'Social workers wanted to do everything, to prevent everything, and have ended up not being able to do anything properly.'<sup>212</sup> It is certainly striking that social work seemed to take on new roles throughout the period, without any sense of delineating the boundaries of the profession; during the

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<sup>212</sup> Jordan, *Freedom and the Welfare State*, p. 163.

period itself, child care tutor Thomas Douglas remarked that the mix of concrete statutory obligations and abstract attitudes involved in the social worker's task was rarely conducive to consistent practice.<sup>213</sup> Throughout this thesis, we shall see some of the limits of this expansion, such as social work's limited success in conducting social research or in co-ordinating work with 'problem families'.

At the same time, we should also appreciate the pragmatism behind the social work role, which allowed sufficient flexibility for social workers to form relationships with individuals, families, and communities as required. We should also note that Jordan's assessment was aimed at a form of social work more generic than the one we have encountered in this chapter. During this period, although there were motions towards generic practice, social workers still operated in specialised roles, with particular client-groups or in particular institutions. It is important, then, to distinguish social work as a profession from the variety of social workers who constituted it. Another theme of the thesis is that while professional expansion was limited by its position in the gaps and on the margins, the work of social workers in their particular setting does seem to have aided the functioning of the welfare state, both for clients and for professionals, precisely because it addressed those gaps in provision and the enduring existence of those on the margins of society. We should be careful, then, not to assess social workers on criteria which did not fall under their remit. Almoners may not have made a significant contribution to the welfare of children (except those who became patients), but they did assist in the efficiency of hospitals and provide a corrective to impersonal professionalism. On the other hand, the work of child care workers did help children and their families to cope with

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<sup>213</sup> T. Douglas, 'Ethics in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 14.3 (July 1967), p. 90.

changes and challenges, either by enabling them to address their own problems or by connecting them to relevant services. The success of social work was the sum of the smaller successes of social workers.

Nevertheless, their position in the gaps and on the margins did mean that social workers were only as successful as the social and medical services in which they were embedded. This again shall be a theme we encounter throughout the thesis. The existence of social workers and the roles which they performed indicates that the welfare state was a disparate array of structures, professions, and cultures which did not always connect in an intuitive or accessible manner. As much as social workers tried to address the gaps in provision, their presence was a reminder of the disjointed nature of the post-war settlements. Their position in the welfare state allowed social workers to perform a series of different tasks, and was in this way constructive, but it was also limiting. The judgement and discretion of social workers was frequently curtailed by the expectations placed on them by policy-makers, the public, and other welfare professionals. This issue is a recurring theme in the next chapter, on the social and political roles which social work adopted during the post-war period.

## 2 Social Work, Social Change, and Social Policy

### I Introduction

As well as their roles within the welfare state, social workers were also concerned with the part they could play in broader social and political issues. Their position in the gaps and on the margins meant that they had a privileged insight into how legislation was experienced by the population as a whole, but it also meant that the profession was susceptible to the effects of social and political change. While social policy as a whole necessarily reflects a variety of social, economic, and political factors,<sup>1</sup> the particular position of social work means that it is particularly affected by the society in which it is situated, especially with regards to the relationship between the individual and the state. It is thus integral to our understanding of how such issues are negotiated.<sup>2</sup> This thesis is framed within a period when the particular political connotations of social work were becoming a point of discussion within the profession, and when social workers were becoming conscious of and concerned about the symbolic value of their work.<sup>3</sup> It was also a period of significant change within English society and culture, in spheres such as class, gender relations, prosperity, and political consciousness, although, as David Cannadine reminds us, such shifts sat alongside some important continuities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lowe, 'Modernizing Britain's Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964', p. 36; Clarke *et al.*, 'Introduction', pp. 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 274; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 364; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 51; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> McLaughlin, *Social Work, Politics and Society*, p. vii; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, pp. 145-146. Much of the literature on change and continuity in areas such as class and welfare are discussed in my introduction, but see especially: Hall, *Sex, Gender and*

Another area which underwent significant transformation in this period was the provision of welfare. This included, as Bernard Harris has argued, ‘the political will...on which these services were offered’.<sup>5</sup> Social work played only a minor role in such discussions, however, a neglect stemming, Rodney Lowe has argued, from its failure to secure professional identity, political weight, and public recognition.<sup>6</sup> These deficiencies were all interlinked, with the lack of professional identity impeding attempts to garner political influence or public approval. Yet we should also recognise that social workers were aiming to gain traction in all three areas, with the result that we cannot understand the profession’s social and political role, and its ramifications for our understanding of the period, without considering neighbouring issues such as social work’s relationship with policy-makers and the public, the role of authority within the social work task, and the way in which shifts in political culture and social attitudes affected welfare practice. In particular, social workers found themselves mediating the complexities of social change and continuity during this period, acting to enable progress whilst assisting those, often found on the margins, whom it threatened. In this sense, the profession also existed in the space between change and stability, helping to navigate the pace of such shifts.

This issue of social work and social change constitutes a large part of this chapter, but, in order to consider how they negotiated the tensions implicit in their social and political roles, we conclude with two case-studies. The first concerns social work’s approach to the family, where a variety of values regarding children

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*Social Change in Britain since 1880*, pp. 117-164; Harris, ‘Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain’, pp. 80-110; Davis, *Modern Motherhood. Women and Family in England, c. 1945–2000*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 300. See also: Jytte Klausen, *War and Welfare Europe and the United States, 1945 to the Present* (New York and Basingstoke, 1998), pp. 245-246; Lowe, ‘Postwar Welfare’, p. 372; Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, p. 34; Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition. Volume Three: A Much Governed Nation. Part 1*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 273.

and their optimum environment needed to be mediated. The second discusses the ‘rediscovery of poverty’, an example of where an issue which social workers had been addressing on a local level became a matter of wider political and social concern, with negative repercussions for the image of social work.

## **I.i The Politics of Social Work**

While debates over whether this was a period marked by change, continuity, or even regression have made for a lively historiographical literature,<sup>7</sup> discussions of post-war social work as a socio-political force have been somewhat tamer. Much of the existing literature has focused on the struggle of social work to obtain increasing political recognition as part of its professional legitimacy. This steady journey from the minor recognition of the welfare state and the 1948 Children’s Act through to the high hopes of the Seebohm Report and disappointment of the Local Authority Act in the late 1960s, with stops in 1959 for the Younghusband Report and in 1963 for another Children’s Act, has become a familiar one.<sup>8</sup> More recent scholarship has focused on matters of citizenship, and the way in which the existence of social work in the welfare state impacted on the inclusion of welfare clients as citizens in post-war society,<sup>9</sup> but even considerations of the broader political trends in which social

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example: Frank Mort, *Capital Affairs. London and the Making of the Permissive Society* (New Haven and London, 2010), pp. 3-4, 20-21; Nick Thomas, ‘Will the Real 1950s Please Stand Up? Views of a Contradictory Decade’, *Cultural and Social History*, 5.2 (2005), pp. 227-236; John Macnicol, ‘From ‘Problem Family’ to ‘Underclass’, 1945-95’, in Helen Fawcett and Rodney Lowe (eds), *Welfare Policy in Britain: The Road from 1945* (Basingstoke and New York, 1999), p. 69; Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948-c. 1970’, pp. 363-364; Conekin *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-21.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example: Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, *passim.*; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 1, *passim.*; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study*, Volume 2, *passim.*; Joan Cooper, *The Creation of the British Personal Social Services 1962-1974* (London, 1983), pp. 68-120; Kenneth Henry Brill, ‘The Curtis experiment’ (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> The prime examples here are: Harris, ‘State Social Work and Social Citizenship in Britain: From Clientelism to Consumerism’, pp. 915-937; Harris, ‘State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past’, pp. 662-679. See also: Tony Gilbert and Jason A. Powell, ‘Power and Social



work was situated have focused on elite thinkers rather than the everyday welfare experience.<sup>10</sup>

Underlying much of this work has been the contention, both implicit and explicit, that the influence of the diagnostic model, with its narrow focus on knowledge and method, meant this was a particularly apolitical period for social work, especially when compared to the emphasis on social reform of the interwar period and the emergence of radical social work in the 1970s.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Enid Harrison argued in 1976 that ‘the diagnostic phase must be regarded as an aberration’, a brief interruption in social work’s longer history of radicalism and reform.<sup>12</sup> Bill Jordan and Nigel Parton have argued that this was because ‘social workers were trained out of any political understanding of their work’, and that questions of technique, theory, and status had taken precedence over action,<sup>13</sup> while Margaret Yelloly has noted that the psychodynamic aspects of casework reflected ‘a deep pessimism as to the possibilities of constructive social change.’<sup>14</sup> This is an evaluation of the post-war period which many of the social workers practicing at the time would have recognised, and the tension between social work’s professional

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Work in the United Kingdom: A Foucauldian Excursion’, *Journal of Social Work*, 10.1 (2010), p. 4; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. x; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, *passim*., but esp. pp. 52-54.

<sup>10</sup> This is by no means, I should add, an issue confined to the historiography of social work. See: Conekin *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> On the interwar period, see: Ray Lees, ‘Social Work, 1925-50: the Case for a Reappraisal’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 1.4 (1971), pp. 371-379, esp. pp. 377-378; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 46-49. On radical social work, see: Bailey and Brake, ‘Introduction: Social Work in the Welfare State’, pp. 1-12; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 71-88.

<sup>12</sup> Harrison, ‘The Changing Meaning of Social Work’, p. 96.

<sup>13</sup> Bill Jordan and Nigel Parton, *The Political Dimensions of Social Work* (Oxford, 1983), p. 3. See also: Lewis, ‘Women, social work and social welfare in twentieth-century Britain: from (unpaid) influence to (paid) oblivion?’, pp. 216-218.

<sup>14</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, p. 140.

aspirations and political responsibilities was a common theme in the professional literature.<sup>15</sup>

The picture is, unsurprisingly, a little more complex. Social workers in the post-war period were not averse to invoking the political consciousness of their forebears, and there was a clearer lineage between the social work of this time and the politically-infused practice of the 1970s than the radicals of that decade might have liked to admit.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, as much as critiques of society and the welfare state were present in social work discussions during the 1950s and 1960s, the social workers of this period did not take action in the same way as the next generation. When Barbara Prynne revisited the post-war years in interviews with social workers active at the time, she found that many had been content to make ‘relatively minor adjustments’ and to leave the social and political order and the existing welfare structures unchallenged.<sup>17</sup> There was, nevertheless, increasing tension and unease over the period that services could and should be better co-ordinated and more

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<sup>15</sup> Robert K. Taylor, ‘The Caseworker’s Role: An American Report’, *Case Conference*, 10.1 (May 1963), p. 4; Kay McDougall, ‘Implications of Social Change for the Social Worker’, *Case Conference*, 4.1 (May 1957), p. 16; Elizabeth Howarth, ‘The Scope of Social Casework in Helping the Maladjusted’, *Social Work*, 6.3 (July 1949), p. 328; Timms, *The Language of Social Casework*, p. 83; Forder, ‘Towards a Social Policy’, p. 286; Francesca Ward, pp. 19-20. These commentators saw the loss of a political purpose as an unfortunate but inevitable part of professionalisation. For more critical voices, see: Dustan, ‘The Ethical Warrant for Social Work’, pp. 10-11; T. S. Simey, ‘Social Work and Social Purpose’, *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 7; M. Tilley, ‘The Social Worker’s Contribution to Welfare’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Welfare – Values and Priorities* (London, 1969), p. 69. On the tension between political and professional functions, see: ‘Comment: The Politics of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 26.2 (April 1969), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> David Webb, ‘Themes and Continuities in Radical and Traditional Social Work’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 11.1 (1981), pp. 143-158. A good example is the The Social Workers Group, part of The Socialist Medical Association. See: Sackville, ‘The Role and Influence of Professional Associations in the Development of Social Work as an Occupation 1900-1990’, p. 88. In 1965, they released a quasi-manifesto entitled ‘A Socialist View of Social Work’, which contained the term ‘social tranquillisers’ to describe social work’s role, quoted in: John Rea Price, ‘The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), p. 412. This idea was picked up and re-used by radical social work: see: *Case Con*, 1 (June 1970), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Prynne, ‘Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship’, in Sandy Fraser and Sarah Matthews (eds), *The Critical Practitioner in Social Work and Health Care* (London et al., 2008), p. 98. See also: Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 99.

politically-conscious.<sup>18</sup> Angry words and sorrowful laments there may have been, but there is nevertheless little evidence of the strikes and protests which characterised the story of social work in the 1970s.<sup>19</sup>

## **I.ii Social Work and Observing Policy**

As per the central theme of this thesis, we find social workers in this period not on the barricades or the picket-line, but rather in the gaps and on the margins. Post-war social workers existed, like those who came before and after them, on the frontline of the welfare state. This had both its benefits and its difficulties. The main advantage was that their position between government and public gave the social worker, as Joan King argued at a 1963 conference, ‘special opportunities to see how social pressures affect the individual’ and the potential ‘to increase social understanding’.<sup>20</sup> This role was evident during the war, when many social workers had felt it necessary to look beyond the boundaries of their particular roles and to consider wider social policy,<sup>21</sup> and continued into the welfare state, when it was considered a professional duty, possibly even a matter of ethical obligation, ‘to foresee new needs’.<sup>22</sup>

This was to a large extent a particular extension of the interpretation and guidance roles which social workers adopted within the welfare state more generally. As a profession trained in interpreting between groups, it was natural for social

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<sup>18</sup> Prynne, ‘Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship’, pp. 98-99.

<sup>19</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 145-147; Paul Halmos, *The Personal and the Political. Social Work and Social Action* (London, 1978), pp. 79-80, 85-86.

<sup>20</sup> Joan F. S. King (ed.), *New Thinking for Changing Needs* (London, 1963), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/5, Publications. Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, pp. 34, 42; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 21. See also: B. E. Astbury, ‘Some Observations of the Impact of the New Social Services on Family Life’, *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), p. 414; J. H. Nicolson, ‘The Background of Social Welfare’, *Social Work*, 8.3 (July 1951), pp. 560-565.

workers to assist welfare clients in understanding new policies and, in turn, informing ‘legislators, social administrators, and public opinion alike’ of ‘the gross anomalies and gaps in our social services’.<sup>23</sup> This emphasis on anomalies and gaps, on the particular issue, with its implied potential for positive change, appeared in very similar form in both *The A.S.W. News* in April 1969 and in a guide to social work for a general readership,<sup>24</sup> indicating the enduring importance of the role to the profession. There were still some voices within the profession who felt that it was as guilty as ever of concentrating on day-to-day problems without an eye for the future,<sup>25</sup> and as we shall see, social workers did begin later in the period to take a more active role in helping their clients to challenge policy.

Crucially, this aspect of social work was one which concerned not only welfare clients, but also, as *The A.S.W. News* noted in April 1966, ‘the problems of the ordinary citizen and the way in which social and economic policy affects him.’<sup>26</sup> This expansion of social work, from a form of often middle-class assistance for working-class clients to a service open to all who needed it, sat within the new universalism which characterised the welfare state.<sup>27</sup> Social workers thus occupied a particular niche within the welfare policy machine: not only did they implement social policy,<sup>28</sup> but they could also offer insight into the effects of such policies on

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<sup>23</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, ‘Poverty and the “Wage Stop”’, *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), p. 260.

<sup>24</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, April 1969, p. i; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, p. 100.

<sup>25</sup> LSE Archives and Special Collections, Fabian Society Archives, E/41/2, Publications, Daddy Should Know Better By Now: The Reform of Social Work, by Andrew Sinfield: original draft, p. 16; Elizabeth A. Sheldon, ‘An Experiment in Group Work with Children’, *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 200; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>26</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, April 1966, p. i.

<sup>27</sup> Lorenz, ‘Decentralisation and Social Services in England’, p. 201; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 53-54; Smith, *People in Need*, p. 21; PEP, *Family Needs and the Social Services*, p. 2; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, pp. 18-19.

<sup>28</sup> Joyce Warham, ‘Social Work and Social Policy’, *Case Conference*, 9.2 (June 1962), pp. 40-44; *The A.S.W. News*, January 1967, p. i.

the public, and determine where further action or adjustment might be needed.<sup>29</sup> This was an aspect of the profession's role within society which was applicable, at least in theory, to the population as a whole, although attention did remain focused on those sections adjudged to be in the greatest need or unable to help themselves.

Unsurprisingly, this position between policy-makers and the public meant that social workers had a number of a number of links, both formal and informal, with those in national and local government. Although Lowe identified that social work as a whole lacked political weight,<sup>30</sup> there were still some social workers who enjoyed some political influence. Some of these were remnants of previous working relationships; child care worker Lucy Faithfull, for example, was able to utilise connections gained during a sojourn in the Home Office when she became a Children's Officer for Oxford City Council in 1958.<sup>31</sup> Others arose during the course of the period. David Burnham found that many social workers, especially those involved in child care, were routinely contacted by councillors and even MPs for their insights into local problems: one social worker, David Custance, was even telephoned by Harold Wilson, then Prime Minister.<sup>32</sup>

Although I have been unable to find any references to social workers who ran for office,<sup>33</sup> there were some who were in constant discussion with the higher echelons of government. The most notable example of a politically-active social worker was Eileen Younghusband, whose correspondence file in her personal papers

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<sup>29</sup> ASW, *Children Away From Home*, p. 4. See also: Study Group on Training for Social Work, *Community Work and Social Change: The Report of a Study Group on Training Set Up by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation*. Chairman Eileen Younghusband (London, 1968), p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Lowe, 'Postwar Welfare', p. 34.

<sup>31</sup> Niechcial, *Lucy Faithfull: Mother to Hundreds*, p. 77

<sup>32</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 128.

<sup>33</sup> There is one notable exception of a politician from the period having a background in social work: Clement Attlee had a background in settlement work. See: C.R. Attlee, *The Social Worker* (London, 1920).

reveals not only a cosy relationship with Labour councillor Peggy Jay, but also exchanges with other social workers on how best to utilise personal connections to influence social policy.<sup>34</sup> There was, however, a distinct lack of a strong professional lobby for social work,<sup>35</sup> certainly no clear equivalent to the Socialist Medical Association to influence and critique welfare policy.<sup>36</sup> Although there were occasional mentions of social workers during parliamentary debates, usually focusing on the utility of the profession for discovering unmet need and reporting on the reception of policy,<sup>37</sup> politicians in this period showed little awareness of what social workers did and how the profession was developing.<sup>38</sup>

### **L.iii                      The Pressures of Public Opinion**

If social workers had some success in establishing links to policy-makers, they were less esteemed in the eyes of the general public. This issue was reflected by Younghusband's speech to the Family Welfare Association (FWA) after the completion of her Report, where she spoke of "dizzy success" on the one hand in

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<sup>34</sup> MRC, Papers of Dame Eileen Louise Younghusband (1902-1981), social worker and writer, 1858-1981 (hereafter: Younghusband Papers), MSS.463/EY/G1/2, Social Work: General "Seebohm", Family Services, pamphlets, correspondence, circulars, papers 1965, Letter from Younghusband to Mrs. Douglas Jay, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1965; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/3, Social Work: General "Seebohm", Letters to the Times, and Sir Keith Joseph's correspondence 1965, Letter from YH to RHJ, 11.6.65 (dictated 10.6.65), subject: Sir Keith Joseph; Kathleen Jones, *Eileen Younghusband: A Biography* (London, 1984), *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>36</sup> John Stewart, 'The Battle for Health'. *A Political History of the Socialist Medical Association, 1930-51* (Aldershot and Brookfield, VT, 1999), esp. pp. 152-232.

<sup>37</sup> There are thousands of references to social workers and social work, scattered across command papers, evidence from committees, and the recordings of sittings in the Commons and the Lords. For examples from the Commons, see: *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons Debate, 26 January 1951, Vol. 483, cc538-539; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons Debate, 19 February 1954, Vol. 523, cc2366-2367; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons Debate, 07 November 1956, Vol. 560 cc234-235; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons Debate, 31 July 1962, Vol. 664, c549; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons Debate, Vol. 702, 17 November 1964, c373, c378; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons Debate, Vol. 762, 11 April 1968, c1635.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, p. 119.

persuading the Ministry of Health Working Party of the value of family casework' and the "devastating failure" to enlist the support of the money-giving public.'<sup>39</sup> This was partially a reflection of the times: the post-war period, and the 1960s in particular, saw an increase in demands on and expectations of state services, even while the public became more critical of established institutions.<sup>40</sup> Social work was not immune to such pressures.<sup>41</sup>

Social workers themselves felt that they made for 'convenient Aunt Sallys', and were blamed not only for their own failings but for those of society as a whole.<sup>42</sup> The notion that members of the public expected the social services to deal with deviants, while simultaneously fearing that they themselves might be targeted and thus stigmatised, was a common theme in discussions of how the profession was perceived.<sup>43</sup> Although the multiple associations of social work, and the profession's ability to act as a bridge between different groups, proved useful with other welfare professionals and with policy-makers, it presented an issue in wider society. For many welfare clients, social work was just another way for condescending state-officials to intervene in their lives,<sup>44</sup> while both public and government laid some

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<sup>39</sup> 'Editorial', *Social Work*, 17.1 (January 1960), p. 1. See also: Jean S. Heywood, 'The Public Understanding of Casework', *Social Work*, 19.1 (January 1962), pp. 8-12. On Younghusband's speech and its context, see: Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', p. 64; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 317; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 115; Lowe, 'Modernizing Britain's Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964', p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> Dustan, 'The Ethical Warrant for Social Work', p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Kay MacDougall, 'Future Clients and Colleagues', *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 9; Mitchell, 'Social work today', p. 27; John Rea Price, 'The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work', *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), pp.

<sup>43</sup> Collins, *A New Look at Social Work*, p. 12; *The A.S.W. News*, October 1968, p. i; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 150; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 2; Lorenz, 'Decentralisation and Social Services in England', p. 201.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Richardson, 'A Letter of Work Amongst Problem Families', *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 429; Elizabeth A. Sheldon, 'An Experiment in Group Work with Children', *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 198; *The A. S. W. News*, October 1969, p. i.

responsibility for tenacious social problems on its permissive approach towards deviants and deviance.<sup>45</sup>

Although such criticisms partially reflected a wider loss of confidence in social institutions, it was professions such as social work which felt the full force of such shifts. As Chris Nottingham has argued, insecure professions like social work were positioned ‘at the point where state and society met the individual’, and were lumbered with roles as ‘messengers of obligation, witnesses to misfortune, and, so often, administrators of society’s zero sums.’<sup>46</sup> In their analysis of American social work, Harry Specht and Mark Courtney have acknowledged a similar issue, that social workers ‘have been society’s unwelcome messengers...and society has treated them accordingly – with ambivalence.’<sup>47</sup> Social workers’ successes were often quiet affairs, felt only by those immediately concerned in the case, while their failures frequently had wider ramifications, some of which were disseminated further by unflattering press coverage.<sup>48</sup>

Above all, however, it is the ambiguity of attitudes towards social workers and their various functions which is key to our understanding of social work’s role in the mediation of social change. As José Harris has argued, the emotional impact of

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<sup>45</sup> T. Douglas, ‘Ethics in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 14.3 (July 1967), p. 91; PEP, *Family Needs and the Social Services*, p. 32; King, ‘First Things First’, pp. 14-15.

<sup>46</sup> Nottingham, ‘The Rise of the Insecure Professionals’, p. 469.

<sup>47</sup> Harry Specht and Mark E. Courtney, *Unfaithful Angels: How Social Work Has Abandoned its Mission* (New York, 1995), p. 5. Pierre Bourdieu found that social workers in France occupied a similar social position. Pierre Bourdieu *et al.*, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Cambridge, 1999), cited in: Nottingham, ‘The Rise of the Insecure Professionals’, pp. 471-472.

<sup>48</sup> Long, ‘Changing public representations of mental illness in Britain 1870-1970’, pp. 164-167, 172-173; John W. D. Davies, ‘Social Work and the Press’, *Social Work*, 19.3 (July 1962), pp. 18-22; Scorpio, ‘Critic’s Column’, *Social Work*, 20.2 (April 1963), p. 13; R. C. Wright, ‘The Staffing of Social Work Services’, *Social Work*, 21.1 (January 1964), p. 5; John Rea Price, ‘The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), p. 413.



institutions like the NHS did not extend to every state service,<sup>49</sup> with the result that it was not always clear how the presence of, for example, social work fitted into the wider post-war picture. It was not just uncertainty about the particular role of social work which caused issues for the profession, however, but also society's uncertainties about its own priorities. Social workers felt that it would be necessary to react to feedback from the communities and the society whom they served, but that such feedback was not forthcoming.<sup>50</sup> As Reg Wright wrote in 1957, 'It would have been easier if social workers could have examined their personal motives with a society which was more certain of its own values and aims'.<sup>51</sup> Given that, as Hochschild argues, social workers are required to 'supervise their own emotional labour by considering informal professional norms and client expectations',<sup>52</sup> this represented a serious issue. In considering the fortunes of social work in post-war society, we should be careful to remember that not only was the profession itself undergoing a period of reflection on what its function might be, but that this happened within a framework of contradictory and ambiguous public opinion on the presence of social work.

This meant that the role of social work in society was often more reactive than proactive. Social work's place in the gaps and on the margins meant that it was positioned, as Nottingham argues, on 'the moving ideological frontiers of British society, where debates about how to deal with social casualties and the respective

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<sup>49</sup> Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', p. 116. See also: Helen Fawcett, 'The Welfare State Since 1945', in Jonathan Hollowell (ed.), *Britain Since 1945* (Oxford et al., 2003), p. 450; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 293.

<sup>50</sup> Noel Timms, 'The Public and the Social Worker', *Social Work*, 19.1 (January 1962), pp. 3-7; King, 'First Things First', p. 17; A.E. Young, 'Communication, Social Work and the People', *Case Conference*, 16.3 (July 1969), p. 101; Noel Timms, *The Receiving End* (London and Boston, MA, 1973), p. 46.

<sup>51</sup> R. C. Wright, 'A Profession of Reformers', *Case Conference*, 3.7 (January 1957), p. 192.

<sup>52</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 153.

rights of the individual and society were fought out.’<sup>53</sup> Although this left the profession susceptible to shifts in social attitudes and political culture, it was nevertheless a position which allowed social workers to help facilitate social change, and also to mitigate its effects. This was exemplified in a speech by social work lecturer George Newton to an audience of Children’s Officers and Home Office inspectors in February 1967. All involved in social work, he argued, ‘have a great deal of experience in bringing about change; both in adapting to it ourselves and in helping others to adapt to it.’<sup>54</sup> Later in the talk, he commented that ‘we can all be clearer if we can think of social work activity as helping where the shoe pinches rather than feeling immediately responsible for providing a new pair of shoes.’<sup>55</sup>

## II Social Work and Social Change

In the following sections, we examine three particular roles which social workers played in regards to social change. These were: helping people adjust to social change; acting as advocates for those affected by social issues; and encouraging participation and social action within communities. These roles were at some points more prominent than at others, but evidence of all three can be found throughout the period. Furthermore, they were often interwoven, with individual social workers frequently taking different action depending on the specific circumstances.

What is essential to note, however, is that all three were attempts to mediate and mitigate the effects of social change or shifts in political culture; even the attempt to foster participation amongst communities was a reaction to a loss of faith

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<sup>53</sup> Nottingham, ‘The Rise of the Insecure Professionals’, p. 466.

<sup>54</sup> George Newton, ‘Adapting to Change’, *Social Work*, 25.1 (January 1968), p. 3. For a similar sentiment, but expressed privately, see: Wellcome, Robina Addis (1900-1986): archives, PP/ADD/B/6, General Correspondence 1967-1981, Reply letter from Addis, 26 February 1969.

<sup>55</sup> George Newton, ‘Adapting to Change’, *Social Work*, 25.1 (January 1968), p. 6.

in state welfare and an expanding voluntary sector. In their particular position in the gaps and on the margins, and between policy and the public, social workers held influence in a number of ways, but this never extended to directing or setting the agenda for social and political shifts. We should also reiterate that this was a period when the diagnostic, medical model of social work was dominant,<sup>56</sup> with the result that many of the profession's social roles, even if they were couched in political terms, were extensions of welfare functions. If terms like 'adjustment' and 'facilitating' are reminiscent of the previous chapter, this is because there is a direct link between the political and the therapeutic aspects of social work.

## **II.i Mediating Social Change**

I have previously suggested that the social and political contribution of social work was an extension of its welfare role. This is evident in the way in which it enabled positive social change by mediating its effects at the level of the individual. The post-war period was, as Shinobu Majima and Mike Savage have contended, a period when social change 'was no longer about the interruption of outside forces, but was now complicit in everyday social life.'<sup>57</sup> It was clear, however, that such inevitable change could result in negative consequences, especially for those ill-equipped to survive in a shifting society, an issue which José Harris has labelled 'the trauma of transformation'.<sup>58</sup> The position of social workers meant that they were well-placed to

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<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Pearson *et al.*, 'Introduction: Social Work and the Legacy of Freud', in Geoffrey Pearson *et al.*, (eds.), *Social Work and the Legacy of Freud: Psychoanalysis and its Uses* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 3; Gregory and Holloway, 'Language and the Shaping of Social Work', pp. 41-44; Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 133-134; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 46-47; Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 95.

<sup>57</sup> Shinobu Majima and Mike Savage 'Contesting Affluence: An Introduction', *Contemporary British History*, 22.4 (2008), p. 446. See also: Harris, 'Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945-2001', pp. 93-94.

<sup>58</sup> Harris, 'Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945-2001', p. 119.

identify and mediate such effects. In this way, their therapeutic intervention could have wider political ramifications.

In the particular context of post-war England, social workers found themselves mediating between change and continuity, helping some clients to address issues of policy and to participate in political culture, whilst also assisting those who found themselves unable to cope with the demands of a rapidly shifting society.<sup>59</sup> This role was evident across the period. As early as 1949, Hardy and Margaret Wickwar were portraying the social worker's task as making 'society's many processes...more effective', as part of which he or she would be expected 'To win people's consent, enlist their co-operation, and help create conditions favourable to that passive consent and this active co-operation'.<sup>60</sup> A similar sentiment appeared in the rough notes for a 1954 lecture by Richard Titmuss entitled 'English Society To-day and Tomorrow', in which he assigned the social services roles such as helping 'To compensate for technicalological (*sic.*) change', supporting 'the casualties (*sic.*) of the economic system', and helping 'the family to adjust to social change.'<sup>61</sup>

Towards the end of the period, *The A.S.W. News* commented that the social worker was increasingly seen 'as helping and supporting those who have a raw deal from society to obtain their social rights'.<sup>62</sup> Social workers began to accept that 'society is complex and swift moving, and it is too easy to lose sight of the

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<sup>59</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work and Social Citizenship in Britain: From Clientelism to Consumerism', p. 934.

<sup>60</sup> Hardy Wickwar and Margaret Wickwar, *The Social Services. An Historical Survey* (London, 1949), p. 282.

<sup>61</sup> LSE Archives and Special Collections, Titmuss; Richard Morris (1907-1973); professor of social administration, TITMUSS/3/371, Academic Related, Family Lectures, 1952, 1954 and 1956, English Society To-day and Tomorrow, pp. 5-6. These are indeed rough notes for a lecture, and are undated. David Reisman, in his analysis of Titmuss's work, makes reference to an unpublished lecture of the same name, given at the Extra-Mural Department at the University of London on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1954. See: David Reisman, *Richard Titmuss: Welfare and Society* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 284.

<sup>62</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, October 1969, p.i. See also: Francis M. Yanney, 'The Case for "Pressure Politics" in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), pp. 164-168.

individual',<sup>63</sup> and that this was as an inevitable consequence of progress.<sup>64</sup> Social work was part of an agreement, some form of a social and emotional settlement, whereby the care offered to such casualties of change reflected the moral stability of society as a whole.<sup>65</sup> That social workers took on this role of mediating and adjusting was not overly distinctive; street-level bureaucrats are often tasked with both alleviating the effects of inequitable economic structures and helping those affected to accept the inadequacies of the system.<sup>66</sup> In the context of post-war England, however, the value it carried in a society of rapid and inevitable change was crucial.

This was very closely linked to social work's role as the 'conscience of society', which we encountered in the previous chapter.<sup>67</sup> While this role certainly had its therapeutic elements, we should recognise that it was also an integral part of the particular nature of social change over this period. We can see this in a speech given by lecturer Roger Wilson to the 1950 British National Conference on Social Work. Considering the conflict between individual needs and social expectations, Wilson argued that this in fact caused 'vital tensions' essential to the development of society: it was in response to this that social work had 'emerged as a self-conscious activity'.<sup>68</sup> Social work was thus located within a Fabian tradition, to which it had clear links, of reform rather than revolution.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, p. 79.

<sup>64</sup> Goetschius, *Working with Community Groups*, p. 186; Dustan, 'The Ethical Warrant for Social Work', p. 10; *The A.S.W. News*, January 1967, p. i; Jeff Hopkins, 'Structural Conflict in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 13.7 (November 1966), p. 254.

<sup>65</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 274.

<sup>66</sup> Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> For examples, see especially: Dustan, 'The Ethical Warrant for Social Work', p. 5; Corner, 'Moral Problems Met in Social Work', p. 26; Russell, 'The Selection of Students', p. 42.

<sup>68</sup> Roger Wilson, 'Social Work in a Changing World', *Social Work*, 7.4 (October 1950), p. 472.

<sup>69</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 45-46; McLaughlin, *Social Work, Politics and Society*, p. 10.

The role of social workers, then, was to help navigate these ‘vital tensions’, thus facilitating social progress whilst minimising the dangers it posed to those unready or unwilling to partake in such changes. The emphasis may have shifted over the period, but social work’s position between society and the individual meant that it was constantly mediating the interests of the two.<sup>70</sup> John Stewart has posited a similar function for child guidance, whereby it was ‘both part of and an agent for the promotion of consensus, moderation, stability, integration and adjustment, all of which were necessary for social progress in a liberal democratic society.’<sup>71</sup> In a number of cases, social workers did this at the level of individuals and families, but they might also, as we shall see next, seek to alter social structures and policies in the interests of their clients.

## **II.ii            Advocacy**

We have already seen how social work’s position on the gaps and in the margins helped the profession to identify some of the failings and deficiencies of policy. In a number of cases, social workers took this process a step further, and began to agitate for change, sometimes even encouraging and facilitating their clients to do likewise. This topic emerged during Cohen’s interview with Clare Winnicott, where she told him that ‘We have to be advocates on behalf of our clients who haven’t got access to public voices or eminences who can put their case’. Ideally, she felt, social workers would be adept at both ‘altering the structure to meet the individual’, and ‘helping the individual within the structure’.<sup>72</sup> The social worker’s position between the client

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<sup>70</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 109.

<sup>71</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 180.

<sup>72</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 19.

and the services meant that he or she had the option of adjusting either side to the other.

In his analysis of ‘street-level bureaucrats’, Lipsky notes that advocacy is a common function for those on the front-line of services. As well as their common function as gate-keepers, they are also expected, he argues, to ‘use their knowledge, skill, and position to secure for clients the best treatment or position consistent with the constraints of the service.’<sup>73</sup> In the context of post-war Britain, this frequently meant identifying those systemic issues which could be addressed, and which were sufficiently widespread to justify the use of resources. Many social workers found themselves acting as advocates for the needs of other professions during the war,<sup>74</sup> so it was reasonable that might extend this service to their work with clients in the welfare state, when it was assumed that those facing the greatest need lacked a sufficiently powerful voice.<sup>75</sup> As well as helping people adjust to social change, social workers could also, as Winnicott identified, begin the process of identifying and addressing emerging needs.

Much of this advocacy took the form of guiding clients to and through the social services, helping them to claim the resources to which they were entitled, a role which was discussed in the last chapter. There were, however, a number of areas where social workers were moved to agitate for greater recognition of social problems or for adjustments to the system as a whole. Housing, a sizeable and ongoing problem in post-war Britain,<sup>76</sup> was a notable example, with an editorial in

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<sup>73</sup> Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, p. 72.

<sup>74</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Geraldine Aves, p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 153.

<sup>76</sup> Alan G. V. Simmonds, ‘Raising Rachman: The Origins of the Rent Act, 1957’, *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 843-868; Todd, *The People*, pp. 162-163; Morgan, *The People’s Peace*, pp. 39, 77, 118; Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 145; Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 302.

*Case Conference* noting that housing scandals were leading to ‘renewed political interests and action on the part of social workers.’<sup>77</sup> Ursula Behr\* and her team even acquired funds to buy some police houses so that ‘problem families’ could gain a semblance of independence in suitable accommodation.<sup>78</sup> Even by the end of the period, social workers from all branches were choosing to intervene on behalf of their clients in the decisions of local housing departments.<sup>79</sup> Unemployment and poverty, which we shall study in detail later, were related issues which also pricked social workers’ political consciences.<sup>80</sup>

Another area where social workers found themselves acting as advocates was in legal matters. Penelope Hall and Ismene Howes, for example, identified during their study of moral welfare that many of the problems faced by local prostitutes were exacerbated by the laws passed to suppress such activity, and that social workers, in partnership with other professionals, could act to address this.<sup>81</sup> This was a period when legislation around prostitution had already come under scrutiny, so this was not an argument which social workers alone were making.<sup>82</sup> Others found that they could not challenge the law so much as contest its application to their clients, such as the work of mental welfare officers in defending clients who were liable to be removed under the 1959 Mental Health Act.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, Anthony Forder argued that social workers, in their efforts to change the behaviour of institutions and

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<sup>77</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Case Conference*, 10.7 (January 1964), p. 193.

<sup>78</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 19.

<sup>79</sup> Letter from E.E. Irvine, *Social Work*, 27.3 (July 1970), p. 24. See also: R. E. Morley, ‘Social Pathology and Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 14.3 (July 1967), p. 97

<sup>80</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, ‘Poverty and the “Wage Stop”’, *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), pp. 255-260; *The A.S.W. News*, April 1963, p. iii; ‘Editorial’, *Case Conference*, 10.7 (January 1964), p. 193.

<sup>81</sup> Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work*, p. 249.

<sup>82</sup> Mort, *Capital Affairs*, pp. 140-141, 167-170; Hall, *Sex, Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880*, pp. 141-142. More generally, see: Paula Bartley and Barbara Gwinnett, ‘Prostitution’, in Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Harlow, 2001), pp. 214-228.

<sup>83</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 13; Powls, *Many Lives*, p. 63.



clients, should help local courts to adapt their sentencing policy for youths,<sup>84</sup> and work by Kate Bradley has indicated that this an area where they did indeed hold some influence.<sup>85</sup>

Such advocacy even took place in the often-apolitical setting of medical social work, with E. M. Goldberg and June Neill reporting that ‘the social workers and the general practitioners continually acted as advocates for unmet needs of the ill and disabled.’<sup>86</sup> In that particular instance, the clinical team sometimes maintained contact with former patients in order to continue these endeavours, persisting even when ‘Appeals to local councillors and MPs were often of no avail’.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, social workers did provide a line to policy, which they utilised, whether through choice or obligation, to indicate areas where the system might need to adapt to local client needs. We should note, however, that not every social worker felt that the views of the profession should be definitive: lecturer and former probation officer R. E. Morley argued that the right of social workers ‘to draw attention to social evils is undoubted’, although ‘their views about the remedies can only rank as opinions beside the opinions of others whose special experience may be no less relevant.’<sup>88</sup>

There was a strong generational element to whether social workers felt equipped and justified to escalate the issues they discovered to the level of policy. Wright, for example, noted the contrast between the older generation, with their vocational ‘sense of inner certainty’, and those new recruits who were ‘less willing to stand up and be counted in the face of some of the conflict existing between the

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<sup>84</sup> Forder, ‘Social Work in the Social Services’, p. 184.

<sup>85</sup> Kate Bradley, ‘Becoming Delinquent in the Post-War Welfare State: England and Wales, 1945–1965’, in Heather Ellis (ed.), *Juvenile Delinquency and the Limits of Western Influence* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 236–237, 239.

<sup>86</sup> Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 143.

<sup>87</sup> Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 141.

<sup>88</sup> R. E. Morley, ‘Social Pathology and Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 14.3 (July 1967), p. 99.

needs of the clients, the needs of social work, and the needs of the organisations in which now social workers are employed.’<sup>89</sup> This was partially because of the pressures of professionalism faced by student social workers. Olive Stevenson reported how ‘younger students seem to think it would be unprofessional to admit how much they care’,<sup>90</sup> while Jessica Brill wrote to *Case Conference* in 1958 to complain that ‘Two things are non-U amongst social workers today. One is to feel passionately the sufferings of your clients; the other is to call for political action to put matters right.’<sup>91</sup> We do know from contemporary accounts that social workers of all ages found themselves moved by the suffering they encountered,<sup>92</sup> but to admit that, and then to take action to change the system, seemed to contradict the professional emphasis on maintaining an objective, non-directive stance.

We should note that the role of advocacy, as well as being a feature of street-level bureaucracy, was also common amongst welfare professionals of the time, many of whom sought to translate the purposes of the welfare state into such positive actions as addressing poverty or campaigning for better housing and health.<sup>93</sup> What distinguished social workers was the particular position they held between government and the public, and the particular insight they had into the effects of policy on people’s lives. Social work thus had a social and a political role in facilitating social change by mediating its effects on a local level. It was a matter of discretion, however, as to whether the issues which resulted from the ebb and flow of

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<sup>89</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 30.

<sup>90</sup> Olive Stevenson, ‘Integration of Theory and Practice in Professional Training’, *Case Conference*, 8.2 (June 1961), p. 48

<sup>91</sup> Letter from Jessica Brill, *Case Conference*, 4.10 (April 1958), p. 291. The phrase ‘non-U’ was a reference to a linguistic term, popularised by Nancy Mitford, whereby people indicated their class status through their vocabulary. ‘Non-U’ referred to non-upper-class speech, so Brill is indicating that these actions are not those of ‘proper’ social workers. See: Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 147.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example: Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 18; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 206, 218-219, 228; Jessica Seth-Smith, ‘The New Look in Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 448.

<sup>93</sup> Vernon, *Hunger*, p. 256.

post-war society might necessitate more than just personalised welfare, whether the concerns of the client might require discussion, or even significant change, at a policy-level. The fact that social workers operated between a number of spheres could cause issues, however, and Lipsky has argued that the particular position of social workers means that they are often reluctant to act as advocates for clients.<sup>94</sup> In the case of post-war Britain, I would venture, this position was actually an advantage, but navigating the tension between the professional and the political sides of their role, an issue which they shared with other ‘insecure professionals’,<sup>95</sup> proved more problematic.

There was another possible factor in the emergence of advocacy as a feature of welfare work: the choices offered by increasing commercialism. With the emergence of the ‘consumer citizen’ in the mid-century,<sup>96</sup> people began to seek ‘increasing empowerment’ through the formation of groups to represent or campaign for their interests.<sup>97</sup> One element of this was a turn towards expertise on legal and consumer matters through such services as the John Hilton Bureau, a regular feature in the *News of the World*.<sup>98</sup> For many, this became ‘a means of gaining free advice and help with a wide range of personal matters’,<sup>99</sup> very much the remit of social work.<sup>100</sup> This shift prompted some commentators to wonder why the services did not

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<sup>94</sup> Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>95</sup> Nottingham, ‘The Rise of the Insecure Professionals’, pp. 468-469.

<sup>96</sup> Matthew Hilton, ‘The Duties of Citizens, the Rights of Consumers’, *Consumer Policy Review*, 15.1 (2005), pp. 7-10; Lawrence Black, ‘Which? Craft in Post-War Britain: The Consumers’ Association and the Politics of Affluence’, *Albion*, 36.1 (2004), pp. 52-82.

<sup>97</sup> Kate Bradley, ‘All human life is there’: the John Hilton Bureau of the News of the World and access to free legal advice, c.1938-1973’, *English Historical Review*, 129.539 (2014), p. 890.

<sup>98</sup> Bradley, ‘All human life is there’: the John Hilton Bureau of the News of the World and access to free legal advice, c.1938-1973’, pp. 888-911.

<sup>99</sup> Bradley, ‘All human life is there’: the John Hilton Bureau of the News of the World and access to free legal advice, c.1938-1973’, p. 888.

<sup>100</sup> In fact, Paul Thompson has argued that studying such associations, alongside user movements and civil liberties groups, can add greatly to our understanding of social welfare. Thompson, ‘Introduction’, pp. 14-15.

exist to offer users of the welfare state a similar array of information,<sup>101</sup> with one editorial in *The A.S.W. News* irreverently flouting the idea of ‘a super *Which* to tell us what are the best buys in welfare’.<sup>102</sup> The main issue for social work, however, was that people were increasingly circumnavigating traditional sources of expertise and advice, and were seeking to voice, and frequently address, the issues they faced without recourse to the state.

### **II.iii Facilitating Participation**

This shift demarcated the limits of advocacy as a role for social workers, since it emphasised that, for all their influence in political and social discussions, they had hitherto failed to set the agenda for such debates.<sup>103</sup> This left social workers open to the criticism that they were propping up inadequate services rather than highlighting the broader necessity of change.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, they were selecting the issues which needed to be addressed, rather than allowing their clients the autonomy of deciding where their own needs lay, and how they might be resolved. This sentiment was pithily voiced by Brian Abel-Smith, who argued in a lecture in December 1963 that ‘Users of public services, even more than those of private services, have got to complain more and be helped to do it.’<sup>105</sup> After attempts to gain increasing influence within the social services, social workers now saw their future as a profession

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<sup>101</sup> See especially: Abel-Smith, ‘Whose Welfare State?’, pp. 55-73.

<sup>102</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, July 1965, p. i.

<sup>103</sup> John Rea Price, ‘The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), pp. 411-418.

<sup>104</sup> Peter R. Day, ‘Communication and Social Work Roles’, *Case Conference*, 15.6 (October 1968), p. 239; ‘A Socialist View of Social Work’, quoted in: John Rea Price, ‘The Social Pathology – A Dilemma for Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), p. 412 ; ‘Comment: The Politics of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 26.2 (April 1969), p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Brian Abel-Smith, *Freedom in the Welfare State* (London, 1964), p. 14.

somehow exterior to the system, able to draw attention to its shortcomings.<sup>106</sup> The solution did not lie in a more substantial role for social workers, in more tasks, but in gaining sufficient independence and freedom as a profession to enact and facilitate social change.<sup>107</sup>

A key component of this shift in social work's social and political role was a wider transformation in political culture. Titmuss, writing in 1960, noted the emergence of 'The Pressure Group State', arguing that its emphasis on affluence and minor alterations was leading the way towards the restriction of social rights and the muffling of social protest.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, José Harris has argued that 'the culture of the period was notably non-participant and passive',<sup>109</sup> and although Lawrence Black contends that pressure groups adopted issues not on the mainstream political agenda, it is still apparent that many efforts in this area were narrow in scope.<sup>110</sup> Social work, then, was caught in a post-austerity shift in political sentiment towards an individualism, largely fuelled by affluence, in which it was little involved.<sup>111</sup> In terms of welfare, the consensus which formerly lay behind the welfare state appeared to be diminishing.<sup>112</sup> In its place was emerging a culture based on local support and

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<sup>106</sup> Francis M. Yanney, 'The Case for "Pressure Politics" in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), pp. 164-168; Roderick Ballard, 'Social Action and the Local Authority Social Worker', *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), pp. 169-170. One notable example from the correspondence pages of *Case Conference* is: Letter from Alfred M. Andersen, *Case Conference*, 13.9 (January 1967), p. 324; Letter from Jane Owtram, *Case Conference*, 13.10 (February 1967), p. 346. These were part of a series labelled, whether by the writers or the editorial team, 'Foolish Legislation'.

<sup>107</sup> A.F. Robinson *et al.*, 'The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers', *Social Work*, 27.2 (April 1970), p. 5.

<sup>108</sup> Richard M. Titmuss, *The Irresponsible Society* (London, 1960), pp. 12, 20.

<sup>109</sup> Harris, 'Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945-2001', p. 102.

<sup>110</sup> Black, 'The Impression of Affluence: Political Culture in the 1950s and 1960s', p. 88.

<sup>111</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, pp. 96, 110; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*, p. 128.

<sup>112</sup> T. H. Marshall, *Sociology at the Crossroads: and Other Essays* (London, 1963), p. 287; Toye, 'From "Consensus" to "Common Ground": The Rhetoric of the Postwar Settlement and its Collapse', p. 16; Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945: Second Edition*, p. 16; Wills, 'Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950-1970', p. 182.

greater non-professional involvement, a 'welfare society', a term which gained increasing currency in social work circles over the 1960s.<sup>113</sup> Whether the actual influence of the state was diminishing has proved difficult to determine,<sup>114</sup> but it is evident that the voluntary sector was expanding in the 1960s to address the gaps in statutory provision, and in a manner consciously exterior to the state.<sup>115</sup>

If there was an anxiety amongst social workers at the beginning of the period that statutory welfare might undermine or weaken the personal contribution to society, by the 1960s they felt it was their responsibility to reignite people's contribution to political and social action. This partially manifested itself in closer links with local pressure groups,<sup>116</sup> and an attempt to assist people in securing the provisions and rights to which they were entitled. As Finlayson has argued, this focus on the 'citizenship of entitlement' is precisely where the voluntary sector falters, so it is little surprise that statutory social work would take this approach towards the growth of participation.<sup>117</sup> It was important, however, that social workers

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<sup>113</sup> Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, pp. 64-68; Joan Eyden (ed.), *The Welfare Society. A Guide for Discussion Groups* (London, 1976), esp. pp. 41-42. This was an edited edition of Hall's guide. Hall had started playing with the idea of the welfare state's demise in the sixth edition of her authoritative description of the social services: Penelope Hall, *The Social Services of Modern England* (London, 1963).

<sup>114</sup> Compare, for example: Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945: Second Edition*, p. 16; Johnson, 'The Role of the State in Twentieth-Century Britain', p. 478; Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 152.

<sup>115</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 317, 329; Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 286; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p.61. There were some areas where voluntary action was declining, such as in child care services: Roy Parker, 'Child care and the personal social services', in David Gladstone (ed.), *British Social Welfare: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1995), p. 175.

<sup>116</sup> *The A. S. W. News*, October 1969, p.i. See also: Francis M. Yanney, 'The Case for "Pressure Politics" in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), pp. 164-168.

<sup>117</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 411. See also: National Council of Social Service, *The Development of Social Service in Great Britain 1939-1946* (London, 1946), pp. 14-15.

maintained a non-directive stance in this endeavour, that they were facilitating rather than dictating the actions of such groups.<sup>118</sup>

The clearest manifestation of the new focus on participation was the advent of ‘community work’, which was explicitly embedded within the political and social shifts of the 1960s,<sup>119</sup> and which was supposedly intrinsically political in a way in which casework and group-work were not.<sup>120</sup> George Goetschius unequivocally argued in his overview of social work in the community that ‘The worker should realise that he is an agent of social change and accept responsibility for this’,<sup>121</sup> and the Community Development Projects initiated in 1969 were presented as social work at its most politically-aware.<sup>122</sup> The role of community workers was to help the various elements in the community, be they people or institutions, to recognise their local needs,<sup>123</sup> and then to ‘create a ‘climate’ for social action’.<sup>124</sup> The term often used was ‘enabler’,<sup>125</sup> meaning ‘a professional who facilitates social growth by awakening and focusing the discontent about conditions in the community’, a definition which appears to have originated with Canadian sociologist Murray

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<sup>118</sup> Wellcome, Robina Addis (1900-1986): archives, PP/ADD/E/7/5, Professional Social Work Bodies, RSH Social Workers’ Conferences 1961-1965, Royal Society of Health Congress, Scarborough, 1962, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April.

<sup>119</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 305-307, 338; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 80; M. Penelope Hall, ‘The coming of social work’, in Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott (eds), *The Social Workers* (London, 1965), p. 24.

<sup>120</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 60.

<sup>121</sup> Goetschius, *Working with Community Groups*, p. 175. See also: ‘Comment: The Politics of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 26.2 (April 1969), p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 59; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 322.

<sup>123</sup> Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work*, p. 34; Muriel A. Smith, ‘Work in the community’, in Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott (eds), *The Social Workers* (London, 1965), p. 65; A.F. Robinson *et al.*, ‘The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers’, *Social Work*, 27.2 (April 1970), p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work*, p. 42.

<sup>125</sup> Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, pp. 291, 302; E.M. Goldberg, ‘Working in the Community: What Kind of Help do People Need?’, *Social Work*, 22.2-22.3 (April and July 1965), p. 13; Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work*, p. 34; Smith, ‘Work in the community’, p. 65.

Ross.<sup>126</sup> It is important to note that the position of social workers as intermediaries was central to community work. Whereas the political potential of social work's position in the gaps and on the margins had only been implicit in other social work methods, in community work it was explicitly politicised.<sup>127</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude that it was in community work that social workers finally utilised their particular role to enact and accelerate social and political change.

There are, however, a number of issues with this reading. First of all, it is not entirely clear whether social workers were widely accepted in the communities where they were based, or that this community action actually benefitted from the intervention of social workers. As José Harris reminds us, the state could appear to be a forbiddingly binding force, so those involved in social action might purposely avoid state support.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, as R. A. B. Leaper warned, there was a possibility that social workers involved in the community might force rather than facilitate progress.<sup>129</sup> In addition, David Thomas has noted that, when it came to the actual practice of community work, many workers were hesitant about utilising concepts from social work. In fact, it was pedagogical techniques developed within the sphere of education, which had already become the dominant discipline within youth work, which were to prove more useful for the actual practice of community work.<sup>130</sup> The relationship between social work and community work was therefore more complex than that presented in the professional literature.

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<sup>126</sup> National Council of Social Service (eds), *Community Organisation: Work in Progress* (London, 1965), p. 11.

<sup>127</sup> R. A. B. Leaper, *Community Work* (London, 1971, first published 1968), p. 97.

<sup>128</sup> Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', pp. 91-92.

<sup>129</sup> Leaper, *Community Work*, p. 113.

<sup>130</sup> Thomas, *The Making of Community Work*, pp. 18-19, 21, 29. Although Thomas discusses in some depth the battle between social work and education for control of youth work and community work, he does not go into detail on the different practical and theoretical concepts offered by the two spheres.



We should also note that the other two roles which social workers played with regards to social change, facilitating adjustment and acting as advocates, were still present in community work. On the first point, the Gulbenkian Report of 1968, which codified community work's role within social work,<sup>131</sup> plainly stated that it was 'a method of dealing with problems of social change' rather than encouraging it.<sup>132</sup> Although many benefitted from becoming involved in the community,<sup>133</sup> others found that it exacerbated existing issues,<sup>134</sup> and for social workers, the welfare of those deemed vulnerable to the effects of change still took precedence over the social and political action of the community as a whole. There is also the argument, made by W. H. Greenleaf, that efforts at 'securing wider co-operation and involvement' were chiefly aimed towards 'reconciling the people concerned to the degree of regulation required' in a modern political system.<sup>135</sup> Participation did not necessarily indicate autonomy.

Furthermore, social workers continued to see their role as providing expertise and guidance,<sup>136</sup> even while the advent of a participant society meant that the input of experts was being openly questioned.<sup>137</sup> Although they sought to derive the objectives of their work from the particular setting, social workers were still eager to take the lead,<sup>138</sup> and tended to channel local activism into established institutional

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<sup>131</sup> Thomas, *The Making of Community Work*, p. 20.

<sup>132</sup> Study Group on Training for Social Work, *Community Work and Social Change*, p. 28.

<sup>133</sup> Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work*, p. 28; Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, p. 77.

<sup>134</sup> Forder, 'Towards a Social Policy', p. 304.

<sup>135</sup> Greenleaf, *The British Political Tradition. Volume Three: A Much Governed Nation. Part 1*, p. 348.

<sup>136</sup> Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work*, p. 9; Forder, 'Social Work in the Social Services', p. 200; Wellcome, Robina Addis (1900-1986): archives, PP/ADD/E/7/5, Professional Social Work Bodies, RSH Social Workers' Conferences 1961-1965, Royal Society of Health Congress, Scarborough, 1962, Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April. This document is unnumbered: the comments of Alderman Dingley are particularly pertinent.

<sup>137</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 338; Stevenson, 'Welfare: Problems and Priorities', p. 77.

<sup>138</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 59, 61.

frameworks such as parish councils.<sup>139</sup> This was partially because they found that when they consciously maintained a low profile, other professionals, administrators, and those involved in local government all failed to comprehend their particular contribution. Such pressures of professionalism, along with their close associations with state welfare, hindered the efforts of social workers to embed themselves within existing community structures and to maintain a non-directive stance.<sup>140</sup>

#### **II.iv Informal Care and Participation**

In all this talk of social change and political action, it is easy to neglect the other, no less important aspect of social work's role in fostering participation, namely, its relationships with informal and voluntary care. In this instance, social workers found it easier to accept and perform a role whereby they supported and supplemented, rather than lead, previously-established networks.<sup>141</sup> The profession still had a clear duty, however, to promote and encourage such arrangements, as can be seen in the instructions of G. M. Carstairs, a professor of psychological medicine at Edinburgh, that it was the responsibility of social workers to 'reactivate the citizen's participation in the care of the helpless'. Crucially, Carstairs envisioned this would be just as beneficial for those providing the care, for those otherwise-fortunate members of the community for whom 'no altruistic opportunity or commitment is offered', as it would for those receiving assistance.<sup>142</sup> Such calls reflected a

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<sup>139</sup> Halmos, *The Personal and the Political*, pp. 82-84.

<sup>140</sup> David N. Thomas, *Organising for Social Change. A Study in the Theory and Practice of Community Work* (London, 1976), pp. 125-128.

<sup>141</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 285.

<sup>142</sup> G.M. Carstairs, 'New Tasks for Community Care in our Changing Society', *Social Work*, 22.2-3 (April and July 1965), p. 5. On the wider influence and context of Carstairs, particularly his BBC Reith Lecture series of 1961, entitled *This Island Now*, see: Claire Sewell, 'The Emergence of the Carer: Mental Health Care in the England and Wales, c. 1946-1999' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2014), pp. 264-265; Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*, pp. 53-54; Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 269.

recognition that the expansion in community spirit and altruism, which some policy-makers and academics had hoped the welfare state might precipitate, were not forthcoming, as well as apprehension that people were embracing the rights but not the responsibilities of welfare policy.<sup>143</sup> Although it came up in discussion less than the entitlement of the client to state welfare, many social workers were staunch in their belief that an essential part of citizenship was the opportunity to contribute to society.<sup>144</sup>

This was a notion which had deep roots within social work, and where, in a more obvious manner than with community work, continuity and change were both in evidence. Although the role of social work in supporting informal care became more prominent in the context of a shifting political culture,<sup>145</sup> it was by no means without precedent. At the 1952 conference on ethics and social work, the delegates agreed that ‘the most important piece of work done by social workers is...that of helping people to be good neighbours.’<sup>146</sup> Likewise, in an address at a 1954 conference on group-work, educationist Philip Morris stressed that ‘the professional contribution must never be allowed to swamp the personal contribution’, and that state provision should never lead people ‘to “contract out” of the duties of a neighbour, or to throw off parental responsibilities.’<sup>147</sup> Such comments were rooted in an anxiety, prevalent in the early years of the welfare state, that the

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<sup>143</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 108.

<sup>144</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Margaret Simey, pp. 14-15; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, pp. 27-28; J. Macalister Brew, ‘Group Work with Adolescents’, in Peter Kuenstler (ed.), *Social Group Work in Great Britain* (London, 1960), pp. 74, 91; Mary Morris, ‘Adult Groups’, in Peter Kuenstler (ed.), *Social Group Work in Great Britain* (London, 1960), p. 130. On this issue more broadly, see: Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, pp. 204-205; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 9.

<sup>145</sup> On this broader trend, see: Sewell, ‘The Emergence of the Carer: Mental Health Care in the England and Wales, c. 1946-1999’.

<sup>146</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 27.

<sup>147</sup> ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, p. 4.

professionalization of welfare might lead to a ‘denial of participation’, or discourage those engaged in voluntary or informal contributions to welfare.<sup>148</sup> They re-emerged, however, with the increasing emphasis on the importance of participation. We should note, however, that informal care did not decline to the extent which many had feared, and the role of social work was always ‘the support, and not the supplanting, of informal care.’<sup>149</sup> Social workers acted as facilitators and enablers for voluntary action and informal care, with an emphasis on ensuring that these disparate areas were coordinated.<sup>150</sup>

## **II.v Social Work and Social Change: Conclusions**

We should stress again that these three roles, adjustment, advocacy, and facilitating action, were interwoven, and all three were happening at the same time, in the same places, even with the same workers. What united them was that they were, rhetoric aside, reactive roles, attempts to mediate change and its consequences. Social work’s ability to enact social change was constrained by its position in post-war society and its welfare structures, so rather than seeing social work as influencing social change, we should see social change as influencing social work; social work’s position and its therapeutic responsibilities meant that it was particularly susceptible to such shifts. While the profession was not in a position, structurally or politically, to encourage grand social shifts, it was more effective at a local scale.

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<sup>148</sup> Robin Means, ‘Older people and the personal social services’, in David Gladstone (ed.), *British Social Welfare: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1995), p. 202; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 315.

<sup>149</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 285.

<sup>150</sup> The relationship between statutory and voluntary social work is covered in Chapter 5, but see especially: ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, p. 25.

In this sense, social workers were simultaneously agents of social change and social stability, depending on the direction and effects of wider forces. Social work was only very seldom a cause of social stasis, partially because of their limited professional and political powers, and partially because of a belief in the inevitability of change. Throughout the period, the profession failed to set the tone for political and social discussions, although the position which social workers occupied between policy-makers and the public meant that they were well-placed to observe the effects of policy and emerging social trends, and to report on where future action might be needed. This was often, however, limited to a local level: at a conference on the social services in the mid-1950s, those present concluded that social work's main contribution to matters of social change was innovation in the voluntary sector, a highly practical input, and providing evidence for official committees.<sup>151</sup> Even when social workers were able to pass on the comments of their clients, as with the Ingleby Committee, they invariably 'translated' them to reflect their own interests.<sup>152</sup> George Newton's comment that social workers should concentrate on 'helping where the shoe pinches' rather than 'providing a new pair of shoes',<sup>153</sup> and the Gulbenkian Committee's emphasis on helping individuals and committees to cope with social change, would indicate that social workers' emphasis on adjustment survived throughout the period.<sup>154</sup>

We should also recognise that just because social workers appreciated the limits of their influence, and concentrated on welfare work rather than political

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<sup>151</sup> *Social Work in the Neighbourhood. Report of the Proceedings of the Joint Conference of Councils of Social Service and Community Associations 13-15 July 1956 at the University of Nottingham* (London, 1956), pp. 28-29; Butrym, *Social Work in Medical Care*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>152</sup> Bradley, 'Becoming Delinquent in the Post-War Welfare State: England and Wales, 1945-1965', p. 241.

<sup>153</sup> George Newton, 'Adapting to Change', *Social Work*, 25.1 (January 1968), p. 6.

<sup>154</sup> Study Group on Training for Social Work, *Community Work and Social Change*, p. 28.

action, does not mean that they did not care about the misfortunes of their clients. It was more the case that their responses tended to be short-term and specific, although the sum of this welfare work did constitute a political contribution of sorts. It is also clear that social workers faced various professional, political, and personal pressures, and not all three could be adequately addressed all the time; in fact, loyalties to their colleagues, to their clients, and to the communities where they worked could come into direct conflict.<sup>155</sup> Again, the solution was to concentrate on local solutions. Even if social workers had decided to speak out about deep-rooted social problems, the lack of an adequate government lobby stood in their way.<sup>156</sup> Constructing a coherent professional voice was the issue which took precedence, and one element of this was showing that social work was adept at reacting to and dealing with the repercussions of social change.<sup>157</sup> One of the reasons why social workers shied away from enacting social action on a large scale was that it threatened to precipitate a ‘de-skilling’ process whereby they would lose some of the professional status for which they had fought.<sup>158</sup>

The case of social work demonstrates some of the tensions which could emerge from social, political, technological, and economic change during this time. It also highlights how this change was experienced on a number of different levels, and that it might manifest itself in different, sometimes conflicting ways on neighbourhood streets and in family homes. This made the work of those who could help mediate such shifts, such as social workers, that much more useful, and their

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<sup>155</sup> On this tension, see: Ferguson, ‘Support Not Scorn: The Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s’, p. 44; Halmos, *The Personal and the Political*, *passim*.

<sup>156</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 273.

<sup>157</sup> Joan L. M. Eyden, ‘The Professional Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 248; Iris Weaver, ‘Notes from English Journals’, *Case Conference* 9.6 (November 1962), p. 160; *The A.S.W. News*, April 1970, p. ii.

<sup>158</sup> Pearson *et al.*, ‘Introduction: Social Work and the Legacy of Freud’, p. 43.

intervention was construed as beneficial not only to their clients, but to society as a whole.

In addition, the story of social work highlights the way in which, as Roger Wilson recognised at the time,<sup>159</sup> and Majima and Savage have discussed recently,<sup>160</sup> social change was implicit in post-war society. Harking back to the language of the previous chapter, any social settlement was a moving one, with new gaps and margins emerging as cultural mores, political culture, technology, and demography all shifted. Social workers could address these emerging issues through their routine welfare work of helping clients to adapt and adjust, through acting as advocates for their clients to local government and policy-makers, or through enabling individuals and communities to identify and address their own problems. All of these methods could, however, present their own difficulties.

The social and political role of social work could be further complicated by the expectations and perceptions of other professionals, of government, and of the public. One issue was that the manner in which social change was perceived and articulated could have an effect as powerful as the changes themselves.<sup>161</sup> Another difficulty faced by social workers was balancing the conflicting expectations and conceptions of their work and their clients. In the next two sections, we encounter two areas where both these problems were present. The first, work with the family, reflected the tension between growing concerns over the child and a belief in the family as the optimum environment for the raising of children. This means that criticisms of social work as paternalistic are justified, but that this as much a matter

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<sup>159</sup> Roger Wilson, 'Social Work in a Changing World', *Social Work*, 7.4 (October 1950), p. 472.

<sup>160</sup> Majima and Savage 'Contesting Affluence: An Introduction', p. 446.

<sup>161</sup> Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, pp. 23-24, 242; Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 168; Hughes, 'Picking over the Remains': the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK', pp. 4, 7.

of pragmatism as it was of ideology. In the second example, the rediscovery of poverty, we examine how social work's preference for local, short-term solutions to poverty came under critical scrutiny when the issue was reconfigured and redefined. By choosing to focus on poverty as one factor within a complex of issues, which included the increasing affluence which helped to highlight poverty's persistence, social workers were vulnerable when redefinitions of poverty placed it once again on the social and political agenda.<sup>162</sup>

### **III Social Work and the Family**

The role of the family in social work, and, in turn, the role of social work in the politics and culture of the family, has received little analysis befitting of its importance to the profession. Considering how central the family was to Beveridge's vision for the welfare state, and the place of the family in shaping the social role of medical and psychological expertise during this period, this can only be considered a missed opportunity.<sup>163</sup> There have, admittedly, been numerous accounts of encounters between social workers and families, with discussions of the 'problem family' at the centre of this scholarship, but the onus has remained on what the actions and words of social workers with regards to families tells us about professional concerns in the welfare state, rather than how these issues speak to the place of the family or the welfare politics in which social work was embedded.

One reason for this approach to the family has been the dominance of casework in analyses of social work methods. Since this work situates itself at the

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<sup>162</sup> Rodney Lowe, 'The rediscovery of poverty and the creation of the child poverty action group, 1962–68', *Contemporary Record*, 9.3 (1995), p. 604.

<sup>163</sup> Fawcett, 'The Welfare State Since 1945', p. 446; Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, pp. 133–134; Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*, *passim.*, esp. pp. xiii–xiv, pp. 161–163;



scale of the individual, it tends to omit the crucial role of the family unit in much casework.<sup>164</sup> Much of the literature on voluntary social work engages explicitly with issues of the family, but essential issues of state authority and social care are, because of the voluntary angle, insufficiently explored.<sup>165</sup> There is, however, a clear historiographical debate regarding social work and the family, namely, the extent to which social workers supported paternalistic family structures in this period. The answer, I suggest, is that it did, but that was a result of growing social concern over the well-being of the child, a theme which has only recently received sufficient attention,<sup>166</sup> and social workers' belief that, with their assistance, most families could provide the optimum environment for the raising of children.

### **III.i Previous Accounts of the Family and Social Work**

On the subject of welfare and family structures, Elizabeth Wilson's 1977 book, *Women and the Welfare State*, set up the debate. Wilson, who was attempting to add considerations of gender to a field dominated by issues of class,<sup>167</sup> argued that welfare in the 1950s was principally concerned with rebuilding or supporting the patriarchal family.<sup>168</sup> This reading, applied to social work by John Vincent, of the welfare state's position towards the family was, I shall argue, largely accurate, but nevertheless overstates the extent to which this was a form of social control.

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<sup>164</sup> I examine the dominance of casework in the historiography of social work methods in the next chapter.

<sup>165</sup> See, for example: Starkey, 'Can the Piper Call the Tune? Innovation and Experiment with Deprived Families in Britain, 1940-1980s: The Work of Family Service Units', pp. 573-587; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', pp. 362-387.

<sup>166</sup> See particularly: Thomson, *Lost Freedom*; Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*.

<sup>167</sup> Shelia Shaver, 'Gender, Class and the Welfare State: The Case of Income Security in Australia', *Feminist Review*, 32 (1989), pp. 90, 92.

<sup>168</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Women and the Welfare State* (London, 1977), quoted in: Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 142. For a similar argument, see: Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 82; Williams, *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 161-163

A finer balance was struck by Michael Rustin, writing in 1979, who argued that the welfare system was too disparate to have any ideological uniformity,<sup>169</sup> positioning the family instead as ‘an institution concerned with dependency...within its boundaries an altruistic institution’, even if it contained unequal power relationships.<sup>170</sup> The presence of social work as an institution tasked with supporting the family was thus symbolic of a new post-war relationship between the state and the family unit, ‘a dominant metaphor for a better society’,<sup>171</sup> even if the compromise included the breakdown of working-class communities and an intolerance towards deviant family behaviours.<sup>172</sup> From Rustin’s analysis, we can take two key points: a focus on the political relationship between family and state (at the expense of the class-based relationship between family and community), and an awareness of the metaphorical value of social work’s support for the ‘normal’ family. Rustin’s argument is thus a useful analysis of the relationship between different scales of welfare intervention.

More recently, the challenges posed by the ‘problem family’ to the social and medical services, and in particular the longevity of particular assumptions about welfare clients, have become a central feature of the historiography. At the end of the 1990s, both John Welshman and Pat Starkey interrogated the role of the ‘problem family’ as a social issue, identifying how it moved from the orbit of eugenics groups and public health departments to voluntary and statutory social workers as part of their growing influence.<sup>173</sup> The work of Becky Taylor and Ben Rogaly on ‘problem

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<sup>169</sup> Rustin, ‘Social work and the family’, pp. 146-147.

<sup>170</sup> Rustin, ‘Social work and the family’, p. 147.

<sup>171</sup> Rustin, ‘Social work and the family’, pp. 147, 150.

<sup>172</sup> Rustin, ‘Social work and the family’, pp. 154-155.

<sup>173</sup> Welshman, ‘The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the ‘Problem Family’, 1940-1970’, pp. 457-476; Pat Starkey, ‘Can the Piper Call the Tune? Innovation and Experiment with Deprived

families' in Norwich gives some indication of how these discussions translated into a social work practice.<sup>174</sup> These accounts have remained focused on the way in which perceptions of the 'problem family' were shaped by professional concerns, and, aside from Welshman's work on the cycle of deprivation,<sup>175</sup> have paid less attention to the politics in which this discourse was embedded. A better understanding of the value ascribed to the family as a social unit is required.

### III.ii The Family and the Child as a Welfare Concern

Despite the focus on helping the individual to understand and adjust to their circumstances, social workers often described their work with families as a central aspect of their role. Examples of the family as the intuitive 'primary' unit for social work intervention can be found throughout the period,<sup>176</sup> and during the 1960s, the profession assumed that any reorganisation of the social services would emphasise work with the family,<sup>177</sup> as problematic as that might prove.<sup>178</sup> Much of the emphasis on the family sprung from a concern over children, and particularly their

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Families in Britain, 1940-1980s', pp. 573-587; Pat Starkey, 'The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968', pp. 421-441

<sup>174</sup> Taylor and Rogarly, 'Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type': Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963', pp. 429-453.

<sup>175</sup> John Welshman, *From Transmitted Deprivation to Social Exclusion: Policy, Poverty and Parenting* (Bristol, 2007); Welshman, 'Knights, knaves, pawns and queens: attitudes to behaviour in postwar Britain', pp. 95-97.

<sup>176</sup> Stephens (ed.), *Problem Families, An Experiment in Social Rehabilitation*, p. 1; 'Voluntary Social Service and Family Life', *Social Work*, 7.3 (July 1950), p. 444; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 1; 'The Family and Moral Standards', *Social Work*, 16.1 (January 1959), p. 10; Dorothy Keeling, *The Crowded Stairs, Recollections of Social Work in Liverpool* (London, 1961), p. 141; Pugh, *Social Work in Child Care*, p. 18; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 111. See also: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 30; Cohen, *Family Secrets*, pp. 219, 229.

<sup>177</sup> Barbara N. Rodgers, 'The Administration of the Social Services and the Family Caseworker', *Social Work*, 17.4 (October 1960), pp. 87-88; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/2, Social Work: General "Seeborn", Family Services, pamphlets, correspondence, circulars, papers 1965, Letter from Younghusband to Mrs. Douglas Jay, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1965; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 21.

<sup>178</sup> Letter from Gillian Stoneham, *Case Conference*, 13.5 (September 1966), p. 185; F. V. Jarvis, 'In or Out? – An Agonising Appraisal', *Case Conference*, 14.4 (August 1967), pp. 137-143.

environmental and relationship needs. The work of John Bowlby on the role of the mother proved particularly influential on social work thought,<sup>179</sup> even if this meant that considerations of the father's contribution to their child's development remained very limited.<sup>180</sup> In fact, Pat Starkey, and later, April Gallwey, have both argued that when social workers spoke of the 'problem family', they really meant the 'problem mother'.<sup>181</sup> While this was often true, there are a number of counter-examples, particularly Elizabeth Irvine's\* reminder that it 'takes two to make a problem family', and that the actions of a good parent could compensate for those of a bad one.<sup>182</sup> It was, however, concern over the child which was key, and indeed, the image of the child in need was one which had a long pedigree within the development of the profession.<sup>183</sup> Social workers found that the emotive power of the figure of the child lay behind much of their work, and the protection of innocent children was one of the main expectations placed on the profession.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 126; Rustin, 'Social work and the family', p. 141; Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 75-79; Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, pp. 138-140; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 71; Bailkin, 'The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State', p. 107. For the wider context of this, see: Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 78-105; Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, pp. 61-66.

<sup>180</sup> Frank Bodman, 'Child Care and Child Guidance', *Case Conference*, 7.10 (April 1961), p. 268; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 30; Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 104. In fact, Stefania Bernini has argued that this has meant that fatherhood has been neglected in the historiography of post-war society, although this has partially rectified by the work of Laura King. See: Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, pp. 70-71; Laura King, *Family Men: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Britain, 1914-1960* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>181</sup> Pat Starkey, 'The Feckless Mother: women, poverty and social workers in wartime and post-war England', *Women's History Review*, 9.3 (2000), pp. 539-557, esp. p. 544, quoted in: April Gallwey, 'Lone Motherhood in England, 1945-1990: Economy, Agency and Identity' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2012), p. 42.

<sup>182</sup> Elizabeth E. Irvine, 'Some Notes on Problem Families and Immaturity', *Case Conference*, 6.9 (March 1960), p. 227. See also: ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, p. 21; Stephens (ed.), *Problem Families, An Experiment in Social Rehabilitation*, p. 4; Frank Bodman, 'Child Care and Child Guidance', *Case Conference*, 7.10 (April 1961), p. 268.

<sup>183</sup> Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', pp. 680-696; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 91.

<sup>184</sup> Philip and Timms, *The Problem of 'The Problem Family'*, p. 32; Niechcial, *Lucy Faithfull: Mother to Hundreds*, pp. 77-79; Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, p. 151; Halsey, 'The Idea of Welfare and the Justification For It', p. 28; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 4.

The role of the family and the child in social work is complicated by the work of Harry Hendrick, which has yet to achieve the prominence in social work historiography which it merits. Hendrick contends that social policy involving children operates through a series of complex dualisms which ‘have tended to encapsulate children in an entity of investment that treats them as constituting ‘the future’’.<sup>185</sup> In this way, policy can depict the spectre of the child as both that of a victim and, more commonly, a threat.<sup>186</sup> In cases of abuse, Hendrick maintains, ‘the child took on a metaphorical role while providing the physical evidence of moral decay.’<sup>187</sup> Such fears coexisted alongside an optimistic belief that deprived children could be ‘integrated into the ideal of the welfare state’,<sup>188</sup> and that working-class families, especially mothers, had the wherewithal to withstand difficult times, especially when assisted by state officials.<sup>189</sup>

Hendrick’s dualisms were commonly evident in the discourse amongst social workers, who wished to both protect the child from society and portray the child as a potential threat to social order. Examples abound of social workers justifying their work with families as in the interests of the future of society,<sup>190</sup> notably psychiatric social worker Eugene Heimler’s argument at a 1961 conference on mental health that it was essential to recognise that ‘the child is not only father to the man, but society

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<sup>185</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, p. 1.

<sup>186</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, p. 7.

<sup>187</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, pp. 6, 10, 12.

<sup>188</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, p. 138.

<sup>189</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, p. 140; Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, pp. 371-372; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 96; Harris, ‘Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945-2001’, p. 92; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*, p. 82.

<sup>190</sup> ASW, *Children Neglected or Ill-Treated in Their Own Homes*; ‘Why Not Talk It Over?’, *Social Work*, 7.3 (July 1950), p. 456; Brenda Dickeson, ‘Child Care and Family Welfare’, *Social Work*, 15.3 (July 1958), p. 491; ‘The Neglectful Mother, By the Southampton Discussion Group’, *Social Work*, 12.2 (April 1955), p. 59; Robert Foren, ‘“Colour” As a Variable in the Use Made of a Local Authority Child Care Department’, *Social Work*, 27.3, (July 1970), p. 15; Halsey, ‘The Idea of Welfare and the Justification For It’, p. 27; Francesca Ward, p. 18.

is mother to him'.<sup>191</sup> At the same time, there was a feeling amongst social workers that the family was the best place for any child, and that, as Alan Cohen said to Ursula Behr during her interview, 'the child care service operated on the assumption that a poor home was better than a good institution.'<sup>192</sup> Contrary to the fears of parents, social workers were keen to keep families together, as Wilson and Vincent suggest, or at least to place them in a family environment.<sup>193</sup> Even when children were placed in institutional care, social workers still strived to act as a bridge to some semblance of a family life outside the institution walls.<sup>194</sup>

This view of the family reflects the often contradictory views taken of the child. If the child was simultaneously threat and victim, then the family was both a site of pathology and of optimal care. Family social work was often a case of short-term intervention to enable pragmatic solutions, which would ideally result in long-term prevention by raising children who would prove to be better parents than their own.<sup>195</sup> Social workers, because of their particular position, felt keenly these social expectations of family welfare and its aims. However, even while there was great anxiety over the dangers posed by poor parenting, social workers were generally optimistic that family life would prevail, and that with their help, damaging parenting practices could be avoided.<sup>196</sup> For this reason, Jordanna Bailkin is justified

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<sup>191</sup> E. Heimler, 'The Mentally Ill in the Community', in ASW, *Mental Health and Social Work, A Symposium* (London, 1961), p. 35. For more on Heimler, a Hungarian Jew who survived Auschwitz and Buchenwald, see: Long, 'Changing public representations of mental illness in Britain 1870-1970', pp. 150-152.

<sup>192</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 11.

<sup>193</sup> ASW, *Children Away From Home*; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 49-63; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 129; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, pp. 11, 21. Institutions were ideally modelled on family homes, although this was often untenable given their age and former functions: Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>194</sup> N. M. Gately *et al.*, 'Parent, Child and Therapeutic Team in a Hostel Setting', *Case Conference*, 7.4 (September 1960), p. 95; Ruth V. Smith, 'Social Work in a Residential Unit for Mentally Handicapped Children', *Case Conference*, 5.8 (February 1959), p. 203.

<sup>195</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 38; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 110.

<sup>196</sup> Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', pp. 371-372; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 71-72.

in arguing that the state's attitude towards such issues as private fostering was often 'at odds with itself',<sup>197</sup> since the fear of the institution clashed with the fear of the inadequate mother. Although Wilson is right to highlight how the welfare system supported the family, this was not a reinforcement of patriarchal values. It was rather, as we see in the next section, a belief that the child, whose welfare carried symbolic weight for society as a whole, required a family environment, monitored, if necessary, by the expertise of welfare professionals.

### **III.iii            The Fear of the Immature Client**

The anxiety which social workers suffered over immaturity in their clients was another reason why the child, and through the child, the family, was such a crucial site of intervention. This focus on the 'immature client' was a characteristic of social work over the period, and echoed a number of terms, such as deviant, unorganised, and immoral, which were by this point outdated.<sup>198</sup> The sense of a stunted development evoked by the word was no mistake, and was a result of a professional focus on adequate child-rearing.

Particularly important was establishing some semblance of authority within the household, a view exemplified by child care worker Joan Lawson's view that 'Love and security, and the authority implicit in both, form the best-known compost for healthy growth in human beings.'<sup>199</sup> This meant that, as well as assisting in the care of neglected children, social workers also looked to provide an appropriate

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<sup>197</sup> Bailkin, 'The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State', p. 120.

<sup>198</sup> Corner, 'Moral Problems Met in Social Work', p. 14; Harriett C. Wilson, 'Problem Families and the Concept of Immaturity', *Case Conference*, 6.5 (October 1959), pp. 115-118; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 131

<sup>199</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 28.

environment for the maturation of the parents. This might require the child care officer to embody parental authority so that child's parents could 'regain or gain the security of childhood under the guidance and control of a responsible adult',<sup>200</sup> although other accounts indicate that most parents did not grasp the objective of this process.<sup>201</sup>

The result of these issues was that 'problem families' took on an emotive significance similar to that of the children which they were supposedly failing. One social worker commented that such families 'could indeed be more justly called the heart-break families',<sup>202</sup> while the authors of an article on collaborative attempts to tackle 'problem families' noted that 'these parents have the immaturity of children dangerously housed in adult bodies with adult powers', and that there was 'no greater potential danger to civilisation and culture'.<sup>203</sup> As David Kynaston reminds us, this was a period when 'the moral and social health of the family' was seen as indicative of the moral and social integrity of the nation as a whole.<sup>204</sup> Given these concerns over the immaturity of their clients, and the way in which it threatened the healthy development of future generations and thus the future of society,<sup>205</sup> it is perhaps surprising that social workers felt that the family was the optimum environment for the child.

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<sup>200</sup> National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, p. 99. See also: Letter from C. W. French, *Case Conference*, 2.5 (September 1955), p. 15

<sup>201</sup> Pugh, *Social Work in Child Care*, p. 21.

<sup>202</sup> Letter from Mary Kitchin, *Case Conference*, 8.6 (November 1961), p. 152.

<sup>203</sup> 'Why Not Talk It Over?', *Social Work*, 7.3 (July 1950), p. 456.

<sup>204</sup> David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-51* (London, 2007), p. 558. See also: LSE Archives and Special Collections, Titmuss; Richard Morris (1907-1973); professor of social administration, TITMUS/3/371, Academic Related, Family Lectures, The Family as a Social Institution, British National Conference of Social Work, 1954, p. 2; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 179.

<sup>205</sup> Michal Shapira, *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Democratic Self in Postwar Britain* (Cambridge and New York, 2013), pp. 17-18.



Nevertheless, the belief remained that most families could survive these difficulties and, with appropriate support, could overcome their shortcomings. Social workers felt that they (and, if necessary, their colleagues in other services) had the skills to support immature families,<sup>206</sup> so the onus remained on supporting the family. In the clash between the post-war emphasis on emotional immaturity and detrimental relationships and the importance placed on the family unit, the latter more often than not took precedence. In the context of a society where the family was 'recognised as the social institution best suited for the nurturing and education of children' and was seen as 'natural, necessary and irreplaceable', social workers were reluctant to intervene and challenge family structures.<sup>207</sup> Although social work tended to reinforce patriarchal norms, this was a side-effect of broader social pressures.

This is by no means a particularly new story, although Hendrick's insights, with their emphasis on the metaphorical significance of the child and the family, justify a rethink of historiographical approaches to the family. There are two further, hitherto unexplored reasons why social workers might have chosen to support the family, both of which relate to the practical and personal issues of working with families. The first was to avoid the lengthy process of committing children to care, especially when informal and less direct solutions were wont to emerge if social workers waited to intervene.<sup>208</sup> It is clear from accounts of the period that moving and removing children was highly time-consuming.<sup>209</sup> The second was the emotional

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<sup>206</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 109.

<sup>207</sup> Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, p. 74. See also: Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 101-103.

<sup>208</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 112, 190.

<sup>209</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 9; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 82-89; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 73-76.

labour involved in removing the child, especially since many social workers felt that it was difficult to punish poor parenting without also punishing the child.<sup>210</sup> As Bronwen Rees declared in her account of the period, ‘To me the whole system seemed wicked and wrong. Whatever the parents may or may not have done, inevitably it was the innocent children who suffered.’<sup>211</sup> Again, the emotional labour of work with children, and thus with families, should be taken into consideration, especially when it occurred away from the security of institutions.

### **III.iv Social Work and the Immigrant Family**

The increasing presence of immigrants gave many social workers cause to re-evaluate their practice, and, when the first wave of arrivals was joined by their spouses and children in the latter half of the period, existing concerns around the family gained a new dimension.<sup>212</sup> Although some social workers felt that the issues reported by immigrant families were broadly similar to those experienced by native clients,<sup>213</sup> differences in culture, especially different norms and expectations on the subject of parenting, threatened to pose new problems.<sup>214</sup> On the topic of West Indian arrivals, Anneliese Walker, herself an immigrant, warned that British social work training, with its culturally-specific assumptions about the family, might leave practitioners ‘at a loss when they have to deal with families of a different cultural

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<sup>210</sup> Elizabeth A. Sheldon, ‘An Experiment in Group Work with Children’, *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 198; Olive Reiner, ‘Naught for Your Comfort’, *Case Conference*, 15.11 (March 1969), p. 433; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 11; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 77.

<sup>211</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 18. On such complexities, see also: Taylor, ‘Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work’, p. 693.

<sup>212</sup> Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, p. 188.

<sup>213</sup> D. M. Wood *et al.*, ‘The West Indian in the Provinces’, in S. K. Ruck (ed.), *The West Indian Comes to England. A Report Prepared for the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities by the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1960), p. 167.

<sup>214</sup> Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 101; Bivins, *Contagious Communities*, p. 228.

pattern, particularly where moral values are involved.’<sup>215</sup> One major issue which emerged was that immigrants saw the child care services not as a last resort, but as a convenience. Immigrant mothers commonly relied on informal childminding while they went out to work, a practice which contradicted the basic tenets of Bowlbyism.<sup>216</sup> In fact, such child care practices were one factor in the challenging of Bowlby’s ideas; Dr Simon Yudkin, Chairman of the Council for Children’s Welfare, noted during a discussion of immigrant families his concern that, in native communities, ‘the tie between children and mothers is becoming too tight’.<sup>217</sup> Not only did those engaged in the social and medical services realise that their approaches might be inadequate when faced with alternative child care practices, but they were also willing to reassess their assumptions in the light of new evidence.<sup>218</sup>

The biggest challenge which West Indian immigrants posed to existing ideas about the family, however, was their permissiveness towards illegitimacy.<sup>219</sup> This issue, highlighted social workers’ fears that non-traditional family structures might produce difficult children. It is worth noting that while social workers tended to accept immigrant family practices, fears about social and sexual relations across racial barriers,<sup>220</sup> especially between ‘white’ women and ‘coloured’ men,<sup>221</sup> meant

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<sup>215</sup> Anneliese Walker, ‘The Irish in Britain (by John Arthur Jackson), Indian Immigrants in Britain (Rashmi Desai) and West Indian Immigrants and the London Churches (Clifford S. Hill)’ (book review), *Case Conference*, 10.9 (March 1964), p. 285.

<sup>216</sup> Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, p. 101; Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 188-192; Bailkin, ‘The Postcolonial Family?’, *passim.*, but esp. p. 107.

<sup>217</sup> Simon Yudkin, *The Health and Welfare of the Immigrant Child* (London, [1967]), p. 13. On the wider context of challenging Bowlby, see: Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 96-98; Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, p. 192.

<sup>218</sup> Peter Hutchinson, ‘The Social Worker and Culture Conflict’, *Case Conference*, 15.12 (April 1969), p. 470.

<sup>219</sup> Wood *et al.*, ‘The West Indian in the Provinces’, p. 167; Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 193-194. Bailkin notes that British laws contributed to the persistence of illegitimacy.

<sup>220</sup> For more on the symbolic and metaphorical aspects of this, see: Waters, ‘“Dark Strangers” in Our Midst’, p. 212.

<sup>221</sup> Banton, *White and Coloured*, pp. 129-130; Griffith *et al.*, *Coloured Immigrants in Britain*, p. 17; Elspeth Huxley, *Back Street New Worlds: A Look at Immigrants in Britain* (London and Toronto,

that there was deep concern about 'half-coloured' children. Such children, who, one report suggested, invariably came from 'unstable or non-existent families and unsatisfactory homes', were overly represented amongst children in care.<sup>222</sup>

Furthermore, their mixed parentage made them difficult to place with adoptive families. Ruth Evans found that immigrant and British families alike tended to pity such children, but nevertheless felt that 'they should be strangled at birth.'<sup>223</sup> Class as well as race played a role here. When E. R. Braithwaite, a West Indian engineer who briefly worked as a social worker (and later became a novelist),<sup>224</sup> tried to find foster parents for Roddy, the illegitimate son of a US serviceman, in the early 1960s, the mother's status as a prostitute was almost as much of an issue as the father's Mexican origins.<sup>225</sup> His Area Officer also advised against placing Roddy in a home with girls because of the uncertainty of what would happen when he became an adolescent.<sup>226</sup> Braithwaite summed up the case thus: 'Rodwell Clive Williams, half-Mexican, half-prostitute. Mix thoroughly for four and a half years. Result should be a cretinous gargoyle at worst, a problem child at best.'<sup>227</sup>

In the face of immigration, social work continued in its emphasis on the family as an optimum environment. This was why working mothers were such a concern, but social workers were willing to forego intervention in such cases. As

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1964), p. 152; D. V. Donnison, 'Absolute Beginners' (book review), *Case Conference*, 3.7 (July 1960), pp. 78-79.

<sup>222</sup> Robert Foren and I. D. Batta, 'Colour' As a Variable in the Use Made of a Local Authority Child Care Department', *Social Work*, 17.3 (July 1970), p. 15; Elizabeth A. Sheldon, 'An Experiment in Group Work with Children', *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 194; Wilfred H. Parry, 'Immigration in Sheffield', *The Medical Officer*, 116.13 (23rd September 1966), p. 164; Dyson, *No Two Alike*, p. 14.

<sup>223</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 106.

<sup>224</sup> For more on Braithwaite, see: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 124-125. Braithwaite is most famous for his account of teaching in the East End: E. R. Braithwaite, *To Sir, With Love* (London, 1959).

<sup>225</sup> Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 8-10.

<sup>226</sup> Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>227</sup> Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, p. 12.

with working-class families, many workers believed that, with their help and instruction, immigrant mothers (and, in this case, grandparents) could usually muddle through and adapt.<sup>228</sup> If anything, they were more resilient in the face of hardship than their non-immigrant equivalents.<sup>229</sup> It was those children who had no access to a family environment, usually due to illegitimacy, who were more of an issue. This was partially due to the importance placed on relationships: many personal accounts of immigrants dwell on their isolation and loneliness,<sup>230</sup> and the absence of sufficient parental figures was also an ongoing issue.<sup>231</sup> There is no doubt that the familial cultures of immigrants, especially West Indians, were identified by social workers as a potential problem, but the ability of social workers to offer any necessary assistance and, more importantly, the presence of some semblance of a family structure were causes for optimism.

### **III.v Social Work and the Family: Conclusions**

In a period when the boundaries between the public and private spheres were becoming increasingly indistinct,<sup>232</sup> the fact that social workers came to embody both state care and state authority posed an issue for everyday practice. Their particular position at the intersection between state, society, and family meant that they had to balance the needs of individuals, whether parent or child, with the expectations of society, a task which proved much harder on the doorstep than in the office. The ‘web of ambiguities and ambivalences’, as Hendrick labels it, presented

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<sup>228</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 99; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 71-75; John Rea Price, ‘West Indian Immigrants: Assimilation and Casework’, *Case Conference*, 12.2 (June 1965), pp. 38-43.

<sup>229</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 102.

<sup>230</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 56-57; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 101.

<sup>231</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 106-109.

<sup>232</sup> Harris, ‘Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain’, p. 104.

by the ‘problem family’ and social attitudes towards their existence proved difficult to navigate.<sup>233</sup> As much as social work in this period has been criticised for its reluctance to challenge or dismantle the nuclear, patriarchal family, I would argue that any social worker’s ability to undertake such a move was constrained by the socio-political mores and anxieties in which it was embedded. At the same time, we should recognise that the theoretical concerns over shifts in working-class motherhood voiced by social work academics, politicians, and public health doctors were not matched in the views of those working in the field.<sup>234</sup> The social workers who actually encountered mothers often had more confidence, both in their clients and in their own ability to help, than those in ivory towers, in clinics and in the Commons.<sup>235</sup>

We should also note that the family’s experience of the welfare process often differed from that of the social worker. When Noel Timms spoke to working-class people who had received visits from social workers, many reported the suspicion that they had been expected to feel ashamed, and to express this, for their failure to conform to the standards of society.<sup>236</sup> In other instances, mothers were desperate to defend their unruly and misunderstood children from the force of the law,<sup>237</sup> while fathers felt that their failure to provide for their families was only underlined by the

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<sup>233</sup> Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, p. 140.

<sup>234</sup> Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 377. On the view of the family as intrinsically fragile in the psychiatric and social scientific literature, see: Teri Chettiar, ‘Democratizing mental health: Motherhood, therapeutic community and the emergence of the psychiatric family at the Cassel Hospital in post-Second World War Britain’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 25.5 (2012), p. 109.

<sup>235</sup> This disparity between theory and practice means that Michal Shapira overstates the connections between expert connections of the child’s psyche and welfare practice. Shapira, *The War Inside*, p. 2.

<sup>236</sup> Noel Timms, ‘Social Standards and the Problem Family’, *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), pp. 5, 8-9.

<sup>237</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 77-81; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 28-37. A good extension to this is the reactions of unmarried mothers to their encounters with social workers. See: Gallwey, ‘Lone Motherhood in England, 1945-1990: Economy, Agency and Identity’, pp. 90, 139, 148-149.

meagre welfare assistance provided.<sup>238</sup> Perhaps the best example is the health visitor who visited Carolyn Steedman and her mother after the birth of Steedman's sister in 1951, and who said, 'This house isn't fit for a baby'. However the remark was intended, it had an enduring effect on Steedman, who wrote, 'I will do everything and anything until the end of my days to stop anyone ever talking to me like that woman talked to my mother.'<sup>239</sup> It is highly unlikely that the health visitor, whatever she wished to convey to the mother, considered the potential impact on the young girl also present.

#### **IV Social Work and Poverty**

This next section considers the role which the spectre of poverty played in the fortunes of social work over the post-war period. I discuss how social workers, whose position in the gaps and on the margins meant that they were well-acquainted with the persistence of poverty before its 'rediscovery', reacted to this difficult moment. As we shall see, social workers were uncomfortable with the elevation of poverty to a topic of social and political discourse, as they had been content to deal with it as one part of a litany of emotional, personal, and social issues. For this reason, we should treat poverty as both an element in welfare discourse and as a factor in everyday encounters between welfare professionals, their clients, and the general public. Rather than poverty being 'rediscovered', as has often been supposed, I contend that poverty was in fact 'repositioned', moving from the gaps and the margins inhabited by welfare practice to the much more visible sphere of political and social concern.

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<sup>238</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, 'Poverty and the "Wage Stop"', *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), pp. 257-258; Harvey, *Casualties of the Welfare State*, p. 22.

<sup>239</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London, 1986), p. 2.

One of the intentions of this section, therefore, is to offer a more complex reading of poverty in this period. The focus on the rediscovery of poverty has meant that poverty's status as a problem of welfare policy has dominated, although there are a handful of accounts which appreciate the complexity of poverty as a social and political topic. A key argument to emerge from this work is David Vincent's contention that we can analyse poverty best when we consider it not as a condition, but rather as a practice, a way of living which sets in motion a series of particular human relationships.<sup>240</sup> Meanwhile, Mark Peel's work on poverty before the welfare state (in a number of different national contexts) has indicated that we should appreciate poverty as one factor amongst many, albeit a significant one, in the politics of social workers' interactions with their clients. Further to this, work from Rodney Lowe has hinted that in analysing the role of poverty in post-war welfare, we must not neglect the impact of affluence, which became another factor in the framework which governed interactions between social workers and their clients.<sup>241</sup> This literature constitutes a useful framework for rethinking the role of poverty within post-war society. When we add considerations of social work, however, we can extend this model further still, to include an appreciation of how poverty was repositioned from an everyday issue of welfare practice to one of social and political discourse, and was thus a versatile concept.

#### **IV.i            The Rediscovery of Poverty**

Poverty, and particularly the rediscovery of poverty in the 1960s, has become one of the major themes in the post-war history of welfare.<sup>242</sup> As Gareth Stedman Jones has

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<sup>240</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 8.

<sup>241</sup> Lowe, 'Modernizing Britain's Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964', pp. 35-67.

<sup>242</sup> Fawcett, 'The Welfare State Since 1945', p. 449.



argued, ‘Poverty has always been there to be discovered, but only in certain political and ideological contexts did its discovery become an explosive issue.’<sup>243</sup> The 1965 publication of Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend’s book, *The Poor and the Poorest*, set the stage for such an explosion. The use of social science to analyse poverty, particularly the use of a ‘relative’ definition which took into account the ability of families to participate in society as well as survive,<sup>244</sup> did not diminish the book’s emotive impact. In the midst of the ensuing discussions, the Child Poverty Action Group was founded, and it was CPAG who would present a memorandum (reprinted in *Case Conference*) on child poverty to the Prime Minister.<sup>245</sup> David Vincent has characterised these events as resulting in a ‘poverty lobby’, arguing that their ‘combination of emotive language and hard statistics made for powerful journalism’, but was ultimately ineffective in practice.<sup>246</sup>

This stood in stark contrast to social workers, whose words were limited and whose actions were plenty. Social workers encountered poverty on a routine basis, and as we saw in the last chapter, were not adverse to offering practical assistance or pointing the way towards material aid if they felt it in the interests of the casework relationship. Despite this, there was very little explicit discussion of poverty within the profession. This moment of ‘rediscovery’, then, posed issues for social workers, who had not shown sufficient concern for this enduring problem.<sup>247</sup> As we saw in the earlier section on public expectations, social workers made convenient scapegoats

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<sup>243</sup> Stedman-Jones, *The Languages of Class*, p. 242.

<sup>244</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 205; Lowe, ‘Modernizing Britain’s Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964’, p. 46. See also: Peter Townsend, ‘Introduction: Does Selectivity Mean a Nation Divided?’, in Peter Townsend *et al.* (eds), *Social Services for All? Part One* (London, 1968), p. 6.

<sup>245</sup> Lowe, ‘The Rediscovery of Poverty and the Creation of the Child Poverty Action Group, 1962-68’, pp. 606-607.

<sup>246</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 163.

<sup>247</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, pp. 47, 60; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 120.

for a range of problems; this time, however, the problem which had attained prominence was one with which they had long been associated.

Prior to the publication of *The Poor and the Poorest*, there had been widespread recognition within social work, and within connected areas of the social sciences,<sup>248</sup> that poverty had not been eradicated by the welfare state.<sup>249</sup> Some felt, however, that the problem had been mainly solved,<sup>250</sup> and many others saw its continued existence amongst their clients as a result of personal inadequacy.<sup>251</sup> In a period characterised by discussions over the causes and consequences of poverty,<sup>252</sup> social workers tended to see material want as evidence of deeper issues. Ursula Behr, for example, was keen to stress to her students that poverty ‘isn’t the be all and end all of things’ and that it was in fact ‘so much more the inadequacy of the person’ which was the issue.<sup>253</sup> Destitution was dwarfed as a social work problem by the more fashionable matters of personality, relationships, and adjustment to social

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<sup>248</sup> Peter Townsend, ‘Measuring Poverty’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 5.2 (1954), pp. 130-37; Peter Townsend, ‘The Meaning of Poverty’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 13.3 (1962), pp. 210-227.

<sup>249</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, ‘Poverty and the “Wage Stop”’, *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), p. 255; PEP, *Family Needs and the Social Services*, p. 208; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 27; Taylor and Rogaly, ‘“Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type”: Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963’, p. 452.

<sup>250</sup> Cherry Morris, *An Adventure in Social Work: The History of the Northcote Trust for Fifty Years, 1909-1959* (London, [1959]), pp. 36-37; Veronica Holder, ‘On Our Present Discontents’, *Case Conference*, 8.9 (March 1962), p. 254; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 61; Younghusband, *Social Work and Social Change*, p. 24. This belief that poverty had been conquered was not limited to social work, of course. See: Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-57*, p. 631; *Daily Herald*, 12 Oct 1951, quoted in: Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-57*, p. 32; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 55.

<sup>251</sup> Paul Halmos, ‘The Training of Social Workers and the Teaching of Psychology’, *Social Work*, 6.1 (January 1949), p. 257; Stella Penley, ‘How Far the Welfare State?’, *Social Work*, 7.1 (January 1950), p. 398; Great Britain Central Office of Information, *Social Work and the Social Worker in Britain*, p. 6; ASW, *Children Neglected or Ill-Treated in Their Own Homes*; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 20; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Irvine, p. 21; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*, p. 80; Taylor and Rogaly, ‘“Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type”: Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963’, p. 447; Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 375.

<sup>252</sup> Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 386.

<sup>253</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 20.

change, even if material assistance could be useful in the preliminary stages of the casework relationship.<sup>254</sup>

When poverty was rediscovered, it became a social and political challenge (if not an embarrassment) for social work less because the profession had clearly been aware that many were still living below the accepted minimum standards, but more because it had blamed the emotional immaturity of those afflicted.<sup>255</sup> This was a period, as Philip Seed reminds us, when it was felt that ‘that *no one* needed any longer to be poor, and few people needed even to be miserable, in the age of welfare.’<sup>256</sup> It is hardly surprising, then, that the reaction from social work periodicals was a mixture of admissions of guilt and defensive apologies. In an editorial in *Case Conference*, in the same issue where the CPAG memorandum was reprinted, Kay McDougall argued that although social workers had not been as involved in social and political matters as they might have been, the often-hidden nature of their involvement meant that they did not deserve the criticisms they had recently received.<sup>257</sup> McDougall’s comments underline that social work was shaken not by the rediscovery of poverty, but by its re-positioning.

#### **IV.ii The Negotiation of Poverty**

Since social workers encountered poverty on a routine basis, the politics of poverty played a key role in the welfare encounter.<sup>258</sup> Social workers generally solved issues

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<sup>254</sup> See, for example: Joan E. Kirkpatrick, ‘The Use of Material Help in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 6.4 (September 1959), p. 85; Malcolm Ford, ‘Financial Help as a Social Work Technique: Some Emotional and Organisational Problems’, *Social Work*, 24.1 (January 1967), p. 24.

<sup>255</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 131.

<sup>256</sup> Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 61.

<sup>257</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Case Conference*, 12.10 (April 1966), p. 330.

<sup>258</sup> Margaret Whale, ‘Problem Families: The Case for Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 11.1 (January 1954), p. 886; Terence Morris, ‘The Social Worker and the Study of Society’, *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 164; Joan E. Kirkpatrick, ‘The Use of Material Help in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 6.4 (September 1959), pp. 83-86; Kay MacDougall, ‘Future Clients and Colleagues’,

of hardship by connecting clients to the relevant services, but this role was not a significant part of their professional identity, so it was little discussed, unlike the attempts to develop relationships and to help clients with issues of their personality. It is crucial, then, that we understand how poverty operated at two distinct levels, that of public discourse and that of the everyday encounters within society. Although Todd has argued that this was a period characterised by discussions over the causes and consequences of poverty, this seems to neglect the fact that poverty as a term had fallen in usage.<sup>259</sup> This is not to say that it had disappeared as an important concept, or had lost its power as a framework for discussion: Peel, for example, has emphasised how the welfare encounter hinged on particular stories about the nature of poverty, constructed by both client and professional.<sup>260</sup> The social work literature, with its fondness for a good tale, certainly contained a fair number of accounts which involved poverty.<sup>261</sup> Although these stories deployed poverty as a theme, however, they were seldom *about* poverty, and more seldom still about solutions.

For this reason, we would better describe this as a period when the causes and consequences of poverty were under negotiation, particularly in the everyday welfare encounter, and when the framework of the debate within poverty was understood as being reconstructed. What we see over the course of the period is poverty moving from a topic of micro-political negotiation to the broader political agenda. This distinction also helps to clarify the minor debate as to what *kind* of

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*Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), pp. 8-9; Ziman, 'Medical Social Work', pp. 118-120; Malcolm Ford, 'Financial Help as a Social Work Technique: Some Emotional and Organisational Problems', *Social Work*, 24.1 (January 1967), pp. 20-24.

<sup>259</sup> Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-57*, p. 631.

<sup>260</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, pp. 4-5, 13.

<sup>261</sup> Further to those already cited, see particularly: Kathleen H. Strange, 'The Social Services', *Social Work*, 9.1 (January 1952), pp. 644-645; K. H. Strange, 'The Council Tenant Continues...', *Social Work*, 9.2 (April 1952), pp. 685-686; K. H. Strange, 'The Council Tenant Talks Again', *Social Work*, 10.4 (October 1953), pp. 849-850.

issue the rediscovery of poverty presented. While Geoffrey Finlayson argues that it was an old social problem refashioned to include a political element, David Vincent contended that any political imperative was absent.<sup>262</sup> On closer examination, however, we find that Vincent is arguing not that there was no political element, but that poverty did not present a serious problem for politicians, a notion which others have challenged.<sup>263</sup> Finlayson's appreciation of poverty as a dynamic concept which shifted in its meaning and in its political weight is thus a more convincing account.

Since social workers operated between policy and the public, between social expectations and the conscience of society, one would expect them to have been deeply affected by the shifting meanings of poverty. In the event, although it took on more significance and became a more common theme in journals and conferences, social work's stance seemed little changed, with many of Cohen's interviewees reiterating the position that poverty was not the greatest problem they faced and that their efforts were better spent in other areas.<sup>264</sup> It is certainly striking that when Kathleen Jones, a social worker turned policy academic, looked back on CPAG, she criticised the way in which its 'disjointed incrementalism' made the benefits system opaquely complex, and provided ammunition for critics of the welfare state as a whole, two shifts which would have particularly affected the territory of social work.<sup>265</sup> The movement of poverty from an everyday problem of practice to a grander concern for society and policy undermined, for better or for worse, much of

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<sup>262</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 165; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 313.

<sup>263</sup> Fontaine, 'Blood, Politics, and Social Science: Richard Titmuss and the Institute of Economic Affairs, 1957-1973', p. 410.

<sup>264</sup> See particularly: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 21; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 20.

<sup>265</sup> Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 169.

the discretionary power which social workers had developed in addressing particular instances of material need.

#### IV.iii Poverty and Affluence

In order to fully analyse the political and professional currency of poverty within this period, however, we have to understand how it interacted with rising affluence. For Rodney Lowe, affluence ‘afforded society the luxury of redefining poverty.’ With the rise of prosperity, the framework within which the inability to survive and to participate in society shifted.<sup>266</sup> However, this was counterpointed by a tendency in post-war society to conceive affluence ‘in terms of moral and cultural loss’.<sup>267</sup> Affluence created new problems, Avner Offer has argued, without necessarily helping to solve all the old ones.<sup>268</sup> Poverty, once the manifestation of most social work problems (although by no means the cause), was now but one element in a network of social problems.

It is noteworthy, then, that many social work accounts of families facing destitution focused on their thoughtless spending, such as child care officer Esther Robertson’s sad reference to ‘people who have perhaps pledged much of their uncertain future income to obtain unwanted utility goods and (*sic*) glittering toys of today’.<sup>269</sup> A number of other descriptions, meanwhile, were thinly-veiled

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<sup>266</sup> Lowe, ‘Modernizing Britain’s Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964’, p. 46.

<sup>267</sup> Black, ‘The Impression of Affluence: Political Culture in the 1950s and 1960s’, p. 86. See also: Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 75.

<sup>268</sup> Avner Offer, *The Challenge of Affluence: Self-control and Well-being in the US and Britain Since 1950* (Oxford, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>269</sup> Esther C. Robertson, ‘Some Thoughts on Children’s Departments Money, and Child Poverty’ (*sic*), *Case Conference*, 14.1 (May 1967), p. 18. See also: Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 105-106; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 88-90; Elisabeth Hunter, ‘The Relationship between the Public Health Nurse and the Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 16.1 (January 1959), p. 6; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 77; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, pp. 60-64.

condemnations of the misuse of disposable income, with juvenile delinquency in particular blamed on ‘the new temptations and freedoms of the affluent society.’<sup>270</sup>

When the cultural critic Richard Hoggart reminded his social work audience at a 1959 conference that ‘The most striking change in the last fifteen years is not that people now live in a careful Welfare State but that they are prosperous’, many of those present might have begrudgingly agreed.<sup>271</sup> For Kay McDougall, writing in 1964, increasing prosperity was changing the territory of social work, leading to new problems and clients, as well as increasing the contrast with those facing poverty.<sup>272</sup> Affluence presented both new specific problems, and contributed to the wider background of other social issues.

Perhaps the biggest issue which social workers had with affluence was that it prevented the public from taking an interest in the plight of the poor. We saw in an earlier section how affluence altered the political culture of post-war Britain, leading to a decline, or so welfare professionals and academics thought, in social consciousness and altruism. This was no different with poverty. As a letter to *Case Conference* put it, in a tone saturated with sarcasm, ‘Why should a public conditioned to acquisition and self interest (*sic*) bother about social casualties, except as a passing armchair sentiment? Who wants to pay an increase in rates so that tinkers can have decent lavatories to which they are not accustomed? Heavens above!’<sup>273</sup> Affluence altered the attitude of the general public towards social workers

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<sup>270</sup> Wills, ‘Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950-1970’, p. 170. See also: Bradley, ‘Becoming Delinquent in the Post-War Welfare State: England and Wales, 1945-1965’, pp. 230-231. For examples, see: Stroud, *Touch and Go*, pp. 105-115, 140-142; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 21, 124, 192-193; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 55, 58-59, 87.

<sup>271</sup> Richard Hoggart, ‘The Welfare State – Appearance and Reality’, *Social Work*, 17.1 (January 1960), p. 14.

<sup>272</sup> Kay MacDougall, ‘Future Clients and Colleagues’, *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 8. See also: Elizabeth E. Irvine, ‘Education for Social Work: Science of Humanity?’, *Social Work*, 26.4 (October 1969), p. 5; Titmuss, *The Irresponsible Society*, pp. 5, 19.

<sup>273</sup> Letter from J. Dempsey, *Case Conference*, 16.6 (October 1969), p. 218.

and their clients, as well as the expectations placed on the social services. It made them more sceptical about poverty, and more willing to blame those involved for such misfortune.<sup>274</sup> Social workers found themselves positioned between those experiencing poverty and the scepticism of an increasingly affluent public.

Over the period, then, affluence seemed to present just as much of an issue to social workers as poverty. It contributed to social and emotional problems,<sup>275</sup> and altered conceptions of poverty, not just in the reports of sociologists, but also in the eyes of the struggling families who wanted to participate in this consumer culture. In their condemnation of clients who spent beyond their means, there was a strong hint of the classism of previous eras,<sup>276</sup> although there were a number of social workers who rallied against this, asking whether the average middle-class home was really so well managed.<sup>277</sup> In addition, social workers realised that it was only through the financial wealth of society as a whole that welfare provision and social work could exist at all.<sup>278</sup> Even if affluence could be accepted, the way in which it reconfigured views of poverty was more problematic, a view exemplified by Family Service Unit (FSU) leader Stephen Wyatt's statement in *Case Conference* that 'we cannot afford poverty in our society', since 'society itself always pays for poverty in the long run'.<sup>279</sup> A focus on the economic cost of supporting destitute families had meant that the social cost, especially on children, was increasingly neglected. As we saw in the

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<sup>274</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, 'Poverty and the "Wage Stop"', *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), p. 255.

<sup>275</sup> Hyndman, 'The West Indian in London', p. 127.

<sup>276</sup> Black, 'The Impression of Affluence: Political Culture in the 1950s and 1960s', p. 86.

<sup>277</sup> Rosalind Chambers, 'Poverty and Mismanagement', *Case Conference*, 2.6 (October 1955), p. 10; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 105.

<sup>278</sup> Margaret Thomas, 'Role Understanding is a Function of Good Communication? An Examination of Roles in the Personal Social Services', *Social Work*, 27.3 (July 1970), p. 3. See also: Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', p. 113.

<sup>279</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, 'Poverty and the "Wage Stop"', *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), p. 260.



earlier section on social change, the effect of increasing affluence on the political culture in which welfare was embedded posed new issues for social work, and reconfigured older ones.

#### **IV.iv Social Work and Poverty: Conclusions**

It is clear, then, that poverty played a number of different roles in the theory and practice of welfare, and often in complex ways. It was a framework in which to position other problems rather than a problem within itself, and in this way it interacted with other anxieties about affluence, social change, and detrimental relationships. Social workers did not encounter some non-existent ideal of the needy family, but rather poverty as one factor in a series of broader issues. These images of poverty were further complicated by the development of an increasingly affluent society, both because it affected the destitute family's conception of itself and because it diminished social concern for those suffering serious material want. Social workers had the discretion to deal with poverty and the way in which it manifested itself with particular clients. If social workers focused more on the fall-out from affluence than on poverty, it was perhaps because it offered better professional opportunities, or because they were confident that issues of poverty would slowly resolve themselves.<sup>280</sup> It certainly seems that social workers were more content solving cases as they arose than trying to enact structural reform, an individualism which was itself partially a result of affluence.

As a profession, then, social work did not have a general response to poverty, a strategy which sought to initiate social change, mostly because the social worker's

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<sup>280</sup> Elizabeth Irvine, for example, felt that rising affluence would eliminate the welfare state's shortfall in material provisions within fifty years: Elizabeth E. Irvine, 'Education for Social Work: Science of Humanity?', *Social Work*, 26.4 (October 1969), p. 5.

best tool in the face of material need was their ability to refer clients to other services. Social work may not have been progressive in the face of poverty, but neither was it overwhelmingly conservative or reactionary. Poverty was approached as one factor, seldom a causal one, amongst many, a symptom rather than a disease. As I argued earlier, we should see this as a period when poverty was under negotiation, but as a framework rather than as an isolated issue; furthermore, we should understand the events of the 1960s not as a rediscovery of poverty, but as a repositioning. Social workers were happy to work in the gaps and on the margins, in territory where they could approach poverty as and when it arose, exercising their own professional discretion. However, when poverty was repositioned in the mid-1960s, from an everyday issue individual to each client to a matter of broader social and political discourse, the social worker's territory came under extensive scrutiny, meaning that this pragmatism was no longer a sufficient defence.

## **V                      Conclusions**

This chapter has shown how the place of the social worker within society and the welfare state allowed them a certain amount of influence, but also limited their opportunity to enact broader change. Their position in the gaps and on the margins was reflected in many of their political roles: they acted as an interface between policy-makers and the public; they attempted to integrate care and control, the interests of the individual with the interests of wider society; they sought to balance social change and social stability through helping people to identify and address their issues, or to adapt to shifting social patterns. The multiple associations of the social worker had its advantages, allowing them to represent and interpret between different elements within society.

At the same time, however, it meant that expectations of social work were high, and that it was liable to be blamed for the persistence of social problems, some of which they lacked the influence and resources to reasonably address. If social work seemed powerless to enact social change itself, if its values and priorities appear to have been driven by broader social forces, then we should recall that this is the image of social work which was presented at the beginning of the chapter. Social work exists to reflect wider social shifts: the emphasis on adjustment, on allowing different elements of society to co-exist or interact, is as apt as ever.

For this reason, it is important to highlight the balance between pragmatism and idealism. Social work was subject to a number of different expectations, and sometimes these came into conflict. Families, for example, were often posited as the main cure for the problems which they themselves presented. The limited influence of social work meant that it was adept at fostering local solutions to emerging practical problems, but that it was nevertheless frequently at the mercy of more fundamental social shifts. For the historian, however, this allows an insight into how new and old issues interacted, such as the interface between poverty and affluence, the changing role of class in the welfare encounter, or the shift from a collective welfare state to a more individualistic welfare society. In this regard, we should note that the theoretical concerns of policy-makers, social scientists, and the public were not necessarily reflected in the practical priorities of the social worker.

The view from social work is, of course, only one side of the story. We also need a more expansive and detailed sense of how policy-makers saw social workers, and how social work clients and the general public related to the profession.<sup>281</sup> This

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<sup>281</sup> We also need to understand how other welfare professionals saw social workers. This is explored in Chapter 5.

would extend our understanding of how the multiple associations of the social worker were perceived, as well as offering an alternative view of the gaps and the margins of society and the welfare state. It is unlikely that these other groups would have understood social work in the same complex way that social workers themselves did.

Overall, however, it is important to note that social work operated not only to help people navigate the welfare state, but also to navigate a changing society. Whether we assess the post-war period as one of instability or conservatism, and recent scholarship has made an unhelpful distinction between the 1950s and 1960s in this regard,<sup>282</sup> we should acknowledge that services existed to help people adapt to a social change, and occasionally an upheaval, which was deemed almost inevitable. As the institutions and principles of society shifted, so too did the gaps and the margins which social workers and their clients occupied. However, whereas social work was generally able to deal with such changes, there were those in society who were not. Social workers believed that, with their help and that of others in the social and medical services, individuals, families, and communities could overcome their problems, and successfully adjust. If we accept that the post-war settlements made for a society which contained contradictions as well as gaps in provision and between different welfare cultures (and the roles which social work took on in the last chapter would indicate that they did), then we should also understand that services existed to deal with these, often on a pragmatic, individualistic basis.

What did change the nature of welfare and social relations over this period, however, was money. The economics of welfare have long been a contentious

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<sup>282</sup> Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', pp. 363-364.

issue,<sup>283</sup> but the interplay between affluence and culture has only recently become the subject of historical analysis. The influence of prosperity has appeared throughout this chapter, often as a necessary addition to discussions more social and political in nature. We should not neglect the vestiges of classism which existed in anxieties over affluence, both with regard to an unsophisticated working class and an uncaring middle class. Although social work operated on an individualistic basis, it still had an interest in the altruism and collectivism of society as a whole, and this seemed threatened by the increasing disparity between the affluent public and impoverished welfare clients. This was not an issue which social workers had predicted during their war-time discussions.

The individualism precipitated by affluence was curiously underlined by shifts in the social sciences from studying individuals to aggregating populations.<sup>284</sup> This meant, argued Stephen Wyatt in his aforementioned *Case Conference* article, that ‘we have learned to talk not in terms of individuals but in sweeping generalisations and statistical averages’.<sup>285</sup> With regards to social work and the social sciences, this is only one part of a larger story about the impact of disciplines such as psychology and sociology on the methods of the profession and the attempts of social workers to get involved in social research. As with this current chapter, their position in the gaps and on the margins allowed them a certain amount of influence in the field of the social sciences, but was in other ways limiting. It is to this story that we now turn.

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<sup>283</sup> Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>284</sup> Jennifer Platt, ‘Sociology’, in Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine (eds), *The History of the Social Sciences since 1945* (Cambridge et al., 2010), p. 104.

<sup>285</sup> Stephen A. Wyatt, ‘Poverty and the “Wage Stop”’, *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), p. 255.

### 3 Social Work Theory and Practice and the Social Sciences

#### I Introduction

When Alan Cohen asked Francesca Ward, a former almoner, to list the most influential ideas during her time as a social worker, she replied that she and her colleagues were ‘like the urban fox going to dustbins, we’ve taken pickings wherever we could, you know, anything that we found useful in practice.’<sup>1</sup> For Ward, social work was a pragmatic undertaking, focused not on theoretical consistency but on uncovering concepts which might prove useful or helpful for routine welfare work. Social workers’ position in the gaps and on the margins meant that they operated alongside a number of different professions and academic fields, with the result that they were exposed to a variety of influences. This broad awareness of different ideas about individuals, society, and their problems meant that social work thought was an eclectic mix.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, when Margit Tornudd, an Inspector of Child Welfare from Helsinki, visited England in 1958 to study child care practices, she was struck by the ‘optimistic experimenting’ she found, concluding that ‘Applied practical idealism seems to be a distinctive mark of the British welfare services.’<sup>3</sup> In examining the influences on social work theory and practice over this period, we should remember that success in the field, both long- and short-term, was the ultimate aim. This led to

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<sup>1</sup> Francesca Ward, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Righton, ‘Social Work and Scientific Concepts’, *Social Work*, 26.3 (July 1969), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Margit Tornudd, ‘Comments on Some Aspects of Social Work in Finland and Britain’, *Case Conference*, 4.9 (March 1958), p. 257.

what Chris Jones has labelled a ‘looting’ approach to the social sciences.<sup>4</sup> In their attempts to utilise, disseminate, and produce knowledge in post-war England, social workers were driven by a pragmatic approach to their clients and to other professionals. They were, as probation officer and lecturer Juliet Cheetham alliteratively argued, ‘primarily practical people.’<sup>5</sup>

The following chapter has three broad substantive purposes. The first is to examine the impact of the post-war social sciences on social work, and to explore how these interacted with some of the other more personal influences on theory and practice. With regards to the first, I seek to move beyond accounts of post-war welfare work which emphasise the impact of the psychological sciences to the neglect of other influences, both academic and non-academic. We must appreciate, in analysing the actions of social workers in the gaps and on the margins of the welfare state, that their work utilised not only concepts from psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis, which I collectively term the psychological sciences, but also ideas from sociology, anthropology, and from the less prominent (but nevertheless important) fields of literature, religion, and industry and management. This is not to say that every social worker found methodological inspiration in every one of these areas, but rather that they comprised the diverse range of concepts from which the individual worker might take their pick.

It would be misleading, however, to assume that the theoretical foundations of social work mapped directly onto practice. The application of concepts and frameworks from the psychological and social sciences was selective. The second aim of this chapter is to explore the two major uses of social work’s distinctive

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> Juliet Cheetham, ‘Immigrants, Social Work, and the Community’, in J. P. Triseliotis (ed.), *Social Work with Coloured Immigrants and their Families* (London, 1972), p. 57.

theoretical foundations. The first benefit was that these various social and psychological insights did indeed offer social workers a way to understand and potentially help individuals, families, and communities. A framework in which to understand the actions and nature of individuals, groups, and society also helped social workers to endure the emotional labour of welfare work. The second benefit was that the construction of a suitably academic body of knowledge helped social workers to achieve and maintain a professional status. The diversity of this knowledge base was crucial. A familiarity with a number of different disciplines meant that social workers could understand and communicate with a range of professionals within society and the welfare state, an essential characteristic for any profession which operated in the gaps.

Most of all, however, a sound scientific background for their practice justified the discretion of social workers, so that they were relatively free to approach the issues of the field as they saw fit. As Chris Nottingham reminds us, we cannot explain the work of ‘insecure professionals’ without considering their autonomy to exercise discretion.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Tony Evans and John Harris, following Lipsky’s analysis of street-level bureaucracy, argue that this is particularly important for social work.<sup>7</sup> Some focused examinations of social work have already highlighted the tensions around discretion, with Maurice Vanstone noting the ‘conglomeration of pseudo-scientific, religious and common sense theorizing’ behind probation work, and Rona Ferguson examining the ways in which almoners ‘struggled to reconcile personal feelings and professional considerations with the practical requirements of

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<sup>6</sup> Nottingham, ‘The Rise of the Insecure Professionals’, p. 465. See also: Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Evans and Harris, ‘Street-Level Bureaucracy, Social Work and the (Exaggerated) Death of Discretion’, pp. 871-895.



their job.’<sup>8</sup> In studying social work, we should consider carefully the range of criteria which lay behind decisions of practice.

This is the third objective of the chapter, to consider how those within the profession learnt to act, behave, and speak like social workers. If social work was built on a variety of influences, which were then utilised to a number of disparate ends, we need to consider how this then became a body of knowledge which could be deployed in practice. Much of the knowledge required to conduct oneself like a social worker was practical, and in this regard, practitioners could draw upon a rich and pragmatic ‘oral tradition’ within the profession, constituted from the experiences of senior social workers in the field and passed onto students and newcomers. Each worker, depending on the particular setting and the problems which he or she faced, utilised a different range of ideas from a variety of sources, combining them with the practical abilities which were learnt from others or self-acquired. Throughout this chapter, I refer to the various concepts which social workers could employ as a ‘toolkit’, partially to underline the extent to which social work practice was governed by pragmatism, and partially to highlight the discretionary nature of their use. The objective, we should note, was not consistency, but rather the search for concepts or frameworks which worked or which helped. Those ideas which did not fit the social work model, such as Freud’s thoughts on sexual instinct, could be quickly dismissed,<sup>9</sup> and in fact, social workers generally ‘shied away from the more controversial and challenging aspects of contemporary psychiatric theory.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 96, see also, p. 158. Ferguson, ‘Support Not Scorn: The Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s’, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 106. As Mathew Thomson has argued, the role of sexuality in Freud’s theories was a major barrier to its general acceptance in British culture. Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, pp. 20-22.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, ‘‘I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home’: Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain’, p. 123.

In any discussion of social work methods, it is particularly important to note that these influences were not necessarily evident in everyday practice. In fact, both the primary sources and the secondary literature suggest that the explicit use of techniques from the psychological and sociological sciences was severely circumscribed. The major tool for many social workers in their everyday practice was, after all, the relationships which they forged with their clients.<sup>11</sup> A key component of this relationship, as we saw in the chapter on the role of the social worker, was the personality of the social worker themselves.<sup>12</sup> The relationship between social worker and client was often initiated through an interview, which, as almoner Helen Rees argued in 1949, was ‘not only the main tool of our trade’, but quite possibly the only concrete tool which the worker could offer.<sup>13</sup> As Younghusband would later argue, social workers’ concerns in this period often outnumbered the methods available to them, and in turn, their resources did not match the scope of their ambitions.<sup>14</sup> Even if social workers employed only a limited number of techniques, and had to refer clients to other professions for advanced medical or institutional care, they nevertheless drew on a number of different influences, academic and otherwise, to better understand their clients’ various relationships (including that with the social worker) and to hone their interviewing skills.

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<sup>11</sup> Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 376; Macnicol, ‘From ‘Problem Family’ to ‘Underclass’, 1945-95’, p. 74; Prynn, ‘Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship’, pp. 104-105; Froggett, *Love, Hate and Welfare*, pp. 58-60; Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Helen Rees, ‘On Teaching Interviewing’, *Social Work*, 6.2 (April 1949), p. 276. See also: Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7; Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 2; Robert J. N. Tod, ‘Why Visit?’, *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), p. 401; Noel Timms, ‘Social Standards and the Problem Family’, *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), p. 4; Madge Dongray, ‘Social Work in General Practice’, *Case Conference*, 6.2 (June 1959), p. 40.

<sup>14</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 26.

## **I.i Practical Expertise**

An analysis of the process by which social workers constructed an eclectic array of concepts and frameworks to inform practice and justify discretion, the ‘applied practical idealism’ which left such an impression upon Margit Tornudd, helps us to reconsider the role of expertise in this period. A great deal of work on post-war Britain has highlighted the unprecedented influence of experts, particularly social scientists and their proposals for improving society.<sup>15</sup> While social workers existed on the borders of this culture of the expert, with only the profession’s more prominent members able to contribute, they nevertheless constituted a practical manifestation of this post-war trend. Their focus on adapting the theoretical expertise into welfare practice means that social workers were akin to practical experts. This is a group far closer to Chris Nottingham’s ‘insecure professionals’ than to the technical and technocratic identities which Mike Savage has argued were emergent at this time.<sup>16</sup>

We should recognise that, along with the rise of expertise, there were those professions who were trying to incorporate these new ideas into well-worn

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example: James Vernon, ‘The Social and Its Forms’, *Representations*, 104.1 (2008), p. 156; Chris Nottingham and Rona Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975’, *Medical History*, 51.3 (2007), pp. 330; Abram de Swaan, *In Care of the State: Health Care, Education and Welfare in Europe and the USA in the Modern Era* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 226–247; Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 7–10; Conekin *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, pp. 14–15; Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830–1990*, pp. 150–151; Harris, ‘Tradition and transformation: society and civil society in Britain, 1945–2001’, p. 100; Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, p. 102; Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy*, p. 6. For a broader, often irreverent, yet useful overview of the role of expert, see: Joe Moran, ‘The Fall and Rise of the Expert’, *Critical Quarterly*, 53.1 (2011), pp. 6–22.

<sup>16</sup> Mike Savage, ‘Affluence and Social Change in the Making of Technocratic Middle Class Identities: Britain, 1939–1955’, *Contemporary British History*, 22.4 (2008), pp. 457–476; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 67–92. It is worth noting that Savage includes as part of his description of these ‘technocratic’ identity an evolving ‘social science identity’, which did share territory with this practical expertise. See: Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 79.

frameworks, who were more concerned with solutions and results than with scientific knowledge.<sup>17</sup> For example, Laura Tisdall, in her recent work on teachers and the foundations of their practice, has argued that they relied on a ‘practical expertise’, which is best understood as a ‘craft knowledge’, with its own ‘internal logic and coherence.’<sup>18</sup> In an admittedly very different context, James C. Scott has argued that close attention should be paid to practical knowledge and to those ‘informal practices and improvisations that could never be codified.’<sup>19</sup> Social workers, as a profession characterised by their position in the gaps between professions and on the margins of society, were a key manifestation of this trend, and studying their relationship with the social and psychological sciences is a valuable step in considering these fields ‘as an applied discipline’.<sup>20</sup>

In thinking about how social workers learnt to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to and effective in the field, we do face the thorny methodological issue of recovering practice, especially if we wish to underline pragmatism and discretion. The vast majority of accessible accounts which describe social work practice are to be found in professional publications, in journals, conference proceedings, and monographs, and are accordingly idealised or overly brief. One way to address this, of course, is to consider a variety of evidence, such as oral testimonies. Even then, however, we are still limited by an emphasis on words and language. As the other sections show, the construction of a professional

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<sup>17</sup> This tension between producing knowledge and finding solutions is explored in much greater depth in the next chapter.

<sup>18</sup> Laura Alison Tisdall, ‘Teachers, teaching practice and conceptions of childhood in England and Wales, 1931-1967’ (PhD thesis, King’s College, Cambridge, 2014), p. 14. I am grateful to Laura for letting me peruse her thesis and for answering my questions on what all this meant.

<sup>19</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Attempts to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1998), p. 6. Scott’s analysis concerns urban planning and agrarian studies, but his discussion of ‘practical knowledge’ is very useful, esp. pp. 309-341.

<sup>20</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 6.

language was very useful in itself, both in legitimating certain actions and in allowing social workers to interact with other professionals. This issue is more extensive, however, than the admittedly treacherous gaps between what social workers said they did and what they actually did,<sup>21</sup> for even this neglects significant aspects of their practice. Many a social worker, for example, found that a well-timed silence could constitute an essential tool in their encounters with clients, as could their clothing, their appearance, and a host of non-verbal actions.

As Peel reminds us, the welfare encounter, particularly the interview process, was highly choreographed, and ‘was physical as much as verbal: caseworkers evaluated gestures, expressions, dress, and physical surroundings.’<sup>22</sup> Moreover, discussions in previous chapters indicate that sometimes the simple presence of the social worker in the household or down the street carried a certain weight in itself. If we want to understand the pragmatic practice of social work, and with it the theoretical underpinnings of post-war welfare, we need to appreciate the performative nature of the welfare encounter, and the role of such actions in social work practice.<sup>23</sup> This is, of course, no simple task. Social workers only seldom dwelt on the non-verbal aspects of their work, and it is arguable that since we are forced to access such performances through words, our analysis is necessarily simplified.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> On this issue, see: Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 2. See also: Starkey, ‘Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945’, p. 254; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Academic interest in the nature and endurance of performance began apace with J. L. Austin’s discussion of ‘performative utterances’ in the 1950s. See: J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1975). This concept was applied to performance and theatre studies, the field which I have found most useful here, through the work of Erika Fischer-Lichte. See: Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Semiotik des Theaters* (Tübingen, 1983); Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London, 2008). The term ‘performativity’ has also become well-known through the work of Judith Butler on ‘gender performativity’. See: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and Oxford, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York and London, 1993).

Nevertheless, a consideration of these aspects of social work does add to our understanding of welfare practice, and particularly the pragmatic actions of the worker, especially because this aspect of the profession was acquired in the field rather than in the classroom. We return to this issue of performance, and its role within the ‘oral tradition’ of social work, at the end of the chapter.

By appreciating the way in which these various influences co-existed and were (often inconsistently) applied, we can also move beyond current accounts of welfare theory which simplify the range of ideas and frameworks which existed within the welfare state. The existing view of methods in the social and medical services is not only a misrepresentation of the pragmatic eclecticism which characterised much social work practice, but it also fails to unpick the connections between psychological, sociological, and religious conceptions of individuals and groups in post-war society. It is important to study the theoretical underpinnings, both explicit and implicit, of social work methods, as it was one way in which ideas and concepts from the social and psychological sciences could, albeit in altered and interpreted forms, enter the home or infiltrate institutions.<sup>25</sup> This examination has only recently become viable, dependent as it is on the ability to sufficiently historicise the social sciences. The next section, a short literature review, suggests how analysis of the historical conditions of the psychological sciences and, more recently, the social sciences allows us to contextualise properly social work methods.

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<sup>25</sup> Shapira, *The War Inside*, pp. 17-18; Thomson, ‘The Psychological Sciences and the ‘Scientization’ and ‘Engineering’ of Society in Twentieth-Century Britain’, pp. 151-152; Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, pp. 9, 253, 269; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, pp. 87-107; Sapsford, ‘Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise’, pp. 36-37, 41-43.

## II The Dominance of Casework

In the existing literature discussing social work methods, one in particular has been central: that of casework, with its supposed influences from psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis. Even during the period under review in this thesis, social work historiography was focused on the shift towards a social work theory and practice informed by the psychological sciences. The most influential text in this regard has been Kathleen Woodroffe's 1962 text, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States*, in which she posited the idea of the 'psychiatric deluge', a grand shift towards psychiatric understandings and interventions which accompanied social work's professional development.<sup>26</sup> This notion has since been rightly disputed,<sup>27</sup> although some recent accounts of social work have adopted Woodroffe's arguments without any great challenge.<sup>28</sup> However, the impact of the concept of the 'psychiatric deluge' has meant that most examinations of social work methods have started with casework and then sought to complicate this analysis, either by questioning the translation of casework principles into practice,<sup>29</sup> or by highlighting the continuity of non-casework activities such as social reform.<sup>30</sup> This emphasis on casework, and with it the influence of the psychological sciences on social work theory and

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<sup>26</sup> Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States*.

<sup>27</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 49; Webb, 'Themes and Continuities in Radical and Traditional Social Work', p. 143. Margaret Yellowly has argued that Woodroffe never intended for her thesis to be applied beyond the United States. Yellowly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> For examples of how this text still holds sway over histories of social work, see: Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, pp. 112-115; McLaughlin, *Social Work, Politics and Society*, p. 12; Taylor and Rogarly, 'Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type': Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963', p. 433. For a critical analysis of Woodroffe's influence, see: Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 668; Yellowly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, p. 134.

<sup>30</sup> Lees, 'Social Work, 1925-50: the Case for a Reappraisal', pp. 371, 377-378; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 87.

practice, has limited our understanding of social work methods and their relationship to the social sciences in post-war Britain.

There are two key reasons why so much of the critical discussion of social work methods has focused on casework and its links to the psychological sciences. The first is that, quite simply, casework was indeed the most prominent of the various social work methods during this period, and even though it was, as we shall see, widely challenged,<sup>31</sup> it was still a common part of everyday social work practice.<sup>32</sup> The second factor has been the development of the advanced analytic and the theoretical tools to interrogate the influence of psychological and psychoanalytic ideas on social work. The work of Michel Foucault, and interlocutors such as Nikolas Rose, has proved particularly useful in analysing the implicit social relations and power-dynamics behind the use of the psychological sciences.<sup>33</sup> These texts have tended to focus on and analyse the use of psychological ideas within particular case studies of social work, and in this sense they have been effective in opening up quasi-objective notions of psychological science to political analysis.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> One obvious example from within social work is: 'Comment: Has Casework a Future?', *Social Work*, 25.2 (April 1968), p. 2. The classic example from outside the profession is: Barbara Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology* (London, 1959), pp. 268-297.

<sup>32</sup> Butrym, *Social Work in Medical Care*, p. 17; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 26; Bernard Davies, *The Use of Groups in Social Work Practice* (London, 1975), p. 13, quoted in: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> Michel Foucault's work was hugely varied, but the three texts which are particularly illuminating for analyses of the welfare professions are: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London, 1965); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1972); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, 1977). For explicitly Foucauldian analyses of social work, aside from the works subsequently cited, see: Gilbert and Powell, 'Power and Social Work in the United Kingdom: A Foucauldian Excursion', p. 3-22; Malcolm Carey and Victoria Foster, 'Social work, ideology, discourse and the limits of post-hegemony', *Journal of Social Work*, 13.3 (2011), pp. 248-266, esp. p. 262.

<sup>34</sup> See: Rose, *Governing the Soul*; Nikolas Rose, 'Engineering the Human Soul: Analyzing Psychological Expertise', *Science in Context*, 5.2 (1992), pp. 351-369; Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge, 1996); Nikolas Rose, 'Psychology as a Social Science', *Subjectivity*, 25, (2008), pp. 446-462.



Two notable examples of studies which used this critical work on the psychological sciences to discuss the development of casework methods within social work are Vivienne Cree's 1995 study, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, and Roger Sapsford's 1993 chapter, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise'. Cree argues that the first half of the twentieth century saw a new 'space of knowledge' being created in and around social work,<sup>35</sup> and that casework was a major part of this shift, with its psychological tenets lending scientific legitimacy to new developments.<sup>36</sup> Sapsford, strongly influenced by Rose and his notion of the 'psychological complex', analyses the implicit politics behind casework, in particular the manner in which such use of the psychological sciences had the effect of legitimising and normalising the surveillance and moral judgement of families and individuals.<sup>37</sup> Both of these treatments, while highly useful, leave the wider methodological context of social work underdeveloped. The work of Foucault and Rose proves very useful in understanding how social work developed, as Sapsford argues, a distinctive 'expertise of practice and the experience of successful practice',<sup>38</sup> but it does mean that the disciplinary effects of ideas are highlighted above the choices of the welfare practitioners themselves.

One effect of this focus on the theory and legitimisation of social work rather than on its practice is that the everyday pragmatism of welfare is lost. David Burnham, for example, has criticised the focus on casework for the way in which it privileges the study of elite thinkers over the experience of practitioners.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 70. Cree seems to borrow this phrase from Jacques Donzelot, whose work on social work and charity in France she cites: Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (London, 1980).

<sup>36</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 87-107.

<sup>37</sup> Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', pp. 36-37, 41-43.

<sup>38</sup> Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Burnham, 'Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography', pp. 14-15.

Welshman, meanwhile, has stressed the experimental nature of much casework practice, highlighting the importance within this of emotional support and practical aid.<sup>40</sup> A greater interest in voluntary social work, sparked off by Jane Lewis' earlier work on the voluntary sector,<sup>41</sup> has helped in reconsidering the role of casework alongside other aspects of the profession.<sup>42</sup> As early as the 1970s, commentators on the recent history of social work were noting that casework was most useful when it legitimated existing practice rather than overhauling social work methods.<sup>43</sup> On a similar line, Margaret Yelloly argued that social work theory was not a direct adaptation of psychoanalytic ideas, but was rather an application of these concepts to specific social problems,<sup>44</sup> and was a method of understanding these problems rather than practically addressing them.<sup>45</sup> Crucially, Yelloly found a role for sociology, contending that it was this discipline which allowed social work to temper the difficult edges of psychoanalysis into something useable in the field.<sup>46</sup>

However, while those writing on social work methods were able to turn to a lively literature on the psychological sciences, similar work to adequately historicise sociology and the other social sciences (as a practice rather than as a discipline) has only recently emerged. In a 2008 article, Thomas Osborne, Nikolas Rose, and Mike Savage spoke of the need to rethink the history of sociology in Britain, and to move beyond a history based on great thinkers to one looking at 'the investigations of a diverse range of dabblers, explorers, thinkers and questioners of society, and the

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<sup>40</sup> Welshman, 'The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the 'Problem Family', 1940-1970', pp. 457-476.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, pp. 101-121.

<sup>42</sup> Welshman, 'The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the 'Problem Family', 1940-1970', pp. 462-464.

<sup>43</sup> Parry and Parry, 'Social work, professionalism and the state', pp. 33-35, 37-38, 40; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, pp. 54-57, 65, 71-77.

<sup>44</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 73-87.

<sup>45</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, p. 134.

<sup>46</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 73, 98, 115.

closely-entangled concepts and explanations that they generated.’<sup>47</sup> This focus on ‘dabblers’ and ‘explorers’ is one which seems particularly amenable to the study of social work.

The project of historicising sociology was continued by Mike Savage in his 2010 book, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, in which he sought to deconstruct the social science apparatus and reconstruct the experiences of social research.<sup>48</sup> As we shall see in the next chapter, he sees both social workers and social work methods, especially the interview, as playing an important role in this story. While Savage acknowledges his debt to the work of Nikolas Rose, he argues that ‘he overstates the importance of the psy-sciences and understates the role of other social sciences, which have historically deployed a different, more ‘social’ conception of the self.’<sup>49</sup> For Savage, future scholarship lies in incorporating further disciplines into our understanding of post-war research culture. The current chapter seeks to consider how social work contributed to and borrowed from this nexus of the social and psychological sciences.

In the work of Savage we can see a new avenue for thinking about the effects of the social sciences and the psychological sciences, one which maintains a useful focus on subjectivity and disciplinary formations of behaviour, but also incorporates the messier aspects of the day-to-day conception and application of the social sciences.<sup>50</sup> This trend can already be observed in Roger Backhouse and Philippe

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Osborne *et al.*, ‘Reinscribing British sociology: some critical reflections’, *Sociological Review*, 56.4 (2008), p. 522.

<sup>48</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. x. Savage’s analysis of the post-war social sciences has not gone unchallenged, but this only emphasises how his work has opened up new avenues of enquiry. See: Jon Lawrence, ‘Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England’, *History Workshop Journal*, 77.1 (2014), p. 217.

<sup>49</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Mathew Thomson has argued that the development of a framework for historicising the social sciences as well as the psychological has also proved useful in reconsidering experiences and conceptions of childhood in the post-war period. See: Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 7-8.

Fontaine's recent efforts to historicise the social sciences and in Greg Eghigian *et al.*'s attempts to bring together work on the 'human sciences', citizenship, and politics.<sup>51</sup> In addition, revisionist accounts of the role of psychological knowledge have challenged the work of Rose and Foucault by emphasising some of the popular and everyday spaces in which new psychological categories could emerge.<sup>52</sup> Particularly pertinent to this thesis is the work of Mathew Thomson, John Stewart, and Vicky Long, which has indicated that we can gainfully reincorporate notions of the 'social' into our analysis of the psychological sciences in welfare.<sup>53</sup>

### III Rethinking Social Work Theory and Practice

As I have argued above, it is not so much the focus on casework which has limited our understanding of social work methods (although this method has dominated), but rather the emphasis on the impact of the psychological sciences. However, recent work on historicising the social sciences would suggest that it is now necessary to consider the influence of sociology on social work methods, including casework. In this next section, I argue that, despite the assimilation of psychological and psychoanalytical concepts into the theory and practice of social work, a sociological basis was present throughout, and there was in fact an important interaction between

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<sup>51</sup> Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine, 'Toward a History of the Social Sciences', in Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine (eds), *The History of the Social Sciences since 1945* (Cambridge *et al.*, 2010), pp. 184-233. Greg Eghigian *et al.*, 'Introduction: The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences in the Twentieth Century', *Osiris*, 22.1 (2007), pp. 1-25.

<sup>52</sup> Rhodri Hayward, 'The invention of the psychosocial', *History of the Human Sciences*, 25.5 (2012), pp. 7-8. Hayward cites the work of Mathew Thomson and Joanna Bourke as notable components of this trend.

<sup>53</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*; Thomson, 'The Psychological Sciences and the 'Scientization' and 'Engineering' of Society in Twentieth-Century Britain', pp. 141-158. Long, "'Often there is a Good Deal to be Done, but Socially Rather Than Medically': The Psychiatric Social Worker as Social Therapist, 1945-1970", pp. 231-237, esp. p. 235. Stewart, 'I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home': Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain', pp. 111-127; John Stewart, 'The scientific claims of British child guidance, 1918-1945', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 42.3 (2009), pp. 407-432, esp. pp. 421-425.

the sociological and the psychological tenets of social work methods. The other principal social work methods, group-work and community work, may have utilised a different mixture of these various influences, but the same ingredients were present. This connection between the (psychological) health of the individual and the wellbeing of society, an increasingly-prominent notion in Britain over the first half of the century, fitted with the various social work roles explored in previous chapters.<sup>54</sup>

This disrupts the conventional narrative in histories of social work methods, whereby the psychological sciences were dominant during the professionalising process, with the social sciences gaining prominence with the advent of community work in the late-1960s.<sup>55</sup> Since social workers were pragmatic practitioners, they utilised a variety of concepts from a number of fields. The characterisation offered by Geoffrey Pearson *et al.*, that the mood was ‘one of cautious eclecticism rather than committed adherence’, is highly convincing.<sup>56</sup> The following section seeks to reconsider the role of sociology (and occasionally anthropology) alongside the psychological sciences within this ‘cautious eclecticism’, with the sections thereafter examining the impact of religion, literature, and concepts from industry and management studies.

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<sup>54</sup> On this connection between the personal and the collective, see: Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care*; Rhodri Hayward, ‘Enduring Emotions: James L. Halliday and the Invention of the Psychosocial’, *Isis*, 8.4 (2009), p. 838; Harris, ‘Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870-1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy’, p. 135; Shapira, *The War Inside*, pp. 17-18; Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, pp. 9-10, 290-291.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example: Brian J. Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems* (Oxford *et al.*, 1970), pp. 4-13; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 71; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, pp. 87-88; Woodroffe, *The Psychiatric Deluge*.

<sup>56</sup> Pearson *et al.*, ‘Introduction: Social Work and the Legacy of Freud’, p. 5.

### III.i Implicit Uses of Sociology in Social Work

As Jennifer Platt has observed, the boundaries of sociology in the post-war period were indistinct, especially in its less academic guises, where it sometimes seemed to conflate with and support social work and social reform.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Backhouse and Fontaine have argued that the adaptability of psychology, coupled with an increasing interest in the 'human factor' in this period, meant that it became the focus point of social scientific interdisciplinarity in the post-war period, a position previously assumed to belong to sociology.<sup>58</sup> This is a story reflected in the methods of social work, where new ideas from the psychological sciences were integrated into a structure where social sciences constituted 'the knowledge base of the profession'.<sup>59</sup> If previous accounts have, correctly, recognised the influence of these psychological and psychoanalytical ideas, the way in which they were tempered with sociological concepts has received less attention.

There has long been a close association between sociology and social work, 'one of the closest', as sociology lecturer Brian Heraud reflected in 1970, 'which can exist between a social science and a professional practice', albeit one not always evident in the field or the institution.<sup>60</sup> This was largely due to the influence of sociology in social work training, both academically and in the more practical guise of settlement work.<sup>61</sup> As evident as this may seem, it is not a universal view: Reba

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<sup>57</sup> Platt, 'Sociology', pp. 103, 128. See also: Martin Bulmer, 'Sociology in Britain in the Twentieth Century: Differentiation and Establishment', in A. H. Halsey and W. G. Runciman (eds), *British Sociology Seen From Within and Without* (Oxford, 2005), p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine, 'Toward a History of the Social Sciences', pp. 216, 222.

<sup>59</sup> Nottingham and Dougall, 'A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975', p. 323.

<sup>60</sup> Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, p. 271.

<sup>61</sup> A. H. Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain: Science, Literature, and Society* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 8–10, 66; Reba N. Soffer, 'Why do disciplines fail? The strange case of British sociology', *English Historical Review*, 97.385 (1982), p. 771; Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, pp. 73, 77; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 43; Pollard, *Social Casework for the State*, p. 7.

Soffer, for example, argued that, for the first half of the twentieth century, ‘Practical social workers in Britain ignored sociological theory because the unimaginative and threadbare contents of that theory were of no use to them.’<sup>62</sup> While sociology may not, as Soffer maintained, have enjoyed universal prestige at this time, this did not mean that it did not offer some utility. Jean Snelling and Kay McDougall both recalled that sociology played a large role in their social work training during the interwar period, although Snelling reported, as did Wright when commenting on his post-war course, that the influence of social anthropology was still clear.<sup>63</sup>

In fact, as Agnes Crosthwaite concluded in her 1940 pamphlet *The Social Services and the Professional Social Worker*, social work knowledge was primarily sociological in nature.<sup>64</sup> By this, we should stress, she meant that social work was concerned with questions about society, rather than informed by studies based on sociological methods; it was not until the post-war period that this form of sociology would emerge as a distinct field.<sup>65</sup> However, even if the ‘social studies’ which made up a social worker’s education contained only a hybrid version of sociology, it was nevertheless present and, if the recollections of Cohen’s interviewees are to be believed, useful.

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<sup>62</sup> Soffer, ‘Why do disciplines fail? The strange case of British sociology’, p. 781.

<sup>63</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, pp. 2, 7; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 17; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 5. On the close relationship between social anthropology and sociology in the British social sciences, see: J. D. Y. Peel, ‘Not Really a View from Without: The Relation of Social Anthropology and Sociology’, in A. H. Halsey and W. G. Runciman (eds), *British Sociology Seen From Within and Without* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 70-93; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 148-163.

<sup>64</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/2, Publications, Agnes Crosthwaite, *The Social Services and the Professional Social Worker*, c. 1940, p. 8. For more on the roots of social work knowledge in early sociology, see: Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 208.

<sup>65</sup> Platt, ‘Sociology’, pp. 104-105; Lawrence, ‘Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England’, p. 216; Soffer, ‘Why do disciplines fail? The strange case of British sociology’, p. 774.

In the early years of the welfare state, this sociological basis acted as a foundation to which more advanced and prestigious psychological ideas could be added.<sup>66</sup> In the first year of the welfare state, sociologist Paul Halmos suggested that sociological approaches within social work had led to a ‘progressive elimination of non-psychiatric problems’, with the result that the territory of the profession could now shift towards more psychological issues.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, Betty Joseph argued in a paper to the Association of Family Caseworkers in April 1951 that casework had grown out of two disciplines, sociology and psychology.<sup>68</sup> Although psychoanalysis did offer a theory on which to advance their work,<sup>69</sup> the problems that social workers dealt with were nonetheless ‘psycho-social’,<sup>70</sup> and so too, it was implied, should be their approach.

By ‘psycho-social’, Joseph was referring to those psychological issues faced by the client which affected their social functioning. This was a common term in social work circles, and should not be confused with the concept of the ‘psycho-social’ which Rhodri Hayward has charted, namely, the particular association between the psychological health of the individual and the wider condition of society.<sup>71</sup> Joseph’s usage of the term, however, was more concerned with the individual within their particular context, and was typical for the way it used concepts from the psychological sciences to extend, rather than replace, the

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<sup>66</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 73, 98.

<sup>67</sup> Paul Halmos, ‘The Training of Social Workers and the Teaching of Psychology’, *Social Work*, 6.1, (January 1949), pp. 252, 257.

<sup>68</sup> Betty Joseph, ‘Psychoanalysis and Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 8.4 (October 1951), p. 589.

<sup>69</sup> Betty Joseph, ‘Psychoanalysis and Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 8.4 (October 1951), p. 597.

<sup>70</sup> Betty Joseph, ‘Psychoanalysis and Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 8.4 (October 1951), p. 599. See also: Margaret Whale, ‘Problem Families: The Case for Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 11.1 (January 1954), p. 882.

<sup>71</sup> Hayward, ‘The invention of the psychosocial’, pp. 4-6. As previous chapters have shown, however, this connection between the wellbeing of the individual and the condition of society as a whole was an important one in justifying the intervention of social workers.



sociological foundations of social work methods.<sup>72</sup> A prime example of this is psychiatric social worker and lecturer J. P. Triseliotis's definition of a 'psychosocial diagnosis' as one which coupled psychodynamic concepts with 'a good grasp of the reality' of the client's world.<sup>73</sup> As with other social work theories, this explicit intermingling of psychological and sociological ideas was an attempt to develop an eclectic and effective understanding of individual and social problems, and was not intended as a coherent theory.

In addition, sociological frameworks could also be used to temper the increasingly prominent concepts from the psychological sciences. Such a balance was evident in the experience of psychiatric social worker Edgar Myers\*, who was instructed by psychiatrist Aubrey Lewis to balance out the emphasis on psychiatric issues in his field by reading sociology.<sup>74</sup> This was part of a wider trend amongst psychiatric social workers at that time to take a greater interest in the role of 'the social' in their theory and practice,<sup>75</sup> with Wright emphasising that the social worker's knowledge of people's everyday experiences and struggles had 'acted for a long time as an antidote to some of the pretensions of social medicine and psychiatry'.<sup>76</sup> Even those branches of social work most closely affiliated with the psychological sciences felt that the balance of sociological concepts was needed.

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<sup>72</sup> An overview of conceptions of 'psychosocial welfare' is given in: Froggett, *Love, Hate and Welfare*, pp. 31-47.

<sup>73</sup> J. P. Triseliotis, 'Preface', in J. P. Triseliotis (ed.), *Social Work with Coloured Immigrants and their Families* (London, 1972), p. vii. The view of social work problems as predominantly 'psycho-social' would later become an integral part of the influential social work theory emerging in North America during this period. See especially: Felix P. Biestek, *The Casework Relationship* (London, 1961), p. 134; Florence Hollis, *Casework: A Psycho-Social Therapy* (New York, 1964).

<sup>74</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 9.

<sup>76</sup> R. C. Wright, 'The Mental Health Bill – A Comment', *Social Work*, 16.3 (July 1959), pp. 95-96.

### III.ii Explicit Uses of Sociology in Social Work

For others, however, sociological thought merited more than just a foundational role.

In a 1957 article, psychiatric social worker and former child care worker Mary Swaine made a plea for the role of the discipline to be considered more seriously, arguing that the dynamic nature of casework meant that it was ultimately more sociological than was realised. Some social workers were already making movements in this direction. Noel Timms, recently qualified as a psychiatric social worker, attempted to counter what he deemed to be an overreliance on psychoanalysis and psychiatry by collaborating with a sociologist, although he did note that the therapeutic skills of casework proved very useful for encouraging people to talk about abstract sociological ideas.<sup>77</sup> However, even if some social workers wished to stress the contribution of sociology, or to explore it in more depth, it was still in combination with concepts from the psychological sciences that it proved most useful. Discussions of authority taking place in sociological circles, for example, allowed social workers to reconsider how and why some clients refused dynamic casework.<sup>78</sup>

This relationship was partially a result of social work's position in the gaps, between institutions, professions, and disciplines. As Swaine argued, the social worker 'looks both ways while sociologist and psychologist investigate the same problem from different angles.'<sup>79</sup> This meant that the psychological elements of casework could also help to temper the focus of sociology on people's

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<sup>77</sup> Noel Timms, 'Social Standards and the Problem Family', *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), pp. 2, 4. See also: Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 82.

<sup>78</sup> Philip and Timms, *The Problem of 'The Problem Family'*, p. 32.

<sup>79</sup> Mary N. Swaine, 'Sociology and Social Work', *Case Conference*, 3.7 (January 1957), p. 197. See also: Grace Coyle, 'Some Principles and Methods of Social Work Education', *Social Work*, 15.1 (January 1958), p. 414.

environments.<sup>80</sup> Not only could social workers benefit from utilising the social and psychological sciences together, but they did so in a way particular to their profession.

As the period progressed, the use of sociology within social work became more explicit, and social work literature began to cite the influence from the social sciences more clearly.<sup>81</sup> This was largely due to the increasing acceptance of sociology within academic and public circles.<sup>82</sup> When E. M. Goldberg made her predictions in 1961 for the coming decade, she highlighted the need for a ‘sociology of social work’ which could unify the existing knowledge and concepts gathered by the profession.<sup>83</sup> Part of the allure of the social sciences lay in the growth of their predictive powers, what Stevenson termed the “‘information explosion’”, so that their relevance to social problems seemed ever greater.<sup>84</sup> Social work educators became increasingly keen to put sociological thinking at the heart of their courses,<sup>85</sup> and by the time Jennifer Platt trained in 1968, the study of sociology was compulsory.<sup>86</sup> This was, however, a version of sociology adapted for the needs of social workers, and the disciplines remained, institutionally at least, very much separate.<sup>87</sup> Although sociology was present as one of the disciplinary foundations of

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<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth Howarth, ‘Family and Kinship in East London’, *Social Work*, 15.1 (January 1958), p. 435.

<sup>81</sup> Editor, ‘Comment’, *Social Work*, 22.4 (October 1965), p. 2; Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 82; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, p. 102.

<sup>82</sup> Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life 1957-1964* (Basingstoke, 1986), pp. 32-33; Halsey, ‘Introduction’, p. ix; Robert F. Edon ‘Do People Really Matter?’, *Case Conference*, 11.7 (January 1965), p. 223.

<sup>83</sup> E. M. Goldberg, ‘The Social Worker in the Sixties’, *Social Work*, 18.4 (October 1961), p. 26.

<sup>84</sup> Olive Stevenson, ‘Specialisation Within a Unified Social Work Department’, *Case Conference*, 15.5 (September 1968), pp. 184-189; Backhouse and Fontaine, ‘Toward a History of the Social Sciences’, p. 221; Soffer, ‘Why do disciplines fail? The strange case of British sociology’, pp. 774, 800.

<sup>85</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/25790/JenniferPlatt.doc>, quoted in: Lawrence, ‘Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England’, p. 236. This is the same Jennifer Platt who became an esteemed sociologist.

<sup>87</sup> Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain: Science, Literature, and Society*, p. 94.

social work knowledge in the early years of the welfare state, by the end of the 1960s it was an explicit part of the social work identity,<sup>88</sup> even if the influence of social work on sociology was somewhat diminished.

There was, however, another important reason for the increasing acceptance of sociology: growing disillusionment with casework, and particularly with its psychological and psychoanalytical pretensions. If the prestige of the psychological sciences aided the dominance of casework, then its excesses figured in its rejection. Ursula Behr noted how, amongst her students, casework became ‘almost a dirty word’ in the 1960s,<sup>89</sup> while a poem submitted to *Case Conference* by ‘A Younghusband Trainee’ described casework as ‘An unfathomable web of relationship/which is rationally probed in platitudes’ and its jargon as ‘Tools of explaining the art to/privileged disciples.’<sup>90</sup> There were a number of factors in this shift. Broadly speaking, there was increasing rejection of institutionalised psychiatry, along with other traditional forms of authority,<sup>91</sup> and a shift towards the community as a site of care,<sup>92</sup> while in the specific case of social work, Barbara Wootton’s attack on social workers’ indiscriminate use of psychological and psychoanalytical concepts proved an influential critique.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, p. 271; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 246-247.

<sup>89</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, pp. 19-20.

<sup>90</sup> *Case Conference*, 14.9 (January 1968), p. 344.

<sup>91</sup> Porter, ‘Two Cheers for Psychiatry! The Social History of Mental Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain’, p. 401.

<sup>92</sup> Kay McDougall, p. 32; Volker Hess and Benoît Majerus, ‘Writing the history of psychiatry in the 20th century’, *History of Psychiatry*, 22.2 (2011), pp. 139-145; Catherine Fussinger, ‘“Therapeutic community”: psychiatry’s reformers and antipsychiatrists: reconsidering changes in the field of psychiatry after World War II’, *History of Psychiatry*, 22.2 (2011), pp. 146-163; Chettiar, ‘Democratizing mental health: Motherhood, therapeutic community and the emergence of the psychiatric family at the Cassel Hospital in post-Second World War Britain’, p. 108; Eghigian *et al.*, ‘Introduction: The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences in the Twentieth Century’, p. 22. We should note that by no means did psychoanalysis disappear: Deborah Cohen argues that it was at its strongest in 1970. See: Cohen, *Family Secrets*, p. 240.

<sup>93</sup> Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology*, pp. 268-297; Rosalind Chambers, ‘Professionalism in Social Work’, in Barbara Wootton, *Social Science and Social Pathology* (London, 1959), pp. 355-

This did not mean, however, that the more implicit influences of the psychological sciences on casework, such as the focus on the individual and the ‘self’, were discarded. Just as the sociological aspects of casework were able to survive when combined with psychology and psychoanalysis, so too did those same aspects of social work theory endure when the social sciences became more prominent. The fact that they were increasingly being challenged did not mean that they no longer proved useful for social workers working in the field and in institutions. By the end of the period, Heraud still characterised social work theory as essentially psycho-social, as a necessary combination of the psychological and social sciences.<sup>94</sup>

### III.iii Group-Work and Community Work

If one response to the perceived overemphasis on concepts from the psychological sciences in casework was to argue for a greater awareness of sociology, then another was to highlight the alternative methods available to social workers. For example, many social workers began to lament the neglect of group-work as a part of their profession.<sup>95</sup> This was exemplified by Christopher Holtom, who wrote to *Case Conference* in 1955 to lament the ‘tacit assumption among the majority of social work educators in this country that true social work is casework and nothing else’. By focusing on the individual at the exclusion of their environment, he argued, social

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376; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 150. The definitive account of Wootton’s critique and the reaction from social workers has yet to be written, but see: Ann Oakley, *A Critical Woman: Barbara Wootton, Social Science and Public Policy in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York, 2011), pp. 213-218; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 173; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>94</sup> Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, p. 281.

<sup>95</sup> E. I. Black, ‘Introduction’, in ASW, *Supervision in Social Work, A Report of the School for Supervisors of Students in Practical Work Agencies, April, 1952* (London, 1952), p. 2; Dorothy M. Deed, ‘Casework and its Administrative Setting’, *Case Conference*, 1.11 (March 1955), pp. 7-8.

workers were at risk of exacerbating the situation, and were denying themselves ‘an invaluable therapeutic tool by scorning the group-work skills.’<sup>96</sup> This imbalance was largely a reflection of the gap between professional practice and professional discussion. In her analysis of the period, Younghusband pointed out that there was in fact a great deal of work with groups, and an exposure to key texts on group-work, but little analysis and development of group-work as a distinctive method, and no attempt to relate theory to practice.<sup>97</sup>

Since the academic credentials of group-work were at this time so underdeveloped, those who did discuss it often attempted to lend it legitimacy by emphasising its connections with the psychological and psychoanalytical tenets of casework. A notable example of this was the argument that, since casework necessarily involved the family, it could be viewed as a form of group-work.<sup>98</sup> This was in fact a common feature of the few conferences and books which were dedicated to group-work. As ever, the focus was on how the psychological and social sciences could be combined, or how new insights in one area forced social workers to rethink another.<sup>99</sup> Of the texts which Younghusband cites as influencing group-work, many were concerned not with sociology, but with group psychology.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Letter from Christopher Holtom, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1955, *Case Conference*, 2.2 (June 1955), p. 16. For similar complaints, see: Dorothy M. Deed, ‘Casework and its Administrative Setting’, *Case Conference*, 1.11 (March 1955), pp. 7-8;

<sup>97</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 123.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example: ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, p. 8; Jeffrey E. Smith, ‘The Uses of Focus’, *Case Conference*, 10.7 (January 1964), p. 204; Howard Williams, ‘Problems of Family Casework in a Statutory Setting’, 24.4 (October 1967), pp. 18-25. For a discussion of the way in which one very particular group of social workers, the Family Discussion Bureau, attempted to stretch the focus of psychoanalysis to include couples and families, see: Cohen, *Family Secrets*, p. 222.

<sup>99</sup> ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, pp. 15, 21; Kuenstler, ‘What is Social Group Work?’, p. 24; Adam Curle, ‘Dynamics of Group Work’, in Peter Kuenstler (ed.), *Social Group Work in Great Britain* (London, 1960) pp. 137-139.

<sup>100</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 123.

The notion that group-work functioned best when supported by casework was increasingly accepted through the 1960s.<sup>101</sup> This was partially the result of a number of experimental projects which attempted to use the two methods in tandem, the first of which took place in in the late 1950s, and was written up and published as *The Canford Families* in 1962.<sup>102</sup> In this report, Elizabeth Howarth\* concluded that the combination of methods made them both more effective, but also harder to measure.<sup>103</sup> This reflects one of the issues of properly assessing the influences on and influence of group-work: although later accounts imply that there was a lively culture around this particular method,<sup>104</sup> the source base is relatively limited, and the secondary literature very limited.<sup>105</sup> The inclusion of group-work may have expanded the methods available to the social worker, but the balance of sociological and psychological insights was largely unchanged, although the increasing use of role theory in action research and with families did underline the practical uses of sociological concepts.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>102</sup> Elizabeth Howarth *et al.* (eds), *The Canford Families: A Study in Social Casework and Group Work* (Keele, 1962); R. Roseman and J. Cooke, 'Social Groupwork with Children in a Family Casework Agency', *Social Work*, 21.4 (October 1964), pp. 16-20; Sheila Sturton, 'Developing Group Work in a Casework Agency', *British Journal of Social Work*, 2.2 (1972), pp. 143-158.

<sup>103</sup> Elizabeth Howarth, 'Organisation and Methods of Social Work', in Elizabeth Howarth *et al.* (eds), *The Canford Families: A Study in Social Casework and Group Work* (Keele, 1962), p. 78.

<sup>104</sup> Tom Douglas, *Groupwork Practice* (London, 1976).

<sup>105</sup> There is one notable exception: Maurice Vanstone, 'A History of the Use of Groups in Probation Work: Part One – From 'Clubbing the Unclubbables' to Therapeutic Intervention', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42.1 (2003), pp. 69-86. Also pertinent to group work is the existing historiography on the development of theories of group dynamics at the Tavistock, which had a number of connections to social work. See: Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, 'The Tavistock Programme: The Government of Subjectivity and Social Life', *Sociology*, 22.2 (1988), pp. 171-192. See also: Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 170-171. Social workers of the time did acknowledge this connection. See: Kathleen Bannister *et al.*, *Social Casework in Marital Problems: The Development of a Psychodynamic Approach* (London, 1955); W. G. Fox, 'The Family Discussion Bureau, A New Specialisation?', *Case Conference*, 1.11 (March 1955), pp. 22-26; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Irvine, pp. 17-20.

<sup>106</sup> Brian Benson Mitchell, 'Towards a Role Theory of Group Dynamics', in Barbara Butler (ed.), *The Voice of the Social Worker. Papers written by members of the professional social work staff of the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1970), pp. 63-73; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, p. 102; Pugh, *Social Work in Child Care*, p. 18; Younghusband,

A more dramatic shift in the methods of social work was presented by ‘the re-discovery of community work’.<sup>107</sup> Much as with group-work, social work in communities was occurring across the period, but was only identified as a distinct method with its own theoretical underpinnings during the 1960s.<sup>108</sup> This was part of a wider shift towards community care across the social and medical services, especially within psychiatry.<sup>109</sup> Community work in social work, with its foundations in colonial administration and development,<sup>110</sup> was particularly influenced by anthropology, which gave social workers conceptual tools to help them understand working-class or immigrant clients.<sup>111</sup> Anthropology was already familiar to those social workers, of course, who had encountered it as a principal part of their sociological studies, and even those elements which were distinct to community work were intertwined with the social scientific and psychological ideas already present in social work practice. In fact, one of the terms central to social

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*Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 41; Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, pp. 69-77.

<sup>107</sup> Kay McDougall, ‘Time for Change’, *Case Conference*, 19.10 (February 1970), p. 393.

<sup>108</sup> Goetschius, *Working with Community Groups*, p. xviii; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 239-240; Younghusband, ‘Postscript’, p. 187.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example: John Welshman, ‘Rhetoric and reality: community care in England and Wales, 1948-74’, in Peter Bartlett and David Wright (eds), *Outside the Walls of the Asylum: The History of Care in the Community 1750-2000* (London and New Brunswick, NJ, 1999), pp. 204-226; Porter, ‘Two Cheers for Psychiatry! The Social History of Mental Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain’, pp. 383-406, esp. pp. 398-403; Barham, *Closing the Asylum: The Mental Patient in Modern Society*; Busfield, ‘Restructuring Mental Health Services in Twentieth-Century Britain’, pp. 9-28.

<sup>110</sup> Thomason, *The Professional Approach to Community Work*, pp. 9-13; Thomas, *The Making of Community Work*, p. 26; L. R. S. Singh, in The National Council of Social Service (Inc.), *The Family, Report of the British National Conference on Social Work at Bedford College for Women, London, 15th to 18th April 1953* (London, 1953), pp. 78-81, esp. p. 81; J. T. R. Macaulay, in The National Council of Social Service (Inc.), *The Family, Report of the British National Conference on Social Work at Bedford College for Women, London, 15th to 18th April 1953* (London, 1953), pp. 81-83; Terence Morris, ‘The Social Worker and the Study of Society’, *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 167. For a discussion of how community work ideas circulated between social workers in Britain and in the Commonwealth, see: Thomas Bray, ‘Global Solutions and Local Needs: Transnational Exchanges in Post-War British Social Work’, *Cultural and Social History* (forthcoming).

<sup>111</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, pp. 5, 22; Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*, p. 224; John Mays, ‘Social Research and Social Casework: II’, in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), p. 70. On Mays’ research, see: Welshman, ‘The Unknown Titmuss’, p. 236.



work across the period in all its forms, that of ‘maladjustment’, was borrowed from functionalist social anthropology.<sup>112</sup>

As with casework and group-work, however, we should be careful not to overemphasise the importance of such ideas to community work. If studying group-work is made more complex by the shortage of theoretical and practical accounts, then any analysis of community work is hindered by the fact that many primary sources present an idealised version of the method’s theory and practice.<sup>113</sup> In short, it is difficult to get a sense of what a community worker might actually have done.<sup>114</sup> Unpublished archival sources indicate that community work, much like the other social work methods, required the development of relationships with individuals and the assessment of group dynamics. A particularly useful example is community worker Pat Seddon’s report on the North Kensington Family Study, which took place over the 1960s.<sup>115</sup> Although this report contains a fair number of community work platitudes,<sup>116</sup> Seddon reported that the majority of her time was spent familiarising herself with the local area and its inhabitants,<sup>117</sup> acting as a ‘signpost to information-getting in general’,<sup>118</sup> and coordinating local services.<sup>119</sup> In addition, large parts of her time were devoted to explaining the purpose of her presence in the community.<sup>120</sup> Seddon admitted to the Committee that there was in practice little

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<sup>112</sup> Stewart, ‘The scientific claims of British child guidance, 1918-1945’, p. 431.

<sup>113</sup> See, for example: Thomas, *Organising for Social Change*, pp. 23-35.

<sup>114</sup> Leaper, *Community Work*, p. 91.

<sup>115</sup> For more on the North Kensington Family Study, see: Thomson, *Lost Freedom*, pp. 207-208.

<sup>116</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, p. 5.

<sup>120</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965,

difference between casework and community work,<sup>121</sup> the main distinction being that casework was concerned with ‘breakdown’ situations and was thus more focused on individuals than the preventative aims of community work.<sup>122</sup>

Other reflections on community work made a similar connection,<sup>123</sup> with Joan King hoping that the outcomes of the Seeböhm Report might allow social workers to ‘reach far beyond the discovery and rescue of social casualties’.<sup>124</sup> This view of social work should be understood within the wider trend of the psychological sciences’ increasing interest in the governance of populations,<sup>125</sup> as well as the shift from the brief clinical consultation within medicine towards longitudinal studies of public health.<sup>126</sup> This phenomenon has been labelled by David Armstrong as ‘surveillance medicine’, a ‘clinical iceberg’ where ‘Everyone was normal yet no-one was truly healthy.’<sup>127</sup> In the case of community work, the attitude amongst social workers was that every resident was a potential client,<sup>128</sup> so the move towards the community as a social work concern did not mean that the emphasis on diagnosis and on the threat of individual pathology intrinsic to

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“Community Development Method Applied in North Kensington”, 7/3/66, p. 6. For a similar account of community work, see: Thomas, *Organising for Social Change*, pp. 25-35, 69-73.

<sup>121</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, “Basic Concepts in Community Development”, p. 2.

<sup>122</sup> LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, “Basic Concepts in Community Development”, p. 3.

<sup>123</sup> Baldock, *Community Work and Social Work*, pp. 112-114. A.F. Robinson *et al.*, ‘The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers’, *Social Work*, 16.2, (April 1970), p. 3; Thomas, *The Making of Community Work*, p. 12.

<sup>124</sup> King, ‘First Things First’, p. 17.

<sup>125</sup> Rose, *Governing the Soul*, pp. 1-11; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 68.

<sup>126</sup> David Armstrong, *A New History of Identity. A Sociology of Medical Knowledge* (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), pp. 139-140.

<sup>127</sup> Armstrong, *A New History of Identity*, p. 105. The advent of ‘surveillance medicine’ was also evident over the interwar period where social workers were employed in clinical settings focused on psychology, such as child guidance clinics. See: Stewart, ‘The scientific claims of British child guidance, 1918-1945’, p. 414; Stewart, ‘I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home’: Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain’, pp. 113-114.

<sup>128</sup> Thomas, *Organising for Social Change*, p. 186; Cohen, *Family Secrets*, p. 223.

casework was lost.<sup>129</sup> As Vanstone has argued, even when casework came under attack, ‘psychology prevailed and the individual remained the target of change.’<sup>130</sup>

The methodological toolkit of social work remained consistent, even while its application became broader,<sup>131</sup> a key stage in the professionalisation of social work.<sup>132</sup>

### **III.iv Combining Social Work Methods**

The reason why such shifts could affect all three of the principal social work methods was predominantly because community work was practiced alongside rather than instead of group-work and casework. Once again, it was the mixing of methods and their distinctive academic frameworks which characterised social work, with each of the three methods seen as complementary to the others.<sup>133</sup> This attitude could be seen in a number of experimental projects over the period.<sup>134</sup> In the final report for one of these, the Bristol Social Project, the director John Spencer concluded that, rather than the dogmatic approaches evident in other countries, ‘an eclectic method is likely to prove the most useful approach in Great Britain.’<sup>135</sup> This approach to social work methods was evident, albeit theoretically, as early as the

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<sup>129</sup> Peter Marris, ‘Foreword’, in David N. Thomas, *Organising for Social Change. A Study in the Theory and Practice of Community Work* (London, 1976), pp. 10-11; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 246.

<sup>130</sup> Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 123.

<sup>131</sup> Parker, *Local Health and Welfare Services*, p. 184; Thomas, *Organising for Social Change*, pp. 77-81, 89.

<sup>132</sup> Welshman, ‘Rhetoric and reality: community care in England and Wales, 1948-74’, p. 225.

<sup>133</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 242.

<sup>134</sup> Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate, passim.*, but esp. pp. 8-9, 280; A.F. Robinson *et al.*, ‘The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers’, *Social Work*, 16.2, (April 1970), pp. 3-4; Family Welfare Association, *The Family: Patients or Clients? A Study of Co-Operation in Social Casework by Almoners and Family Caseworkers* (London, 1961), p. 71. For more on experimental work by the FWA, see: Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, pp. 101-121; Starkey, ‘Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945’, pp. 245-261, esp. pp. 248-252.

<sup>135</sup> Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, p. 289.

mid-1950s: at a meeting of the Association of General and Family Caseworkers in 1955, the chair, J. T. Eastman, suggested that a future step for social workers might be to 'look detachedly and dispassionately at the problems of the community and help its members to tolerate the uncomfortable things and so to accept casework.'<sup>136</sup> Over the course of the period, social workers were becoming increasingly confident in their eclecticism, and it was accepted that social work methods and their academic influences could not only be combined, but were often complementary.

The combination of social work methods, and thus the different disciplinary influences on social work, was not, however, without its problems. One example was cited in *The A.S.W. News* of July 1966, which reported that 'The uncertainties of the present role of many social workers are exemplified by one local authority field worker...who said "I'm not sure how far I ought to get involved with community development in working hours when I'm paid as a caseworker".'<sup>137</sup> There was also an implicit hierarchy to the various methods available. Psychiatric social workers who applied their knowledge to community problems were presumed to lack the skills for individual therapy,<sup>138</sup> and while senior caseworkers were often involved in new community work projects, experienced community workers were very seldom involved in experiments with casework methods.<sup>139</sup> In addition, social workers often felt that fellow professionals would be adverse to them drawing on their full range of academic fields. Joan Hutton, writing about group-work in *Social Work*, reported

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<sup>136</sup> F.M., 'Association of General and Family Caseworkers, The Caseworker and the Community To-Day', *Social Work*, 12.3 (July 1955), p. 100. This was a report of the AGFCW Conference, held at Whirlow Garage from 22-24<sup>th</sup> April 1955.

<sup>137</sup> *The A.S.W. News*, July 1966, p. ii.

<sup>138</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, pp. 9-10. Issues of hierarchy are discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

<sup>139</sup> *Case Conference*, 13.12 (April 1967), p. 447. This was an advert for a caseworker to help set up a community work project. For a suggestion that caseworkers were nevertheless interested in community work, see: Michael Power, 'Varieties of Casework', *Case Conference*, 19.4 (October 1962), p. 18.

that psychiatric social workers working alongside more specialised psychiatrists were tentative about using concepts from the social sciences with which their colleagues might not be familiar.<sup>140</sup>

If social workers operated in the gaps between different professions, this may have allowed them to utilise ideas from a wide range of different disciplines, but their lack of specialism could also mean a confused, occasionally auxiliary, professional identity. Nevertheless, the experience of social workers shows that the increasing influence of the psychological sciences did not preclude the presence of sociological and anthropological thought; likewise, the rise of the social sciences may have challenged the primacy of psychology, but the two could be combined in an eclectic and pragmatic approach to welfare.<sup>141</sup> We should note, however, that the scientific concepts adopted from psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis were more often the subject of derision than the social sciences.<sup>142</sup> With the exception of psychiatric social work, sociology generally proved the more comprehensible and inclusive discipline for social workers. As Joan Lawson concluded at the end of the period, 'I do think perhaps that a sociological framework to our strivings may prove in the end to be slightly more helpful than the psycho-analytic millstone we hung around our necks so hopefully in those very early days.'<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Joan M. Hutten, 'Varieties of Group Work in Psychiatric Settings', *Case Conference*, 5.5 (October 1958), pp. 120-121.

<sup>141</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 253.

<sup>142</sup> Vera Derer, 'Open Case Conferences', *Case Conference*, 8.9 (March 1962), p. 242; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 25

<sup>143</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 77.

#### IV The Uses of Social Work Theory and Method

If we are to accept that social work methods were increasingly combined over the period, with the result that ideas from the psychological and social sciences were often interwoven, we also need to consider the precise utility that these often-theoretical concepts offered to social workers. We should carefully note that, as Yelloly argued, the fact that social work borrowed theory from disciplines such as sociology and psychoanalysis did not mean that they were also present in practice.<sup>144</sup> This was a state of affairs consciously identified by social workers, with Noel Timms noting that it was in ‘the construction of technique that sociological knowledge seems least relevant’.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, it is clear from accounts of particular cases that social workers tended to use simple language in their conversations with their clients, and frequently did the same when reporting their experiences to others, especially privately.<sup>146</sup>

The next section argues that while social workers were able to formulate a distinctive professional language of their own, the variety of the fields from which they drew concepts meant that they could also converse with other professions, such as psychiatrists and magistrates, in their particular professional vernaculars of

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<sup>144</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, p. 134.

<sup>145</sup> Noel Timms, ‘The Boundaries of Casework’, *Case Conference*, 4.5 (October 1957), p. 142.

<sup>146</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 177; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 95. For examples, see: National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*; Pamela Briskin, ‘Objective Fact-Finding in the Psychological and Social Services’, *Social Work*, 19.1 (January 1962), pp. 14-21; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, esp. p. 98; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*; Evans, *Happy Families*; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/3/2, Social Work: General “Seebohm”, Family Services, pamphlets, correspondence, circulars, papers 1965; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/3/4, Social Work: General “Seebohm”, “Evidence presented to the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services. By the Association of Family Caseworkers, July 1966, pp. 2-4; Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, GC/148/13, Casework questions, c. 1950s-1960s, A report of a single day’s work by a child care officer spent in escorting a pregnant unmarried girl aged 17½ to meet her own mother for the first time in 17 years; Wellcome, Robina Addis (1900-1986): archives, PP/ADD/B/6, General Correspondence 1967-1981, Letter to Addis, dated April 10 [1970?]. The author of this final source is not confidential in the letter, but the folder was accessed on the condition that Addis’ correspondents were anonymised.

medicine and law.<sup>147</sup> This was the main professional benefit for social workers of developing such a diverse methodological toolkit. The main personal benefit, meanwhile, was emotional. Ideas from fields such as psychoanalysis and sociology helped social workers to understand the seemingly irrational actions of their clients, as well as the personal decisions of themselves and their colleagues. Both of these factors combined to fortify social workers' discretion in the field; even if they did not directly utilise psychological and sociological concepts, they could always be used to justify their actions. This aspect of the social worker's education was not extensively discussed during the period, but the process of gathering what Younghusband termed 'knowledge for practice' was nevertheless essential.<sup>148</sup>

#### **IV.i The Role of Jargon and Language**

In his interview with Cohen, Reg Wright admitted that he did not believe 'that human knowledge about human behaviour has increased all that much in the last thirty years'. What had changed, however, was that the profession had developed 'some better ordered ways of describing it than we did', and although Wright was dismissive of such fashions, he conceded that they did have their uses.<sup>149</sup> During the period itself, Timms argued that 'The ability to communicate and to receive and understand communications from others, be they clients, social work colleagues or those trained in other fields' was one of the two most important skills for social workers.<sup>150</sup> A consistent theme in the secondary literature, meanwhile, has been the

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<sup>147</sup> This feature of social work is explored in: Timms, *The Language of Social Casework*, *passim.*, esp. pp. 96-97.

<sup>148</sup> Jones, *Eileen Younghusband: A Biography*, p. 89.

<sup>149</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 17. See also: Rogers and Dixon, *Portrait of Social Work*, p. 14.

<sup>150</sup> Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*, p. 18. The other of the two was conveying acceptance: we shall touch on this later.

way in which the concepts and terms borrowed from academic disciplines helped legitimise social work,<sup>151</sup> with Mathew Thomson correctly noting ‘the powers of communication and influence that came with psychological insight’.<sup>152</sup>

It is little surprise, then, that social workers were concerned with formulating a professional ‘jargon’, which could be understood by welfare professionals but still stand as evidence of social worker’s education and professionalism. Even if some social workers were dismissive of the word ‘jargon’, with its pseudo-professional, often American overtones,<sup>153</sup> others felt that, deployed in an appropriate fashion, it could be an important element of the profession’s identity.<sup>154</sup> For example, social workers had to be careful, as a *Social Work* editorial commented, to use it only with fellow professionals, for it could be ‘terribly irritating to the layman.’<sup>155</sup> It was clear, however, that social workers did not always adhere to this.<sup>156</sup> Bronwyn Rees mentioned the humorous case of one Rita Partridge, a troublesome mother who had so often dealt with the welfare services that she had learnt all of the psychiatric terminology they employed.<sup>157</sup> Whether intentionally or not, social work was certainly one of the avenues through which the public encountered psychological ways of seeing themselves and society.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 87-107; Sapsford, ‘Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise’, pp. 36-37, 41-43.

<sup>152</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 269.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Round and About’, *Case Conference*, 12.7 (January 1966), p. 214; Geraldine Aves, p. 22.

<sup>154</sup> David Donnison, ‘Jargon’, *Case Conference*, 1.10 (February 1955), pp. 9-10; ‘Editorial’, *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), p. 109; Barbara Butler, ‘On the Use of Casework Jargon’, *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), pp. 185-187; Geraldine Aves, pp. 22-24; Francesca Ward, pp. 17-18.

<sup>155</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Social Work*, 16.4 (October 1959), p. 109.

<sup>156</sup> V. J. Derer, ‘On Giving a Talk’, *Case Conference*, 10.10 (April 1964), p. 307; Malcolm Ford, ‘Financial Help as a Social Work Technique: Some Emotional and Organisational Problems’, *Social Work*, 24.1 (January 1967), p. 24.

<sup>157</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 37. A similar phenomenon could also be observed whereby the subjects of social research projects began to use sociological terminology with their interviewers. See: Lawrence, ‘Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England’, pp. 225-226; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 6.

<sup>158</sup> Shapira, *The War Inside*, p. 17.



Moreover, the ability of the social worker to be fluent in the language of the psychological and the social sciences was an important part of contribution to teamwork in the welfare state, since he or she could translate unfamiliar terms for their fellow professionals in the many spheres where the influence of such disciplines, especially psychology, was felt.<sup>159</sup> In addition, it meant that those professionals, particularly within medicine, did not have to simplify their communication with social workers.<sup>160</sup> In a period when social workers sought to translate and interpret between different areas of society and of the welfare state, such matters were paramount, with Timms commenting that any social worker who concerned himself with language was ‘labouring at the rock face of his profession.’<sup>161</sup> We should recognise that insofar as there was a language of social work, it was one comprised of concepts from a wide range of different spheres, some academic (such as medicine and sociology) and some practical (such as the legal system and welfare administration).

It was ultimately the sheer variety of influences on social work language which gave it much of its power; it was not so much what their particular professional jargon allowed social workers to express which proved so useful, but rather, the associations and connections it allowed them to make. This aspect of

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<sup>159</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, pp. 291-294. This aspect of teamwork will be discussed in the chapter on that theme, but see especially: MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, pp. 11-12; Long, ‘“Often there is a Good Deal to be Done, but Socially Rather Than Medically”: The Psychiatric Social Worker as Social Therapist, 1945-1970’, pp. 223-239; Stewart, ‘“I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home”: Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain’, pp. 111-127.

<sup>160</sup> Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975’, p. 323; Ferguson, ‘Support Not Scorn: The Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s’, p. 52. For a useful example, see: Wellcome, Robina Addis (1900-1986): archives, PP/ADD/B/6, General Correspondence 1967-1981, Letter to Addis from a consultant psychiatrist, 21st December 1970. Again, the letter was not anonymised, but, as part of the conditions for accessing the folder, the reference has been.

<sup>161</sup> Noel Timms, *Case Conference*, 16.12 (April 1970), p. 507.

professional language is best understood through the notion of ‘articulation’, as popularised by Stuart Hall.<sup>162</sup> ‘Articulation’, which has its origins in Antonio Gramsci’s extensions of Marxism,<sup>163</sup> shows how particular ideas can not only exert power through their expression, but also through their ability to link a series of disparate concepts together.<sup>164</sup> John Clarke *et al.* have argued, with specific reference to the welfare state, that articulation allows us to understand how statements on this topic can have powerful effects on practice through their reference to (and exclusion of) certain aspects of the politics and culture of welfare.<sup>165</sup> The words spoken by, about, and for those implicated in the welfare state, but especially those involved as clients, consumers, and citizens, take a certain discursive force from their ability to express and evoke a select range of concepts and views.

If much of the social worker’s role in the welfare state came from their fluency in the various medical, legal, and administrative languages present, then it seems reasonable to argue that their ability to link these different spheres together carried a certain power in itself. In addition to this, however, their use of a particular language could link the social worker themselves to these disparate spheres of the welfare state. The social worker carried associations with, for example, the legal system, the medical establishment, and the child care services. As Marilyn Gregory and Margaret Holloway have argued, the shift in social work language towards a more clinical mode allowed the profession to position itself within the wider

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<sup>162</sup> Jennifer Daryl Slack, ‘The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies’, in Kuan-Hsing Chen and David Morley (eds), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London, 1996), pp. 113-129, esp. pp. 121-125.

<sup>163</sup> Slack, ‘The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies’, pp. 117-118.

<sup>164</sup> Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York and London, 1992), p. 54, quoted in: Slack, ‘The theory and method of articulation in cultural studies’, p. 115.

<sup>165</sup> Clarke *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, pp. 5-6.

therapeutic ‘psy-discourses’ of the welfare state, and to distance itself from its moralistic origins.<sup>166</sup> It is indeed evident from Chapters 2 and 5, on the politics of social work and on teamwork practice, that these associations were an important part of the social worker’s relationship with their clients and their colleagues. If we consider the articulation behind social work language, then we can observe how the multiple ‘jargons’ which the social worker could deploy, even if only partially or imperfectly, helped them in their everyday practice.

It might be surprising, therefore, that one of the benefits of social work theory was the way in which it justified the silence of the social worker. As Snelling argued, perhaps the most useful aspect of casework for practice was its ability to shift focus from the words of the social worker to those of the client.<sup>167</sup> Their knowledge of and fluency in the various psychological and sociological concepts behind casework meant that social workers could justify adopting the role of an active listener. This meant that post-war social workers were continuing a long-term professional ability to elicit narratives of self-justification from their clients,<sup>168</sup> only now it was underlined by the post-war trend for confessions of the self.<sup>169</sup> Helen Anthony, for example, reported that her ‘hard acquired casework principles and methods’ were most useful in those cases when clients came in to let off steam, and presumably to talk without interruption.<sup>170</sup> This combination of active listening with a foundation of psychological insight was neatly illustrated by Betty Joseph’s

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<sup>166</sup> Gregory and Holloway, ‘Language and the Shaping of Social Work’, pp. 40–46. See also: Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, pp. 89–91.

<sup>167</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 28.

<sup>168</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, pp. 4, 5. See also: Starkey, ‘Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945’, p. 254; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 96.

<sup>169</sup> Cohen, *Family Secrets*, pp. 224–226; Rose, ‘Engineering the Human Soul: Analyzing Psychological Expertise’, p. 364; Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880–1970*, p. 120; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 96.

<sup>170</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 25.

contention in her 1950 paper that ‘We have to get the feelings behind the words, or as one worker put it, ‘make the words fit the music,’ and we shall only do this by encouraging the client to talk in her own way.’<sup>171</sup>

This was exemplified by a controversial discussion in *Case Conference*,<sup>172</sup> over the best way to keep clients talking, with suggestions including complete silence with occasional ‘grunting’ to the use of ‘sympathetic mooing’ to encourage the client.<sup>173</sup> This was a topic which reflected a concern with the psychological subjectivity of the client and an awareness of the power dynamics inherent in the welfare encounter. Social workers knew that one of their best powerful tools in the battle for professional influence was their access to their client’s unmediated feelings and thoughts,<sup>174</sup> but they also appreciated that their interest in the client’s voice and their idiosyncratic methods of obtaining it required foundations in psychological and sociological concepts.

#### **IV.ii            The Role of Theory as Emotional Support**

Aside from the benefits of formulating a distinctive professional language, it is also clear that the theoretical concepts which social work borrowed from the psychological and social sciences helped social workers understand themselves, their clients, and their colleagues. Aside from the therapeutic value which this offered, as examined in the chapters on social work roles and welfare teamwork, these concepts

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<sup>171</sup> Betty Joseph, ‘Psychoanalysis and Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 8.4 (October 1951), p. 596. See also: ASW, *Recent Developments in Case-Work*, p. 8.

<sup>172</sup> Reg Wright, *Case Conference*, 16.12 (April 1970), p. 497. Such was the volume of correspondence that the editor had to declare the topic closed to further contributions. This seldom happened in social work journals.

<sup>173</sup> Mary McCullough, ‘The “Grunting Method” and Matrimonial Conciliation’, *Case Conference*, 1.4 (August 1954), pp. 18, 19. Robert Foren, ‘On Not Grunting’, *Case Conference*, 1.4 (August 1954), pp. 19, 20. Letter from Margret Scott, August 27<sup>th</sup> 1954, *Case Conference*, 1.6 (October 1954), p. 16. Letter from Gordon Rose, August 19<sup>th</sup> 1954, *Case Conference*, 1.6 (October 1954), p. 16.

<sup>174</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 253.

could also help with the emotional labour of social work. Faced with the seemingly irrational behaviour of their clients, the psychological frameworks emerging around the time of the war proved valuable to social workers in helping them understand and explain these issues.<sup>175</sup> Social workers reported that, prior to this point, their inability to comprehend the behaviour of their clients had hindered not only their ability to help, but also their motivation.<sup>176</sup> The social sciences, meanwhile, could help social workers to understand the failings of society: in a 1966 article, Sheila Kay reported that, when faced with the realities of material need, she and her colleagues were increasingly returning to knowledge from the social sciences ‘in an endeavour to come to terms with this poverty’.<sup>177</sup>

This is a theme which often emerges in accounts of social work training and education. Mary Hartley reported that her education in family dynamics and theories of behaviour gave her cause to re-evaluate her work in Blackpool prior to training, but also gave her the tools to understand why she had worked in that way and how it might have actually been useful.<sup>178</sup> Burnham found that many of the social workers he interviewed were initially sceptical of the academic ideas which they encountered during training, but that they nevertheless provided a consistent foundation when they actually began to practice.<sup>179</sup> As Wright implied, many of the developments in theory came out of a desire to understand and to communicate one’s experiences of

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<sup>175</sup> Porter, ‘Two Cheers for Psychiatry! The Social History of Mental Disorder in Twentieth Century Britain’, pp. 387-388; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 30; Goldberg, *Welfare in the Community*, p. 11.

<sup>176</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 36; Collins, *A New Look at Social Work*, p. 4.

<sup>177</sup> Sheila Kay *et al.*, ‘From Psychiatric Social Work to Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 23.2 (April 1966), p. 16. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 34.

<sup>178</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 120.

<sup>179</sup> Burnham *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 177-178. For a notable example of a social worker finding that his training failed to explain a client’s behaviour, see: Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 22.

the field.<sup>180</sup> In this way, it was not so much the power of a multifaceted professional language which social workers took from the psychological and social sciences as it was the comfort of their frameworks, their ability to not only explain but also predict the complexities of individuals and of society.<sup>181</sup> The ability to construct defence mechanisms against the emotional strain of dealing with unfathomable behaviour or to ‘disavow the emotional impact of the work’ is, as Lynn Froggett has argued, an aspect of professionalism which has long proved useful to those employed in the welfare services.<sup>182</sup>

#### **IV.iii Justifying Discretion and Eclectic Practice**

It would be misleading, however, to assume that every social worker utilised such concepts in this way; as we can see across this chapter and the thesis as a whole, there were also those who rejected or criticised new ideas, and tenaciously clung to the old.<sup>183</sup> It was more common, however, for social workers to incorporate new concepts from the social and psychological sciences into their existing toolkit of social work methods and ideas. Shortly after the advent of the welfare state, experienced social worker Dorothy Deed described how she ‘came to see that common sense, experience of people, and a working knowledge of psychology were all woven into the texture of sound case work’.<sup>184</sup> The mixture of old tricks with new

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<sup>180</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 17.

<sup>181</sup> Evans and Harris, ‘Street-Level Bureaucracy, Social Work and the (Exaggerated) Death of Discretion’, p. 890. See also: Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, pp. 108, 156.

<sup>182</sup> Froggett, *Love, Hate and Welfare*, p. 59. These ‘defensive’ uses of a professional body of knowledge for social workers was also receiving some recognition towards the end of the period. See: William Moffett, *Concepts in Casework Treatment* (London, 1968), cited in: Jordan, *Client-Worker Transactions*, p. 47.

<sup>183</sup> Examples abound, but see particularly: Neil H. Leighton, ‘Two Cultures in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), pp. 278-281; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 135.

<sup>184</sup> D. Deed, ‘Supervision; a social worker’s point of view’, in ASW, *Supervision in Social Work, A Report of the School for Supervisors of Students in Practical Work Agencies* (London, 1952), p. 12.

was also a common theme among Cohen's interviewees: Cecil French reported that casework constituted a useful unifying framework for existing practice,<sup>185</sup> while Elizabeth Irvine\* argued that casework offered, in retrospect, a good way to tackle material and emotional problems together.<sup>186</sup>

Evans and Harris have argued that the main advantage for social workers of establishing a body of knowledge was that it could justify their discretion to judge if and when such knowledge could and should be applied.<sup>187</sup> This benefit of professional knowledge, a foundation for confidence in one's own intuitive practice, was a key part of social work discretion. It could also ensure that one felt comfortable with the multifaceted nature of work with a variety of clients and colleagues: Marie McNay found that her exposure to a wide range of techniques and situations during her training at Barking College in the late-1960s meant that she 'never missed anything'.<sup>188</sup> Perhaps the best example of a social worker validating seemingly *ad hoc* methods by citing theory was the case, detailed in an article by psychiatric social worker Robina Prestage, of a nine-year-old boy called Kim. After many frustrated efforts to establish a relationship with Kim, child care officers eventually managed to overcome the issue through a series of water fights.<sup>189</sup> Prestage and her colleagues tried to explain this through a recourse to psychoanalytic theories, but it is clear from the article that the actions came first.

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<sup>185</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 29.

<sup>186</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Irvine, p. 21.

<sup>187</sup> Evans and Harris, 'Street-Level Bureaucracy, Social Work and the (Exaggerated) Death of Discretion', pp. 890-891. See also: Nottingham, 'The Rise of the Insecure Professionals', pp. 465, 475; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 88. For a primary account which emphasises the necessity of professional discretion is using theory, see: Ferard and Hunnybun, *The Caseworker's Use of Relationships*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>188</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 122.

<sup>189</sup> R. O. Prestage, 'Life for Kim', *Case Conference*, 10.10 (April 1964), pp. 297-302.

In this way, social work was consistent with broader British trends towards the adoption and application of academic and scientific ideas. As Halsey has argued, the social sciences in the United Kingdom have avoided the ‘grand theory’ and ‘abstracted empiricism’ of other nations. Instead, the aim ‘has always been to seek explanations and, typically, to use them for the pragmatic improvement of human welfare.’<sup>190</sup> Social work represented the most practical end of this characteristic, and we should appreciate that even when social workers were trying to formulate predictive models of the society in which they were embedded, these were built on foundations of pragmatism. In fact, when social workers discussed the most important tools of their profession, it was frequently (but not always) the relationship between client and worker which was deemed to have the greatest therapeutic value.<sup>191</sup> This constant striving to apply psychological and social scientific theories, usually by considering a wider range of factors, was deemed to be that which set social work apart from sociology and psychotherapy.<sup>192</sup>

We should recognise, however, that this pragmatic approach towards disciplines such as sociology and psychoanalysis frequently involved simultaneously drawing upon a wide range of different theories. Even if English social workers

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<sup>190</sup> A. H. Halsey, ‘The History of Sociology in Britain’, in A.H. Halsey and W.G. Runciman (eds), *British Sociology Seen From Within and Without* (Oxford, 2005), p. 15; Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain: Science, Literature, and Society*, p. 8. See also: Martin Bulmer, ‘National contexts for the development of social-policy research: British and American research on poverty and social welfare compared’, in Peter Wagner *et al.* (eds.), *Social Sciences and Modern States: National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 162-164.

<sup>191</sup> Pollard, *Social Casework for the State*, p. 5; Deed, ‘Supervision; a social worker’s point of view’, p. 7; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B8/2/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10th and 11th – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 36; Collins, *A New Look at Social Work*, p. 38; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 4; Corner, ‘Moral Problems Met in Social Work’, p. 13; King, ‘First Things First’, p. 7; Mark Monger, ‘Probation Casework’, *Case Conference*, 11.5 (October 1964), p. 152; Margaret Thomas, ‘Role Understanding is a Function of Good Communication? An Examination of Roles in the Personal Social Services’, *Social Work*, 27.3 (July 1970), p. 4.

<sup>192</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 20; Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 111-112.



sought to avoid ‘grand theory’ and ‘abstracted empiricism’, then they could still enthusiastically engage with and utilise applied empiricism and functional theory, so long as they helped the worker understand the people they encountered in the field.

## **V                      Alternative Influences**

Of course, social workers did not draw solely upon concepts from the social and psychological sciences in their endeavours to understand their clients, wider society, and their own motivations. As we have seen, these new concepts were often placed into methodological toolkits constituted of older, often very personal ideas. This is not a facet of social work which is obvious in the professional literature, and it is thus an area where we need to turn to the oral histories and autobiographical accounts of social work practice in this period. There are three influences which are particularly prominent, and which are useful in helping us reassess some of the debates around post-war society. These are religion, literature, and industry and management. All three of these areas offered social workers ways to understand the individuals they encountered and the society in which they worked, and the manner in which, for example, literary insights intermingled with religious motivations and psychological concepts shows that the arrival of new ideas and the growth of academic disciplines could complement, rather than displace, older foundations for social work theory and practice. This confluence of art and science within a framework of pragmatic practice was an aspect of the profession which social workers saw as particularly noteworthy.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Jean Snelling, ‘Medical Social Work’, in Cherry Morris (ed.), *Social Case-Work in Great Britain* (London, [1950]), p. 98; Timms, *The Language of Social Casework*, pp. 53-75; Younghusband, *Social Work and Social Change*, p. 26; Alan Keith-Lucas, ‘The Art and Science of Helping’, *Case Conference*, 13.5 (September 1966), pp. 154-161.

## V.i The Influence of Literature

In his interviews with social work pioneers, Alan Cohen asked many of them about the texts which influenced them over their lives and in their practice. To his apparent surprise, many of the social workers mentioned not the primers and monographs which many orthodox histories of social work cite as central to the development of the profession, but pieces of literary fiction. Mary Sherlock, for example, mentioned how much of her understanding of people came from the fiction of authors such as George Eliot, and how ‘detective novels of the old fashioned kind’ reflected the investigative mind-set necessary for any social worker. In fact, Deborah Cohen has noted that many social workers in the post-war period viewed themselves as akin to detectives, attempting to peek behind the presenting problems of their clients.<sup>194</sup>

Sherlock saw this literary education as a counterbalance to the more scientific aspects of social work theory, reporting that literary insights came in useful when faced with particularly scientifically-minded students.<sup>195</sup> Robina Addis\* also found that a literary education was a useful counterpoint to the scientific manner of much social work theory,<sup>196</sup> and Younghusband recalled in her 1978 overview how many social workers felt that the ‘creative imagination of poets and artists’ was not only a valid form of knowledge in understanding relationships, but was in fact an important corrective to the ‘one-dimensional form’ of research into such matters.<sup>197</sup>

All of this indicates that we should treat the literary interests of social workers with more seriousness and more interest than the existing literature. The

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<sup>194</sup> Cohen, *Family Secrets*, p. 221

<sup>195</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 20.

<sup>196</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, pp. 19-20. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 16.

<sup>197</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 152-153. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 17.

notable exception to this is Peel, who has emphasised the more literary aspects of the case report, particularly their need to move as well as inform audiences, as key components of the social work experience.<sup>198</sup> It is no surprise, then, that social workers themselves produced a number of accounts of the everyday practice of welfare.<sup>199</sup> In particular, the ability to find humour in often-desperate situations proved an invaluable tool for weathering the emotional strain of welfare work and for fostering a closer sense of professional community.<sup>200</sup>

This is an area which has received some limited attention, both for the British welfare state and for the welfare aspects of the American 'new deal'.<sup>201</sup> Aside from contributing to a healthy literature on the role of literary figures in shaping national identity,<sup>202</sup> the story of social work and fiction also helps to challenge the distinction between the role of the sciences and of the humanities in English culture, a division famously described by C.P. Snow in his 1959 Rede Lecture on the 'two cultures',<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 3-5. See also: Taylor, 'Humanitarian Narrative: Bodies and Detail in Late-Victorian Social Work', pp. 680-696.

<sup>199</sup> See, for example: Kathleen H. Strange, 'The Social Services', *Social Work*, 9.1 (January 1952), pp. 644-645; K. H. Strange, 'The Council Tenant Continues...', *Social Work*, 9.2 (April 1952), pp. 685-686; K. H. Strange, 'The Council Tenant Talks Again', *Social Work*, 10.4 (October 1953), pp. 849-850. See also: R.J.N.T., 'Conservation with a Taximan', *Case Conference*, 12.1 (May 1965), p. 24; "Lady Almoner", 'Outside In', *Case Conference*, 7.2 (June 1960), pp. 35-38. 'Outside In', a description of an LSD trip, is a particularly diverting account. Another well-weathered example is: Stroud, *The Shorn Lamb*. On the influence of this book, see: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 129.

<sup>200</sup> See, for example: 'Editorial', *Case Conference*, 13.6 (October 1966), p. 194; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 102, 119; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 98. For a short historiography of the uses of humour in professional contexts, especially with regards to the shift from seeing humour as a management strategy to humour as 'resistance, challenge and subversion', see: Robert Westwood and Carl Rhodes, 'Humour and the study of organisations', in Robert Westwood and Carl Rhodes (eds), *Humour, Work and Organization* (Abingdon and New York, 2007), pp. 3-5.

<sup>201</sup> Michael Szalay, *New Deal Modernism: American Literature of the American Welfare State* (Durham, NC, 2000); Bruce Robbins, *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State* (Princeton, NJ, 2007). Brooke Whitelaw utilises literary accounts from authors with a variety of social backgrounds to analyse attitudes towards, amongst other topics, working-class labour. The potential for a similar study focusing on welfare is evident. Brooke Whitelaw, 'Industry and the interior life: industrial 'experts' and the mental world of workers in twentieth century Britain' (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2009), pp. 206-252, 286-325.

<sup>202</sup> This is a huge field, and I shall not attempt to cover it here, but see, for example: Stefan Collini, *English Pasts: Essays in History and Culture* (New York and Oxford, 1999).

<sup>203</sup> Charles Percy Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1959). This idea was actually taken up by Neil Leighton in an article for *Case Conference*: Neil H. Leighton, 'Two Cultures in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), pp. 278-281.

and subsequently challenged by discussions of his work.<sup>204</sup> We should not forget, however, that those who tempered science with literature were often older social workers, which is perhaps the reason why film, television and radio were not mentioned as formative influences, although these media were certainly recognised as useful ways to disseminate social work ideas.<sup>205</sup>

## V.ii The Influence of Industry and Management

However, as Guy Ortalano points out in his discussion of Snow's 'two cultures' thesis, the relationship between the humanities and the sciences over this period was not one-way.<sup>206</sup> Much as emerging ideas in the social and psychological sciences could be tempered by a humanistic or literary conception of the individual and society, so too could concepts and techniques emerging in the industrial and military spheres precipitate a new understanding of the relationships between people and their environment. It is for this reason that we should pay closer attention to the role of science, industry, and technical expertise in the formation of post-war society, an argument most notably advanced by David Edgerton.<sup>207</sup> However, whereas Edgerton argues that the focus of the existing historiography on the welfare state has meant that the significant contribution of science and technology has been neglected,<sup>208</sup> I

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<sup>204</sup> For an overview of discussions of Snow's work, and thus of the relationship between the sciences and the humanities in post-war English culture, see: Guy Ortalano, 'The literature and the science of 'two cultures' historiography', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 39 (2008), pp. 143-150.

<sup>205</sup> For example, Burnham cites the television series *Probation Officer*, which ran between 1959 and 1962, with raising the profile of probation work: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 133. The collection of essays *The Social Workers*, edited by Alan Hancock and Phyllis Willmott and cited throughout this dissertation, was written as a companion to a BBC2 programme of the same name, broadcast in the latter half of 1965. The best example of social workers using the media, however, is the story of how ACCO, wishing to raise the profile of fostering work, managed to persuade the BBC to include a foster child in *The Archers* in 1953: Jacka, *The ACCO Story*, pp. 19, 54.

<sup>206</sup> Ortalano, 'The literature and the science of 'two cultures' historiography', pp. 147-148.

<sup>207</sup> See particularly: David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (Cambridge and New York, 2006); D. Edgerton, 'C.P. Snow as anti-historian of British science: Revisiting the technocratic moment, 1959-1964', *History of Science*, 43.2 (2005), pp. 187-208.

<sup>208</sup> Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970*, p. 2.

argue that the case of social work indicates that the boundaries between the two spheres might be sufficiently porous for our understanding of one to complement the other.<sup>209</sup> In particular, the manner in which industry sought to produce predictable outcomes and a clear description of the process through which they were reached proved a tempting idea to social workers faced with the vagaries of the field. There was also a certain amount of movement of personnel between the two spheres, so that some people came to social work with the frameworks and ideas of industry and management already implanted.

Links existed between social work and industry from the interwar period onwards, with many social workers involved in the promotion of harmonious relations and the attempt 'to win employees' loyalty towards an impersonal corporation' within factories.<sup>210</sup> Over the post-war period, it was also not uncommon for people to have experience of both sectors during their careers: McDougall, during her training, worked on a time and motion study in a factory for the Institute of Industrial Psychology, reflecting that the training she received in management concepts was to prove very useful during her time as a social worker.<sup>211</sup> Industrial psychology enjoyed only limited prestige over this period, meaning that women were often both the subjects and the practitioners of research in this area, so that

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<sup>209</sup> Edgerton does purport to discuss the changing conceptions of British science, technology, and military expertise amongst intellectuals, thus helping to unpack some of the connections between war and welfare: Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970*, pp. 270-304. Through looking to social work, I am attempting to study the relationship on a smaller scale.

<sup>210</sup> Wickwar and Wickwar, *The Social Services*, p. 279. See also: MRC, ASW, , MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/16, Constitution and foundation A Memorandum for the Consideration of the Social Workers' Group, What is a Social Worker?, 12<sup>th</sup> March [1940]; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/5/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 8; Whitelaw, 'Industry and the interior life: industrial 'experts' and the mental world of workers in twentieth century Britain', pp. 84-117.

<sup>211</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 7. See also: Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', p. 36; Cochrane, *Social Work for Jill*, p. 126; WISEArchive, Social Care, Developments in Social Care, 2015, <<http://www.wisearchive.co.uk/story/developments-in-social-care/>> (16 September 2015).

social work, as a predominantly female profession, was more liable to be involved.<sup>212</sup>

As the period progressed, social workers began to take a greater interest in group dynamics, which led them to concepts developed within industry and the military,<sup>213</sup> which many encountered through the London-based Tavistock Clinic and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations.<sup>214</sup> This connection between welfare and industry was underlined by social workers' growing concern with the psychological effects of an increasingly industrialised society,<sup>215</sup> a common welfare concern of the time.<sup>216</sup> Despite these personal and organisational links, however, it was not until the mid-1960s, and the growing interest in community organisation and administration, that social work began explicitly to engage with industrial research.<sup>217</sup> This included Peter Day's article on tensions between colleagues, which, on the basis that 'work groups in factory industry and social work groups have some features in common', used J. A. C. Brown's book, *The Social Psychology of Industry*, as the basis for his

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<sup>212</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 147.

<sup>213</sup> Leaper, *Community Work*, p. 142; ASW, *The Social Worker and the Group Approach*, *passim*.

<sup>214</sup> This was actually two institutions by the post-war period, as the Clinic and the Institute split in 1946. For a critical analysis of the Tavistock, see: Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, 'The Tavistock Programme: The Government of Subjectivity and Social Life', *Sociology*, 22.2 (1988), pp. 171-192. See also: Eric Trist and Hugh Murray, 'Historical Overview: The Foundation and Development of the Tavistock Institute', in Eric Trist and Hugh Murray (eds), *The Social Engagement of Social Science: A Tavistock Anthology. Volume 1: The Socio-Psychological Perspective* (London, 1990), pp. 1-34, esp. pp. 3-24; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 170-171; Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge and New York, 1999). It is worth noting that the Tavistock partially grew out of Army psychiatry, and included an Institute for Operational Research by the 1960s. On studies in which social workers took a particular interest, see: Elliot Jacques, *The Changing Culture of a Factory* (London, 1951). See also: Elliot Jacques, 'Interpretive Group Discussion as a Method of Facilitating Social Change', *Human Relations*, 1 (1948), pp. 533-549. The journal *Human Relations* was published by the Tavistock Institute.

<sup>215</sup> Stevenson, 'Welfare: Problems and Priorities', p. 77; 'William Temple College in the field of Public Administration and the Social Services', *Social Work*, 12.1 (January 1955), p. 21; Kathleen Jones, 'Poverty in the Sunlight', *Case Conference*, 2.11 (April 1956), p. 23; Forder, 'Social Work in the Social Services', p. 182; Forder, 'Towards a Social Policy', p. 302.

<sup>216</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 162; Welshman, 'The Unknown Titmuss', pp. 237-238.

<sup>217</sup> One exception: a 1961 issue of *Case Conference* did carry a book review of a collection of articles from the *Human Relations* journal. Joan M. Hutten, 'Experiences in Groups and Other Papers' (review article), *Case Conference*, 8.5 (October 1961), pp. 139-140. The book was: Wilfred R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups: and Other Papers* (London, 1961).

analysis.<sup>218</sup> In a similar fashion, Anne Crichton, a senior lecturer in the social sciences at the University College of South Wales, attempted to incorporate concepts from management studies into social work to consider issues of status, role conflict, and professional development.<sup>219</sup>

While both Day and Crichton had backgrounds in social work and chose to look to other disciplines for useful concepts, it was also possible for those with a background in management studies and in industry to insert themselves into social work discussions.<sup>220</sup> There was even an issue of *Social Work* devoted to the theme of management in the social services, with the editorial arguing that issues of management had become central topics within social work.<sup>221</sup> The reason for this was clear in an article from Duncan Smith, a research associate at Guy's Hospital Medical School, who noted that that while the fields of industry and commerce were routinely seen as innovative affairs, the social services were 'frequently criticised as being bureaucratic, hidebound and unimaginative'.<sup>222</sup> By the end of the period, some social workers underwent further training which focused on issues of organisation and management, indicating that concepts from industry and management had become an established part the social worker's methodological toolkit.<sup>223</sup>

Perhaps the most important factor in the relationship between the spheres of welfare and industry over this period was the influence of psychology, particularly

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<sup>218</sup> Peter R. Day, 'Rivalry at Work', *Case Conference*, 12.1 (May 1965), pp. 9, 12.

<sup>219</sup> Anne Crichton, 'Role Conflicts in Social Work Agencies – I', *Case Conference*, 12.8 (February 1966), pp. 265-268; 'The Problems of Transition from Caseworker to Administrator', *Case Conference*, 11.8 (February 1965), pp. 243-247. This article came out of the work of the Co-ordinating Committee for Social Work Training in Wales, and contained a section collated by Crichton on the influence of management studies.

<sup>220</sup> Kenneth Shone, 'Industrial Engineering Concepts and the Child Care Service', *Case Conference*, 13.5, (September 1966), pp. 170-174.

<sup>221</sup> 'Comment', *Social Work*, 24.2 (April 1967), p. 2.

<sup>222</sup> Duncan Smith, 'Communications and Change in the Social Services', *Social Work*, 24.2 (April 1967), p. 16.

<sup>223</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 162.

the technologies of psychological assessment utilised by social workers and factory managers alike.<sup>224</sup> Social work theory and method in the post-war period borrowed many concepts from the ‘sciences of the self’ which had emerged over the interwar period, and these sciences were in turn indebted to problems emerging from industrial society.<sup>225</sup> That there were implicit connections and shared personnel should not be surprising, even if we need a relatively narrow focus to identify it. However, the perception that the fields of industry and commerce offered efficiency and innovation meant that they could appear tempting to those who wished to rid the social services of their bureaucratic associations. The emergence of a more explicit exchange between industry and welfare was particularly true towards the end of the period, when the ethical credentials of psychology came under question.<sup>226</sup> If we are to entertain Edgerton’s appeal to study the ‘warfare state’, we should not neglect the connections between industrial, technological, and military expertise, and the attempts of the social sciences to understand individuals and their relationship with each other and their environment.

### **V.iii            The Influence of Religion**

While we can expand our understanding of welfare theory and practice by recognising the influence of literary frameworks and the porous boundaries between the spheres of social work and industrial psychology and management, the role of religion (by which we largely mean Christianity) provides a more complex issue,

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<sup>224</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, pp. 142-150; Rose, ‘Engineering the Human Soul: Analyzing Psychological Expertise’, p. 361; Eghigian *et al.*, ‘Introduction: The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences in the Twentieth Century’, p. 21.

<sup>225</sup> Eghigian *et al.*, ‘Introduction: The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences in the Twentieth Century’, pp. 10, 21, 24.

<sup>226</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 161.



albeit one with a much more extensive existing literature. This literature has mainly focused on the extent to which Christian belief survived in post-war Britain, and has revolved around such issues as declining congregational numbers and the changing relevance of the Church, especially alongside a welfare state which shared much territory with religious organisations.<sup>227</sup>

The links between Christianity and social work were, as discussed in previous chapters, multifaceted,<sup>228</sup> and the enduring interface between the two groups is reflected by the number of religious leaders who contributed to social work journals and conferences.<sup>229</sup> We have also seen how social work took on roles reminiscent of those performed by the Church.<sup>230</sup> Although, as Frank Prochaska has argued, social workers began to forget their origins in religious visiting with the advent of the welfare state,<sup>231</sup> this does not mean that religious factors no longer played a role in social work.<sup>232</sup> In the next section, we explore some of the ways in which Christian principles continued to inform post-war social work, and the ways in

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<sup>227</sup> See particularly: Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*; Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London, 2001); Eliza Filby, 'Faith, charity and citizenship: Christianity, voluntarism and the state in the 1980s', in Matthew Hilton and James McKay (eds), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How We Got to the Big Society* (Oxford and New York, 2011), pp. 135-137.

<sup>228</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 5; Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, p. 61; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 364; Macnicol, 'From 'Problem Family' to 'Underclass', 1945-95', p. 71.

<sup>229</sup> See, for example: The Bishop of St. Albans, 'A Biblical View of the Family and Some Assessment of the Strength and Weakness of the Family To-Day in the Light of the Bible', in The National Council of Social Service (Inc.), *The Family, Report of the British National Conference on Social Work at Bedford College for Women, London, 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April 1953* (London, 1953). pp. 84-90; Dustan, 'The Ethical Warrant for Social Work', pp. 1-12; Peter Hutchinson, 'The Social Worker and Culture Conflict', *Case Conference*, 15.12 (April 1969), pp. 467-470. Hutchinson was an Anglican priest and Community Relations Officer of the Birmingham Community Relations Committee.

<sup>230</sup> King, 'First Things First', p. 17; Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*. p. 82; 'William Temple College in the field of Public Administration and the Social Services', *Social Work*, 12.1 (January 1955), pp. 20-23.

<sup>231</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 97.

<sup>232</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 330-331; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/C2/6, Younghusband Report, The Annual Report of the Moral Welfare Council 1959, March 10<sup>th</sup> 1960, p. 2.

which they, like concepts from literature and industry, were combined with more familiar components of the social worker's toolkit.

As with literature, religion played a role in the personal development of many a social worker. One of the discussion groups at the 1959 conference on morals and social work argued that 'all social workers are motivated by a basically religious impulse',<sup>233</sup> and Cohen's interviews provide clear evidence for this.<sup>234</sup> Olive Stevenson's complex relationship with Christianity, meanwhile, was a key feature in her autobiography.<sup>235</sup> Raised as a strict Catholic, the Church's stance on woman's health and homosexuality (Stevenson identified as a lesbian) gave her cause for doubt,<sup>236</sup> yet she concluded 'I am grateful for the framework of morality which Christianity has given me; at least for the 'pick&mix' that I have chosen'.<sup>237</sup> Whether religion offered a useful framework for social work experiences, or whether social work presented a clear path to expressing religious and spiritual beliefs, the possible presence of Christian ideas in the social work toolkit cannot be dismissed.

The importance which religion played in the personal growth of many social workers was not, we should note, reflected in the formal organisation of the profession. Both D. M. Dyson and Margaret Tilley argued that social workers, in their attempts at non-directive tolerance, were neglecting the importance of religious

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<sup>233</sup> Dustan, 'The Ethical Warrant for Social Work', p. 9. See also: MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G3/5, Social Work: General, Ethics and the Social Worker, Professor Dorothy Emmet, December 1961.

<sup>234</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Enid Warren, p. 4; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Wilkinson, p. 8; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, p. 20; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Molly Bree, p. 5; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 5; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Thomas Tinto, p. 7.

<sup>235</sup> Olive Stevenson, *Reflections on a Life in Social Work. A Personal & Professional Memoir* (Buckingham, 2013), pp. 8-10.

<sup>236</sup> Stevenson, *Reflections on a Life in Social Work*, p. 10.

<sup>237</sup> Stevenson, *Reflections on a Life in Social Work*, p. 11.

matters in their clients' lives.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, many social workers found themselves involved in cases revolving around or complicated by issues of faith and conscience.<sup>239</sup> The increase in immigration later on in the period only made considerations of religion more important.<sup>240</sup>

With regards to their own development, however, many social workers had a similar approach to Stevenson, that Christianity offered them a range of values from which to choose. Rather than study the vagaries of faith, we might, as Callum Brown suggests, consider the persistence of religious articulacy, and the role of religion as a framework.<sup>241</sup> Two aspects in particular stand out. First of all, many connected the belief in the intrinsic value of the individual, a fundamental tenet of social work, to the culture of Christianity in which they worked.<sup>242</sup> This dovetailed with influences from psychology, which also offered 'a religious ethic of the self'.<sup>243</sup> Secondly, there was also the attempt to show that social work was a reflection not only of religion, but also of the democratic values inherent in the welfare state.<sup>244</sup> Younghusband

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<sup>238</sup> D. M. Dyson, 'The Blind Spot', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 1.3 (1949), pp. 49-51; Margaret Tilley, 'The Religious Factor in Case-Work', *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, 1.4 (1950), p. 55.

<sup>239</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 10, *passim*; Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 28; Heasman, *Christians and Social Work*; Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work*; Sheelah Forster, 'Church, Settlement and Community Centre' in Peter Kuenstler (ed.), *Social Group Work in Great Britain* (London, 1960), pp. 93-110; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G3/5, Social Work: General, 'Christianity and Social Work'.

<sup>240</sup> See, for example: A West Indian Social Worker, 'A Look at Britain Part II', in Clifford S. Hill and David Mathews (eds), *Race – A Christian Symposium* (London, 1968), pp. 156-164; Anneliese Walker, 'The Irish in Britain (by John Arthur Jackson), Indian Immigrants in Britain (Rashmi Desai) and West Indian Immigrants and the London Churches (Clifford S. Hill)' (book review), *Case Conference*, 10.9 (March 1964), p. 285; Peter Hutchinson, 'The Social Worker and Culture Conflict', *Case Conference*, 15.12 (April 1969), p. 467; 'Miss B. E. Drake', in London Council of Social Service (ed.), *Immigrants in the New London. Report of a evening (sic) at the Kingsley Hotel, W.C.1 on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1965* (London, 1965), p. 9. This section was written in the third person.

<sup>241</sup> Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>242</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work and Social Change*, p. 23; Margaret Tilley, 'Religion and the Social Worker', *Social Work*, 19.2 (April 1962), p. 8; Mary Richardson, 'A Letter of Work Amongst Problem Families', *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), p. 431; Cormack and McDougall, 'Case-Work in Social Service', p. 27.

<sup>243</sup> Thomson, *Psychological Subjects*, p. 291.

<sup>244</sup> Timms, *Social Casework: Principles and Practice*, pp. 57-58.

noted, for example, that there is ‘a spirit which seeks to understand, to help... This is the essential spirit of Christianity and of democracy... Social work at its best embodies that spirit’.<sup>245</sup> The Christian background of social work, it seemed, made it a valuable component in ensuring the development of a society based on such principles. As part of this, social workers were also wont to call on Christian concepts and evoke Biblical themes for the justification of specific values within the welfare state.<sup>246</sup>

This is not to say, of course, that the connection between Christianity and social work was undisputed. For example, the indistinct equation between religion and social work drawn by Paul Halmos in *The Faith of the Counsellors* caused discomfort for some social workers,<sup>247</sup> and reignited discussions of the role of religious values with statutory welfare.<sup>248</sup> At the same time, there were some who felt that social work had moved too far away from its clear Christian roots: probation officer Neil Leighton argued that ‘the “social scientific” and “psychiatric” cultures have no positive contribution to make on the moral and ethical aspects of social work’, and had only removed any sense of a moral foundation for the profession.<sup>249</sup> Although Leighton saw the influx of American casework principles as responsible,

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<sup>245</sup> Eileen Youngusband, ‘The Past and Future of Social Work’, *Social Work*, 9.4 (October 1952), p. 727.

<sup>246</sup> ‘The Neglectful Mother, By the Southampton Discussion Group’, *Social Work*, 12.2 (April 1955), pp. 59; Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, GC/148/5/5/5/5, Lectures, Child Care Service in the Local Authority Setting, in Local Authorities and Child Care, ACO 14th Annual Conference, Sep 1963, p. 6.

<sup>247</sup> Paul Halmos, *The Faith of the Counsellors* (London, 1965), esp. pp. 4-7, 177-178.

<sup>248</sup> See, for example: Timms, *The Language of Social Casework*, p. 89; Timms, *Social Casework. Principles and Practice*, p. 3; Bessie Kent, ‘Friend or Foe? A Review Article’, *Social Work*, 23.1 (January 1966), p. 27. On this debate, see also: ASW, *Recent Developments in Case-Work*, p. 3; R. C. Wright, ‘A Profession of Reformers’, 3.7 (January 1957), p. 191. The reviews cited on the inside cover of the 1978 edition are also useful: Paul Halmos, *The Faith of the Counsellors* (London, 1978). They include John Barron Mays in *New Society*, H. Guntripp in *Psychiatric Social Work*, and an anonymous reviewer in *Medical Social Work*.

<sup>249</sup> Neil H. Leighton, ‘Two Cultures in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 11.9 (March 1965), pp. 278-279. See also: T. S. Simey, ‘Social Work and Social Purpose’, *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 5.

we should note that visitors from the USA tended to support rather than challenge the connection between religion and social work methods.<sup>250</sup>

Perhaps the most important aspect of religion for social work was its cultural pervasiveness. Even if Christianity did diminish in influence in the post-war period, largely as a result of the security offered by welfare and increasing affluence,<sup>251</sup> it was still a set of spiritual and humanistic concepts which was widely comprehensible. The case of social work and the Church shows how welfare became embedded in a series of values deemed to be at the centre of society; this appeal to shared national values was part of an attempt by politicians and social commentators to foster a replacement for the sense of local community (of which the Church had been an important part) which seemed threatened by the increasing reach of the state and its bureaucracy.<sup>252</sup> As Eliza Filby reminds us, however, even if there was a secular turn over this period, there persisted 'a strong residual Christian identity within society, while the churches continued to have an important presence in the local community'.<sup>253</sup> Simply put, the cultural vestiges of Christianity had currency, and this was generally to social work's advantage. The personal accounts of religion among social workers indicate that, once again, it was in combination with other influences that religion was most useful, particularly as a framework for humanistic values. In addition, a foundation of faith was one way in which social workers coped with the emotional labour of the field, demonstrating that people could and should be

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<sup>250</sup> Lydia Rapoport, 'Towards a Definition of Social Case-Work', *Social Work*, 11.2, (April 1954), p. 910; Florence Hollis, 'Principles and Assumptions Underlying Casework Practice', *Social Work*, 12.2 (April 1955), p. 49.

<sup>251</sup> S. J. D. Green, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c. 1920-1960* (Cambridge and New York, 2011), pp. 287-289.

<sup>252</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, pp. 148, 155-156.

<sup>253</sup> Filby, 'Faith, charity and citizenship: Christianity, voluntarism and the state in the 1980s', p. 136.

helped rather than judged. If psychology and sociology helped social work appear professional, then religion was part of its accessible side.

#### **V.iv                    Alternative Influences: Conclusions**

Although concepts from the social and psychological sciences were central to social work's identity, they were integrated into a framework which could include a range of different influences. Some of these survived because they offered ways of coping with the emotional strain of the field. Religion, which was declining in institutional influence yet still offered individuals an enduring sense of faith in a testing profession, was a notable example. As Joan Lawson reflected, 'It is essential...for every social workers to believe forcibly in *something*. If it cannot be God, then it has to be humanity, and its onward-and-upward potential.'<sup>254</sup> Religion also remained in the social work toolkit because, like literature, it offered ways of understanding society and individuals which were in accordance with the new concepts arriving from psychoanalysis, psychology, and sociology. The influence of new disciplines did not necessarily mean that older concepts were abandoned.

Other fields, meanwhile, offered alternative ways of considering and representing the professional task. Not only did industry present another potential territory for welfare workers, but it seemed to embody modern values of efficiency and innovation which were otherwise lacking. More importantly, it offered social workers a framework in which to consider the processes of the welfare encounter, and suggested ways in which the erratic experiences of the field might be rendered predictable. It would be deeply erroneous to suggest that every social worker had a

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<sup>254</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 123.

keen interest in all three of these alternative fields, but they nevertheless reflect a methodological toolkit which extended beyond the social and psychological sciences.

## **VI                      Becoming a Social Worker: Training and the Oral Tradition**

Much of the discussion so far has considered the various influences on social work thought and the wide variety of sources, both academic and personal, from which social workers could borrow concepts to understand and address individual and social problems. Some of these social and psychological ideas were useful for understanding client's behaviour and circumstances, some helped social workers to communicate with other professions, and some were used as a foundation for a discretionary and pragmatic practice. Much of the theoretical training which social workers underwent as students was geared towards these concepts, and a psychological *cum* psychoanalytic understanding of individuals was promoted by a training system which required a sizeable amount of introspection from students. This was accentuated by supervisory practices in which further introspection was encouraged, with the relationship between student and supervisor equated to that between social worker and client.

Throughout the period, however, social workers struggled to describe with sufficient clarity the relationship between theory and practice. Much of the expertise necessary for social work was attained during their early years in the field, where they acquired the practical knowledge essential for survival and learnt how to conduct themselves as a social worker. This aspect of social work practice was a useful bridge between generations with often dissimilar theoretical backgrounds, and indicates that we should take seriously the performative aspects of welfare work. The

ability to ‘perform’ the role of social worker may have had foundations in concepts from the social and psychological sciences, but it was nevertheless a pragmatic enterprise. Recognising this helps us to complicate our understanding of welfare work in the post-war period, and to move beyond analyses which are based on scientific knowledge.

## **VI.i Social Work Training**

We should note from the outset that the nature of social work training was not uncontested. As we shall see later, there was lively discussion, and sometimes deep animosity, regarding the extent to which the different courses on offer should be amalgamated and which (or, perhaps more accurately, whose) values should be espoused. This related to issues around the social work’s position in academic circles, and particularly its relationship with the discipline of social administration.<sup>255</sup> Such matters were largely settled at the end of the period with the Seebohm Report and the Local Authority Act, which were the culmination of a shift towards generic, rather than specialist, social work training. This particular moment is discussed in greater depth in section seven of Chapter 5.

For the purposes of our current discussion, however, it is essential to note that those who trained as social workers in this period would have encountered a wide range of subjects. It was common to undertake a course in social studies before any specialisation, and this would include topics such as public health and hygiene, economics, and industrial history, alongside the more prominent subjects of

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<sup>255</sup> These debates were most pronounced at the LSE, and there have been a handful of accounts on the struggle between Eileen Younghusband and Kay McDougall for the reins of social work education, but see especially: Oakley, ‘The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method’, pp. 158-160.



psychology, sociology, and social administration.<sup>256</sup> Although psychological and psychoanalytic concepts were covered in advanced courses before the war,<sup>257</sup> it was only afterwards that it became widely accepted that such ideas could and should be taught to students.<sup>258</sup> This meant that many students were exposed to such ideas in a way that their social work tutors, who had often only encountered the psychological sciences as part of specialist and advanced courses, had not.

One result of this was that social work tutors became increasingly concerned about the uncritical fervour with which students adopted these theories of mind and behaviour.<sup>259</sup> They noted, both during and after the period, that students were often overly keen to utilise their knowledge of psychological and psychoanalytic concepts in the field,<sup>260</sup> and that many were losing touch with the practical and intuitive aspects of the profession.<sup>261</sup> Perhaps the biggest issue, however, was that they did not remain sufficiently open-minded, that they adhered to theories without considering their actual practical and professional value. During a ‘conversation’ on the matter between senior social workers, for example, George Chesters\* argued that ‘You pick from it really what suits you. Something that you’ve heard may give you a clue to something.’<sup>262</sup> A social worker’s use of theoretical concepts should be ideally, it seemed, a personal and pragmatic process.

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<sup>256</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 119; Great Britain Central Office of Information, *Social Work and the Social Worker in Britain*, p. 8; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 7; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 46.

<sup>257</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 10.

<sup>258</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 30.

<sup>259</sup> R. C. Wright, ‘A Challenge to Social Work Education’, *Case Conference*, 8.2 (June 1961), p. 50.

<sup>260</sup> Deed, ‘Supervision; a social worker’s point of view’, p. 12; Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, CC/148/13, Casework questions, c. 1950s-1960s, A “conversation” about the relevance to social work of psycho analytic (sic) concepts, n.d.

<sup>261</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 19. See also: Olive Stevenson, ‘Integration of Theory and Practice in Professional Training’, *Case Conference*, 8.2 (June 1961), p. 48; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 22; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 32.

<sup>262</sup> Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, CC/148/13, Casework questions, c. 1950s-1960s, A “conversation” about the relevance to social work of psycho analytic (sic) concepts, n.d. See also: Vanstone,

This contrasts with the recollections of those who were students in the post-war period. The two major themes which emerge from the autobiographies and oral histories here are the immense excitement and enthusiasm which many students felt, and the introspection which social work courses required. On the first theme, social work tutors were certainly justified in highlighting, as Rose Mary Braithwaite did, ‘the excitement of new knowledge’, but this was more of an expression of vocation and a reaction to education than to specific concepts.<sup>263</sup> Joan Lawson, for example, recalled how she and the other ‘earnest sheep’ on her social science course at the LSE were ‘keen, friendly, full of the youth-making fervour and promise of a burgeoning welfare state’,<sup>264</sup> a confidence which Burnham found was commonplace in students at this time.<sup>265</sup> The psychological concepts which students discovered in the course of their training, and the insights they offered into human behaviour and relationships, were an important part of this.<sup>266</sup> There was also the determination amongst students to improve on the work of their forebears. Students, with the occasional support of their tutors,<sup>267</sup> were a major factor in the renewed interest in the material needs of clients and in group and community work which emerged towards the end of the period, as well as in the attendant rejection of casework and its psychoanalytic underpinnings.<sup>268</sup>

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*Supervising Offenders in the Community*, p. 104; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 222.

<sup>263</sup> Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare, CC/148/13, Casework questions, c. 1950s-1960s, A “conversation” about the relevance to social work of psycho analytic (sic) concepts, n.d.

<sup>264</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 12.

<sup>265</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 8. Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>266</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 7-8; Sheila West, quoted in: Prynne, ‘Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship’, p. 109.

<sup>267</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 10.

<sup>268</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, pp. 19-20.

There is no doubting, however, that social work training was focused, some felt excessively,<sup>269</sup> on understanding the individual, whether it was their psyche or their social conditions. The other major theme in social workers' memories of their training, and one evident across the period, is the amount of introspection which it entailed, often with mixed results. Shelia Ives, who started her training to be a child care officer at Bristol University in 1967, reported that her course was heavily influenced by Freud, and required a degree of introspection which some students found distressing; Ives concluded that, 'They were very good at breaking you down but not very good at building you up.'<sup>270</sup> Some students were initially reluctant to engage in such introspection at first but later came to find it useful.<sup>271</sup> Others, like probation workers Peter Hewitt and Ted Perry, were determined to keep their education pragmatic. They did not engage in the self-discovery of their fellow students, but nevertheless found practical utility in some of the theoretical ideas they encountered.<sup>272</sup> Nevertheless, Hewitt found it useful when he could deploy the approved professional language,<sup>273</sup> while Mary Hartley reported that although she did not necessarily change her practice after training, she felt that she 'belonged after that; I had my ticket.'<sup>274</sup> Once again, the use of psychological concepts within social work discussions was an important professional badge.

Social work training thus promoted not only a psychological view of welfare clients and of society, but also of the social worker themselves. This practice was not

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<sup>269</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 22.

<sup>270</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 122. For an example of someone who found this process more pleasurable, see: Brian Fox, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 121.

<sup>271</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 50-51; H. Clare Makepeace, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 123; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 76-79.

<sup>272</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 122, 177-178.

<sup>273</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 122.

<sup>274</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 123.

just confined to the classroom, however: even after social workers had begun the practical component of their education, they were encouraged to continue demonstrating a depth of insight into their own psychology. This was predominantly achieved through supervision, whereby students were encouraged to discuss their cases with senior social workers and administrators. This practice began in psychiatric social work and had spread throughout the profession by the mid-1950s.<sup>275</sup> It was hoped that discussing one's experiences within a personal relationship would help the student to develop both as a social worker and as an individual, precipitating 'a growth towards a maturity of outlook ... thereby enabling the worker to form a helpful professional relationship with his or her clients.'<sup>276</sup> A major component of this was an emphasis was on promoting a better understanding of individuals' emotions, behaviour, and relationships, often through an understanding of the self.<sup>277</sup>

Although some social workers, such as Winnicott, felt that a supervisor should keep the student grounded and encourage them to maintain an eclectic and pragmatic approach,<sup>278</sup> the majority view seems to have been that the supervisor should fulfil both a parental and therapeutic role,<sup>279</sup> much as the caseworker might

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<sup>275</sup> Elizabeth E. Irvine, 'Renaissance in British Casework', *Social Work*, 13.3 (July 1956), pp. 188-189. See also: Muriel Cunliffe, 'The Use of Supervision in Casework Practice', *Social Work*, 15.1 (January 1958), pp. 408-413; Jessica Seth-Smith, 'The New Look in Family Casework', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), pp. 448; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 19; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 16.

<sup>276</sup> D. Deed, 'Supervision; a social worker's point of view', in ASW, *Supervision in Social Work, A Report of the School for Supervisors of Students in Practical Work Agencies, April, 1952* (London, 1952), pp. 7-8.

<sup>277</sup> Ann Loxley, 'Training with the Institute of Almoners: 1958', in Joan Baraclough *et al.* (eds), *One Hundred Years of Health-Related Social Work, 1895 - 1995. Then...Now...Onwards* (Birmingham, 1996), p. 131.

<sup>278</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 14.

<sup>279</sup> Noel K. Hunnybun, 'Supervision, Education and Social Casework: I', in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), pp. 46-48; Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, pp. 238-239; Bessie Kent, *Social Work Supervision in Practice* (London *et al.*, 1969), pp. 2-4, 156-158.

do with a social work client. Jessica Seth-Smith described supervision in 1958 as a process where ‘habits of mind are called into question and the poverty of one’s understanding exposed,’<sup>280</sup> which placed the supervisor, as Wright recalled, ‘in an authoritative, rather than authoritarian, position in relation to the student’s learning.’<sup>281</sup> If welfare clients were increasingly subjected to disciplinary techniques founded on the psychological sciences, then such supervisory practices meant that so too were welfare professionals.<sup>282</sup> As a *Social Work* editorial so ominously pondered in 1960, ‘The most effective salesman is of course the one who thoroughly believes in his wares. We cannot begin to *sell* casework unless we believe in it and we cannot believe in it unless we know it.’<sup>283</sup> The nature of social work training, with its emphasis on introspection and psychological insights into the self, was not conducive to the eclectic and pragmatic practice which tutors expected from their students. It was commonly the experience of the field and the advice of colleagues which helped social workers to develop this aspect of their professional profile.

## **VI.ii                    Acquiring the Practical Expertise of Social Work**

The majority of personal accounts from the period focus on the accumulation not of the theoretical concepts central to social work, but on the practical knowledge necessary for everyday welfare work. Some social workers acquired such knowledge, and particularly an understanding of how working-class neighbourhoods operated, through settlement work, although by the mid-1960s it was more common

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<sup>280</sup> Jessica Seth-Smith, ‘The New Look in Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 449.

<sup>281</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 9. See also: Kent, *Social Work Supervision in Practice*, pp. 2-4, pp. 156-158; Muriel Cunliffe, ‘The Use of Supervision in Casework Practice’, *Social Work*, 15.1 (January 1958), p. 408.

<sup>282</sup> Yelloly, *Social Work Theory and Psychoanalysis*, p. 108; Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>283</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Social Work*, 17.1 (January 1960), p. 1.

for students to live in rundown areas out of necessity rather than by choice.<sup>284</sup> The majority of this practical expertise, however, was passed down from more experienced colleagues, reflecting the difficulty of ensuring a clear connection between theory and practice in formal social work training.<sup>285</sup> For many social workers, following the actions of an experienced colleague, or ‘sitting next to Nellie’, was an integral part of their training.<sup>286</sup> A number of supervisory relationships were based less around psychological insight, and more about passing on the accumulated wisdom of social work. The effectiveness of this did depend somewhat, as Rose Mary Braithwaite remembered, on who the ‘Nellie’ figure actually was, but both Helen Anthony and Linda Dennis regretted the absence of a mentor figure in their early years.<sup>287</sup> During the course of his oral history project, Alan Cohen began to note the gulf between the professional literature and the ‘oral tradition’ of social work,<sup>288</sup> which concerned not only how to talk to and about clients, but also how to conduct oneself as a social worker and how to ensure one’s own well-being in the field. This ‘oral tradition’ was also fostered through discussion groups at conferences and more informal meetings between colleagues and fellow students.<sup>289</sup>

This aspect of a social worker’s professional development covered a wide range of issues. George Chesters, for example, was instructed never to sit in

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<sup>284</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 138.

<sup>285</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 117-118; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 35-40.

<sup>286</sup> Polly Gordon, quoted in: Prynne, ‘Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship’, p. 100. On the experience of being the ‘Nellie’ figure’, see MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 9.

<sup>287</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 5; Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, p. 39; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>288</sup> See: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 4; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 14; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 19.

<sup>289</sup> Jacka, *The ACCO Story*, p. 91; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Margaret Simey, p. 17.

upholstered chairs, presumably to avoid lice and fleas, an issue which Brian Fox had to learn how to navigate himself.<sup>290</sup> Joan Lawson, meanwhile, learnt the value of bending the rules, and, if it was therapeutic, helping her clients to do likewise.<sup>291</sup> She also discovered the crucial knowledge that social workers should never visit whilst popular television or radio programmes were on: Charles Maule too found that housewives were inaccessible whilst *The Archers* was being broadcast.<sup>292</sup> Clothing was an area where the wisdom of the ages was particularly useful. Isobel Groves told David Burnham how she was instructed during her social studies degree to wear the dowdiest clothing possible for prison visits ‘as they have not seen a woman for a long time’. A senior colleague, Miss Blagborough, advised Groves to wear washable clothes when around sickly children, and taught her how to read a client’s home environment for clues about their circumstances.<sup>293</sup> For almoners, obtaining the right to wear white coats was a vital step in their increasing status in hospitals,<sup>294</sup> while conservative dress proved important for the professional image of social work, a hat being deemed essential wear for female social workers attending court.<sup>295</sup>

It might be tempting to dismiss all this as the ephemera of welfare practice, but that would be to misunderstand the nature of social work. Social workers had to elicit trust from their clients and respect from their colleagues, and both required more than just personal words and professional language. As we have seen in previous chapters, the social worker could act as a therapeutic example of well-

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<sup>290</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, p. 10; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 105.

<sup>291</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 98-99. See also: D. Fletcher, ‘The Institution As Seen By An In-Patient’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Institutional Care* (London, 1967), p. 60. On ‘low-level strategies of professional deviance’, see: Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, p. 80.

<sup>292</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 99-100; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>293</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 112, 120.

<sup>294</sup> Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975’, p. 324.

<sup>295</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 120.

adjusted citizenship, but could also personalise an impersonal welfare state awash with specialists and bureaucrats. This meant that the non-verbal aspects of welfare practice could be crucial.<sup>296</sup> Brill spoke of the dangers in child care of depending ‘upon mere words unsupported by bodily movement and experiences’,<sup>297</sup> while Noel Timms argued that the ability ‘to convey acceptance...both acceptance of their narratives and acceptance of their ‘invitation’ to help despite the client’s issues’ was one of the two most crucial skills for a social worker.<sup>298</sup> An awareness of what could, maybe even should remain unspoken in the welfare encounter was a crucial ingredient of the social work toolkit. This was particularly important when social workers needed to bridge differences of age, class, or, perhaps most notably, race and culture.<sup>299</sup>

Peel’s suggestion, then, that encounters between social workers and their clients were heavily choreographed is one of his most valuable.<sup>300</sup> As important as this idea is for the historiography of social work and class, however, Peel offers scant discussion as to how we might approach the subject of the non-verbal. If we recognise that Ruth Evans silently apologising to a probationer by offering him a cigarette, or Cecil French growing a moustache to compensate for his youthful looks, are important aspects of the practice of social work, then it is nevertheless unclear as

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<sup>296</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 122-123; Elizabeth E. Irvine, ‘The Hard-to-Like Family’, *Case Conference*, 14.3 (July 1967), p. 106; Helen M. Lambrick, ‘Communication With The Patient’, in Eileen Youngusband (ed.), *Social Work and Social Values* (London, 1967), pp. 191-200. This article originally appeared in: *The Almoner*, 15.7 (October 1962).

<sup>297</sup> Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 93.

<sup>298</sup> Timms, *Social Casework. Principles and Practice*, pp. 18, 22. See also: King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 91-92, 94.

<sup>299</sup> See, for example: J. P. Triseliotis, ‘The Implications of Cultural Factors in Social Work with Immigrants’ in J. P. Triseliotis (ed.), *Social Work with Coloured Immigrants and their Families* (London, 1972), pp. 31-37; A. Walker, ‘White and Coloured’ (book review), *Case Conference*, 6.9 (March 1960) p. 235; Cheetham, ‘Immigrants, Social Work, and the Community’, pp. 67-69; Peter Willmott, ‘Social Administration and Social Class’, 4.7 (January 1958), p. 198; Winnicott, ‘Face to Face with Children’, pp. 29-30.

<sup>300</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 2.



to how we approach them as historical moments.<sup>301</sup> This is partially because it is impossible to recover how such actions were intended and how they were received, especially when they come to us second- or third-hand. Hilary Corrick, for example, described how her Area Officer, Juliet Berry, was ‘into feelings and silences. Sometimes with a client she would just stop ... and say nothing.’<sup>302</sup> Corrick admitted that this made her incredibly anxious, but it is unclear how it affected the client and Berry herself, how they behaved during the silence, and, most importantly, whether it worked.

This issue is, of course, also true for the written or the spoken word; we cannot know for certain the intentions behind them or their eventual effects. We do, however, still have the texts, while the performative side of social work is now lost to us, its traces only imperfectly accessible through language. As Peggy Phelan has argued in her discussion of the ‘ontology of performance’, the written word ‘can broach the frame of performance but cannot mimic an art which is nonreproductive’.<sup>303</sup> In fact, since the majority of communication between social worker and client was face-to-face, we cannot escape the impact of performance on welfare practice. The limited records which we have of the words exchanged in these encounters are only one part of the larger choreography to which Peel alludes.

If we cannot recover performance, then, we should at least acknowledge its importance, not only in itself, but also as part of the verbal components of the welfare encounter. The language used by social workers was underscored by influences from a range of disciplines, and was reinforced by actions and appearances. I do not wish to claim that the presence and the performance of the

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<sup>301</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 111. MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 6.

<sup>302</sup> Hilary Corrick, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 133. Ellipses in the original.

<sup>303</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, p. 149.

social worker was necessarily transformative,<sup>304</sup> but it certainly had that potential, not least because any interaction between worker and client would have unspoken yet legible undertones of class, race, and gender difference.<sup>305</sup> Moreover, the persistence of these practices through their transmission from experienced workers to newly-trained professionals, and the role of the social worker as an example of citizenship and self-control,<sup>306</sup> indicates that they had some pragmatic value, which, as this chapter has argued, was the most important criterion on which to judge social work methods.

## VII Conclusions

There are three important ideas regarding social work to take from this chapter. The first is that a number of concepts from a range of fields, both academic and non-academic, influenced social work. The second is that these influences were useful in a variety of ways. Not only did concepts from the social and psychological sciences give social work a respectable foundation on which to build a profession, but they also, along with other influences, allowed social workers to cope with the emotional labour of their profession and to cooperate with other professionals within the welfare state. Language, and particularly the ability to talk in a professional yet intelligible manner to, for, and about welfare clients, proved essential for social workers. Thirdly, pragmatism and discretion were key criteria for social work

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<sup>304</sup> This is, perhaps understandably, the common line from Performance Studies. See: Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*.

<sup>305</sup> Candance West and Sarah Fenstermaker, 'Doing Difference', *Gender & Society*, 9.1 (1995), pp. 8-37, esp. pp. 26-30; Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity*, *passim.*, but esp. p. xi, p. 4, p. 17; Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 2.

<sup>306</sup> The role of the social worker as example is covered in Chapter 1, but see especially: Jordan, *Client-Worker Transactions*, pp. 6-8; Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880-1970*, pp. 93-115.

practice. Social workers were concerned with what worked in the field, and a working knowledge in the social and psychological sciences was perhaps most useful not in offering them techniques, but in allowing them to exercise discretion. This discretionary practice was particular to each social worker: as George Chesters told Alan Cohen, ‘Everybody develops their own technique. It’s a matter of being able to communicate really, how you get a rapport going with people, and feeling comfortable and reveal themselves.’ Nevertheless, this technique was principally developed, for Chesters at least, ‘by watching and listening to other people...picking from what they do what is acceptable to you; what you can use.’<sup>307</sup>

In terms of the broader view, many of the conclusions of this chapter reflect social workers’ positions in the gaps and on the margins of the welfare state and of society. We should recognise that the boundaries between the psychological sciences and the social sciences (principally sociology) were more porous than is at first glance apparent, and that this was a factor in the survival of each of these disciplines when the other was ascendant. Such a relationship is not unintuitive, but the belief amongst social workers that sociological and psychological ideas could work in tandem, and could in fact temper the other discipline’s excesses, is an important one to recognise.

The fact that social workers frequently found themselves in the gaps between those producing psychological knowledge and those interested in the social sciences was one reason why this curious intermingling was possible. This position also allowed other influences to enter the equation. Religious frameworks, if not necessarily the beliefs, could survive in the theory and practice of social work,

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<sup>307</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, p. 10. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, p. 4.

especially when they were combined with democratic values and a focus on the individual inherent in psychology and psychoanalysis. Ideas being formulated in industry and management, meanwhile, offered social workers new ways to think about group dynamics and to accurately map (and predict) the vagaries of the field. Furthermore, literature offered a way of understanding individuals, their relationships, and the society in which they were situated which could interact with but did not rely on scientific frameworks. This made it a good foundation to which one could add new concepts.

Although we have seen how social workers attempted to construct and employ a professional body of knowledge, we should not neglect the personal and the political in our analysis. We saw in the last chapter that professional concerns made social workers reluctant to get overly involved in political matters, but at the same time, their social and political responsibilities limited the extent to which they could engage with academic influences. In considering why British social workers did not take to psychoanalysis in the same committed fashion as their American counterparts, Geoffrey Pearson *et al.* cited the enduring focus on democratic socialism.<sup>308</sup> Even whilst trying to establish a professional identity, social workers still had to maintain their public obligations. In fact, Prynne notes that it was the professional autonomy built on the back of casework's credentials which allowed social workers to move away from the psychodynamic ideas which had underpinned it.<sup>309</sup> We should certainly note that the construction of a body of professional knowledge had a number of personal benefits for social workers, whether it was justifying discretion, offering therapeutic tools, or creating a unified community. The

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<sup>308</sup> Pearson *et al.*, 'Introduction: Social Work and the Legacy of Freud', p. 5.

<sup>309</sup> Prynne, 'Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship', p. 105.

values which underpinned social work knowledge could be just as important as the methods they informed.<sup>310</sup>

Nevertheless, social work methods could look less than impressive to the outsider. This was, after all, a technology of ideas, many of which were shared with and deployed in a more advanced fashion by medical professionals and social scientists. After a difficult visit to a client in *The Shorn Lamb*, Charles Maule remarked that ‘If anyone had asked me what I did for a living I could only have said: ‘Well, I sit down and then I stand up again.’<sup>311</sup> To the uninformed observer, this is very much how the practice of social work might have appeared, a series of conversations taking place over a succession of households or offices, on a variety of (hopefully lice-free) chairs. Yet this process could be informed by a number of different academic influences, or could indeed just be a product of the accumulated wisdom of generations of social workers. Most importantly, however, social workers had something both to justify their presence in the gaps and on the margins and to prepare them for that experience. The range of tasks included in the social work role, the variety of people encountered, and the unpredictable nature of the field all meant that an eclectic approach proved most useful.

Social workers were not just, however, practical experts in their collection and dissemination of concepts and frameworks. They also attempted to continue the construction of a body of professional knowledge through generalising their experiences of the field and through considering the optimum methods of intervention in social and individual problems. This was an endeavour focused not

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<sup>310</sup> Mike Burt and Aidan Worsley, ‘Social work, professionalism and the regulatory framework’, in Sandy Fraser and Sarah Matthews (eds), *The Critical Practitioner in Social Work and Health Care* (London *et al.*, 2008), p. 28.

<sup>311</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 218.

on producing knowledge, but on identifying issues, and on suggesting and assessing solutions. As we shall see in the next chapter, this meant that social work sat on the fringes of post-war social research. Here they (and their case records) proved a valuable resource for surveying the character and effects of a society in flux, but social workers themselves were more interested in a form of ‘action research’, generating ‘knowledge for practice’. In their attitudes towards social research, just as with the ideas offered by the social and psychological sciences and a host of other spheres, social workers were very much ‘the urban fox going to the dustbins’.

## 4 Social Work and Social Research

### I Introduction

The position of social workers in the gaps and on the margins of the welfare state, and on the frontline of the social and medical services, meant that not only could they apply knowledge from the social and psychological sciences, but that they could also contribute to its production. In fact, since social workers were encountering an ever-greater range of complicated personal and social problems, the need to formulate an understanding of their causes and consequences was becoming ever more pressing.<sup>1</sup> In this next chapter, we look at the role which research played within social work, and the attempts of social workers to engage with a burgeoning post-war culture of social investigation. Social workers, as the most personalised branch of the welfare state,<sup>2</sup> were in a privileged position to collect and process information about individuals and society, and their inclusion in research teams was evident from the beginning of the 1950s onwards.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter is concerned with a very specific statement, namely, Mike Savage's argument that, at the end of the 1950s, social workers constituted 'the routine ground troops in the practice of social research'.<sup>4</sup> This chapter seeks to extend and challenge this analysis by considering Savage's contention for the period as a whole. Although Savage's attempt to historicise the social sciences and social research is invaluable in considering social work over this period, it is worth

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<sup>1</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G2/3, Social Work: General, Social Work and the Social Services, 22 January 1952, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 170.

critically examining this specific statement for two reasons. Firstly, it is tempting to extrapolate from this depiction of social workers as the ‘ground troops’ of social research to argue, as Kate Bradley does, that the growth of social research and social work were interrelated and that the boundaries between the two groups were porous.<sup>5</sup> This is ultimately a misrepresentation of the relationship between the two spheres. Secondly, concentrating on the role of social workers in social research can obscure other pertinent aspects of the profession’s research culture.

I argue that while social workers were very much on the frontline of post-war social research, they were as a profession more interested in practical investigations which sought to assess, improve, and demonstrate the efficacy of welfare intervention. As we saw in the last chapter, social workers were ‘practical experts’ in their application of the social and psychological sciences, and this characterisation held true for their attitude to social research. This attitude was noted by a number of commentators and given a variety of labels – in this chapter I use Eileen Younghusband’s term ‘action research’.<sup>6</sup> This ranged from experiments, often based in local communities, which utilised new methodological combinations, to research, usually in institutions, which sought to rigorously demonstrate the effectiveness of social work intervention. Social work was thus characterised by pragmatism and practical expertise; social workers aimed to produce not so much knowledge as solutions. One of the objectives of this chapter is to contextualise this ‘action

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<sup>5</sup> Bradley, ‘Becoming Delinquent in the Post-War Welfare State: England and Wales, 1945–1965’, pp. 238–239.

<sup>6</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950–1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 151, 153. Alternatively, Holman referred to this strain of research as ‘operational’ projects, while John Mack, a lecturer in citizenship at the University of Glasgow and an adviser for the Bristol Social Project, spoke of ‘operational research’. ‘Operational’ and ‘action’ both reflect the functional nature of these investigations. Robert Holman, ‘Social Work Research Today’, in BASW, *Research and Social Work* (London, 1970), p. 5; Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, p. 6.



research' alongside the characteristics and trends of mainstream social research in this period.

To this end, the chapter finishes with a case-study of social workers' approach towards immigration and immigrant culture, one of the major topics within social research of the period. This was a vast category, so the final section largely focuses on social workers' research into West Indians. Since social workers did not have a body of knowledge to inform their work with these new arrivals, they were keen to investigate the social and cultural aspects of immigrant populations. This led them to generate some sociological description of the experience of immigration and of settling in a new country. As with the rest of social work research, however, this was largely focused on identifying and addressing emergent issues, rather than on contributing to a growing body of social research which sought to describe and explain this new social phenomenon. Even when social workers were explicitly involved in such social research, it was often due to their knowledge of the field and their access to clients. Although they were akin to ground troops, this did not mean that they were full members of the research team.

## **I.i                    Defining Social Research**

Even if I wish to reconsider their precise relationship, it is clear that social work was by no means untouched by or uninvolved in post-war social research. Savage has recently sought to describe and analyse the nature of post-war social research, and of the numerous characteristics which he identifies, three are particularly pertinent for understanding social work. The first of these, and perhaps the most significant for social workers in this period, was that some of their tools and methods, notably the interview, were being increasingly adopted by social scientists in their attempts to

investigate society and people's perceptions of social change.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the shift from the late-1950s onwards towards a focus on the temporary, on 'producing knowledge which makes itself rapidly redundant', seeking 'fleeting identities, no sooner established than dissipated',<sup>8</sup> was deeply reminiscent of the welfare encounter. Social workers were already adept at tracing the 'fleeting identities' of individuals and families during times of change. Social work was indeed a profession based on biographical description rather than the formulation of theories of society or the attempt to draw predictive conclusions, and much of social work in this period aimed at short-term adjustment.<sup>9</sup> Towards the end of the period, however, social work research began to search for longer-term solutions, often through diversifying social workers' responsibilities or through suggesting new methods and combinations of methods. While social research as a whole was focused on the temporary, social work research became interested in generalising about the practice of welfare.

The use of welfare tools and methods and a new focus on the temporary were, however, only two aspects of post-war social research culture. Another, a nascent interest in 'an ordinary, everyday social world', was a poor match for social work's historical associations with maladjustment and pathology, and as such played only a minor role in the profession's own research culture.<sup>10</sup> This was exacerbated by the increasing rejection in sociological circles of the focus on social progress and

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<sup>7</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 7, 165-166.

<sup>8</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 164.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Margaret Whale, 'Problem Families: The Case for Social Casework', *Social Work*, 11.1 (January 1954) pp. 881-887; Smith, *People in Need*, p. 141; D. L. Woodhouse, 'Casework with Problem Families', *Case Conference*, 5.2 (June 1958), pp. 31-39; Ferard and Hunnybun, *The Caseworker's Use of Relationships*; Pollard, *Social Casework for the State*.

<sup>10</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7. See also: Lawrence, 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England', p. 215.

solutions which also lay at the heart of social work research.<sup>11</sup> The attempt to create knowledge about average and ordinary populations was the aspect of research culture which most eluded social workers, who were focused on identifying and solving problems. If, as Vernon has argued, the social sciences in this period were lamenting the loss of a white working class, and seeking to reconstruct their agency through accounts of their historical making,<sup>12</sup> then social work was more concerned with helping them to adjust by identifying and addressing those problems caused by social change.

These combined factors meant that social workers largely remained limited to a role as producers of local knowledge, unable to link their local insights with national concerns, much as their ability to affect social change was ultimately confined to their specific fields of practice. On those occasions that social workers did act as the 'routine ground troops' for social research, it is mainly because, when social scientists ventured out to conduct research, they found social workers already inhabiting the gaps between institution and community. Although social workers were aware of the increasing importance of the research subject's voice in the post-war social sciences, and that their access to individuals and communities was thus of utility, their own contributions were ultimately more focused on addressing particular social issues than on augmenting the social and psychological sciences.

Over the course of the period, however, social workers did come to recognise that their professional status and effectiveness was being undermined by an ignorance over the territory of their work and the experiences of their clients.<sup>13</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> Soffer, 'Why do disciplines fail? The strange case of British sociology', p. 774.

<sup>12</sup> Vernon, 'The Social and Its Forms', p. 156.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example: B. Kent, 'What's Wrong with the Social Work Services?', *Case Conference*, 13.11 (March 1967), p. 376; Malcolm J. Brown, 'Introduction', in Malcolm J. Brown (ed.), *Social Issues and the Social Services* (London, 1974), pp. 7-8.

led some social workers to attempt to utilise the tools characteristic of social research, such as surveys and statistical analysis.<sup>14</sup> The object of such investigations remained, however, limited to such professional concerns as social work manpower and public perceptions of social work, and even by the end of the period, Joan King still classified social work research as ‘still in its infancy.’<sup>15</sup> In addition, the values and priorities of social workers and social researchers became increasingly divergent, with the result that there developed a certain amount of mistrust between these two groups.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, there were strong personal links between social scientists and welfare professionals,<sup>17</sup> and as Jordanna Bailkin has recently pointed out, many doctoral students in sociology and anthropology worked as child care officers during their studies, so that an increasing number of social researchers had first-hand experience of social work.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the nature of their particular tasks, and an appreciation of the skills and knowledge offered by the other group, meant that social workers and researchers found sufficient common ground for cooperation.

## **I.ii                    Historicising Social Research**

As with the last chapter, it is principally due to an increasing historical interest in the social sciences that we are able to contextualise and analyse this aspect of post-war social work. One consequence of the resurgent interest in the history of the social

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<sup>14</sup> See particularly: E. Matilda Goldberg, ‘Measurement in Casework’, in BASW, *Research and Social Work* (London, 1970), pp. 27-41.

<sup>15</sup> King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, p. 275.

<sup>16</sup> King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 276-277.

<sup>17</sup> This is neatly exemplified by two marriages *cum* collaborations: that of social worker and social activist Margaret Simey and social scientist Thomas Simey; and that of child care worker and academic Clare Winnicott and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott.

<sup>18</sup> Bailkin, ‘The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State’, p. 93.

sciences has been a greater consideration of social research as a way of gaining insights into previous societies, and particularly the categories through which individuals understood themselves, each other, and society as a whole. David Cannadine has highlighted how the ‘unprecedented proliferation of sociological surveys’ in the post-war period helps us understand shifts not only in society, but in how social change was perceived; Martin Bulmer *et al.*, meanwhile, have discussed the relationship between the ability to survey society and the desire to reform it.<sup>19</sup>

More recently, Selina Todd and Mike Savage have identified the complex relationship between politics, welfare, and social research in the post-war period.<sup>20</sup> The identification of sites of social change and continuity was a political activity, and interacted with perceptions of class, affluence, and poverty.<sup>21</sup> The best example of this relationship is the rediscovery of poverty in the 1960s, a moment which hinged on a combination of new statistical tools and emotive evocations of destitution.<sup>22</sup> If the identification of particular social trends as amenable to investigation had a political element, then so too did the recognition of particular issues as suitable for welfare intervention.

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<sup>19</sup> Cannadine, *Class in Britain*, p. 146; Martin Bulmer *et al.*, ‘The social survey in historical perspective’, in Martin Bulmer *et al.* (eds), *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 1-48, esp. pp. 2-3. See also: Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, pp. 76-77; Bulmer, ‘National contexts for the development of social-policy research: British and American research on poverty and social welfare compared’, p. 149; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 163-165; Whitelaw, ‘Industry and the interior life: industrial ‘experts’ and the mental world of workers in twentieth century Britain’, pp. 140-142. On the link between social surveys and social planning, see: Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880-1970*, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup> Osborne *et al.*, ‘Reinscribing British sociology: some critical reflections’, p. 528; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. x, 7, 15, 133; Todd, *The People*, pp. 175-176, 253-260, 266; Selina Todd, ‘Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working Class’, *Contemporary British History*, 22.4 (2008), pp. 501-518.

<sup>21</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 133; Todd, ‘Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working Class’, pp. 509-513.

<sup>22</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 205; Lowe, ‘Modernizing Britain’s Welfare State: The Influence of Affluence, 1957-1964’, p. 46. See also: Peter Townsend, ‘Introduction: Does Selectivity Mean a Nation Divided?’, p. 6.

We also saw in the last chapter how the dominance of casework has been reproduced in social work historiography, mainly due to the extensive work which has been done by Foucault and those utilising his arguments on the role of the psychological sciences. More recent work on historicising the social sciences has helped to remedy this, and to show, as was a central theme in the last chapter, that sociological and psychological ways of understanding individuals and society, while differing in key ways,<sup>23</sup> were nevertheless intermingled. There has been little written about the historical role of research within social work, and about the contribution of social workers to the creation of social knowledge in the post-war period.

Nevertheless, the sheer amount of information which social work gathered in the course of its everyday practice has not gone unnoticed; Jordanna Bailkin's reference to the 'avalanche of paper' and the 'contentiously evolving systems of classification' which accompanied welfare is exemplified by the incredibly detailed case-notes written by social workers.<sup>24</sup>

The study of social work allows us to gain a greater insight into how this relationship between research and welfare operated at a local level, and gives us a greater sense of the experience of conducting social research. Even if social workers only made a minor contribution to post-war social scientific culture, their role as tools of social research and their position in the gap between researcher and

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<sup>23</sup> Whitelaw, 'Industry and the interior life: industrial 'experts' and the mental world of workers in twentieth century Britain', p. 138.

<sup>24</sup> Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, p. 15. On the excessive detail required in social work case-notes at this time, see: Prynne, 'Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship', pp. 106-107; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 101. Analysis of these case-notes has been a major feature in social work historiography. See, for example: Macnicol, 'From 'Problem Family' to 'Underclass', 1945-95', pp. 81-83; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', pp. 362-387; Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*; Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*. For some general yet illuminating comments about the use of records left by encounters based on unequal power relations, see: Lawrence, 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England', pp. 215-217, 220, 223.

researched helps us understand better the practice of social research and its role in the welfare state and in society. It also helps us to appreciate how social research and its tools, such as questionnaires and surveys, became a part of everyday practice in the social and medical services, and the effect which this had on the researcher and the research object. Not only do we need to consider anew the social investigations conducted by the ‘dabblers’ described by Osborne *et al.*,<sup>25</sup> but we also need to consider the various ways in which such research was inscribed in both the everyday practice of welfare and in the struggles for recognition of Nottingham’s ‘insecure professionals’.<sup>26</sup> We should be aware that research was both a commonplace occurrence and a point of prestige.

In understanding this aspect of social work research, the work of Stanley Cohen proves particularly useful. Cohen, who explicitly seeks to adapt and challenge Foucault’s ideas through an analysis of social control and welfare,<sup>27</sup> has discussed how the ‘people-processing professions’ have gained a ‘collective licence’ to gather huge amounts of different forms of information.<sup>28</sup> He argues, however, that much of this information is ‘less harmful than useless’, predominantly existing to ‘allow the system to expand and diversify even further’, and thus to serve professional rather than disciplinary interests.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, we should remember that, even if the majority of data does primarily serve narrow professional interests, such surveillance is often self-expanding. Any information obtained can justify the growth of professional territory and power, and thus lead to the creation of further professional

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<sup>25</sup> Osborne *et al.*, ‘Reinscribing British sociology’, p. 522. See also: Jennifer Platt, ‘What Should be Done about the History of British Sociology?’, in A. H. Halsey and W. G. Runciman (eds), *British Sociology Seen From Within and Without* (Oxford, 2005), p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> Nottingham, ‘The Rise of the Insecure Professionals’, pp. 447, 449.

<sup>27</sup> On Cohen’s wider project, see: Innes, *Understanding Social Control*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, *Visions of Social Control*, p. 183.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen, *Visions of Social Control*, p. 184.

knowledge.<sup>30</sup> In this manner, research can exist as an everyday practice which forms a major part of long-term professional expansion.

## II Social Work and Attitudes Towards Social Research

We begin the chapter by examining how social workers identified the need for research into their profession and its territory, and reflected on their failure to develop a robust research culture. Secondly, we consider the divergent values of social workers and social researchers in the post-war period, and the uneasy relationship this caused. Finally, we consider the differing roles which research played in social work over this period, with a focus on ‘action research’. Throughout the discussion, we should remember that although social workers and social researchers began to adopt similar methods for creating knowledge, the outcomes of these investigations and the objectives of the two groups were often rather different. In a period when social research was focused on descriptions of transient identities, social workers were more concerned with producing long-term solutions and ensuring the continual progression of their profession and its methods and of society as a whole. ‘Action research’ sat uneasily on the borders of social research culture in this period, but rather than designating social work research as a poor imitation, we can instead interrogate the precise boundaries of social scientific research in post-war England.

During the interwar period, social workers had already begun to recognise the importance of social research for the growth of the profession. In the preliminary discussions to set up a federation of social workers, which occurred at a conference

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<sup>30</sup> Macnicol, ‘From ‘Problem Family’ to ‘Underclass’, 1945-95’, p. 85; David Armstrong, *Political Anatomy of the Body: Medical Knowledge in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1983), *passim.*, but esp. pp. 51-53, 111-112, 117.



held at the LSE on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1934, it was agreed that one of the main aims of such an organisation would be to ‘To facilitate research and the publication of its results’.<sup>31</sup> In a later list of projects which needed addressing before the nascent profession could progress, their aims included attempting to ‘initiate...Surveys and research.’<sup>32</sup> This, however, was likely a reference to the attempts to discover more about the various branches of social work (rather than society) in order to find commonalities between different fields, an endeavour which had been mentioned in the BFSW’s 1935 statement of policy.<sup>33</sup> By the 1942 conference on the social change precipitated by the war, social workers were reflecting that they had played an insufficient role in the recent trend for social investigation which was exemplified by Mass Observation, and needed to develop closer links with centres of such social research.<sup>34</sup> One delegate, Miss Fry, even suggested that social workers keep private diaries of their experiences during the war, since the ‘present unusual conditions had revealed human nature like an upturned sod.’<sup>35</sup> Social workers had the access necessary for social research, but not the experience and the tools to turn their findings in the field into coherent arguments about society.

At a conference held the next year on the Beveridge Report, these sentiments were echoed by Miss Shaw, a Regional Representation of the Provisional National Council for Mental Health, who intoned that social workers were ‘in a uniquely

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<sup>31</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/1/1/1, Constitution and foundation, Conference of representatives of organisations of social workers [to consider the formation of a British Federation of Social Workers], Nov 1934-Feb 1935.

<sup>32</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/1/1/6, Constitution and foundation, Proposed British Federation of Social Workers: suggestions for future work, June 1935.

<sup>33</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/1/1/5, Constitution and foundation, Statement of policy, [1935].

<sup>34</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, pp. 57-58. Inquiries made with the archives at Nuffield College, University of Oxford, would suggest that these diaries are no longer in existence. I have not come across them, either in part or in whole, in any of the other archives which I have visited.

<sup>35</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, p. 60.

advantageous position' and had 'an immense amount of data obtained from contact with people living in ordinary surroundings', and that social workers would have a large role to play in the social surveys and social research of the anticipated unified health department.<sup>36</sup> However, it does not appear that social work was an obvious element of social research projects in the immediate post-war years. For example, although social workers were asked to keep dairies of their day-to-day activities as part of the Nuffield Social Reconstruction Survey of the mid-1940s, these do not appear to have been utilised in any subsequent reports, and the outcomes were absent from social work discussions during the period.<sup>37</sup> Despite this early identification of the role which social research could and should play in the fortunes of social work, it was an aspect of the profession which failed to grow over the post-war period.

Even by the end of the period, there was still a perception that insufficient research had been conducted into the practice and the territory of social work. Both the Younghusband and the Seebohm Reports lamented that research into social work had remained limited,<sup>38</sup> while Adrian Sinfield pointed out in 1969 that even though both central and local authorities had the power to sponsor such research, the will had been lacking.<sup>39</sup> In an appraisal of recent social work research in 1970, Robert Holman conceded that, although the abundant research conducted in psychology and sociology was often applicable for social work, the profession had produced little of its own insights, especially compared to their colleagues in the USA and in the

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<sup>36</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/5/7, Publications, Report of Conference July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> – 1943, The Part which Social Workers can Play in the Beveridge Plan for Social Security, p. 27.

<sup>37</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/3/1/12, Annual Reports, BFSW Ninth Annual Report, 1945, p. 8. See also: Higson, *The Story of a Beginning*, p. 143.

<sup>38</sup> *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services*, para. 11; *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, para. 96-97.

<sup>39</sup> Adrian Sinfield, *Which Way for Social Work?* (London, 1969), pp. 3-5.

natural and social sciences in Britain.<sup>40</sup> This was partly down to the uncertain position of research skills in social work training: students and teachers alike remained apprehensive towards the more technical aspects, and education focused on the use of existing research rather than how to conduct further investigations effectively.<sup>41</sup>

A key reason for social work's lack of a substantial contribution to social research over this period was the increasingly different principles of the two spheres. At a seminar in Oxford, held for an international audience in the middle of the 1950s, Professor Thomas Simey argued that 'Since the publication of the Booth Survey the Social Worker and the Social Researcher have tended to follow separate paths which have crossed only at somewhat infrequent intervals' and that 'the social worker has tended to continue to build on the foundation of doctrine and practice laid down in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century'.<sup>42</sup> Margaret Simey, his wife and herself an established social worker, spoke in her interview with Alan Cohen of her husband's frustration at how by this time 'many people had gone overboard for value-free sociology', which may have explained his comments.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Mike Savage argues that the post-war years saw a resurgence in the 'gentlemanly social scientist',<sup>44</sup> which meant social research began to move away from the applied social studies which had long formed a bridge between social work and the social sciences.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Holman, 'Social Work Research Today', p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in: Margaret Castle, 'Mentally Handicapped People in the Community and the Role of the Psychiatric Social Worker', *Case Conference*, 2.8 (December 1955), p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Margaret Simey, p. 15. See also: Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work. Perspectives and Problems*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>44</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 93-111, 123, 133, 172.

<sup>45</sup> Halsey, *A History of Sociology in Britain*, pp. 8-10,

However, social work's long-term connections to social studies also meant that even when the brief resurgence of the 'gentlemanly social scientist' passed, social work's historical associations with voluntarism and philanthropy barred it from contributing to social research.<sup>46</sup> This problem was noted by Terence Morris, an assistant lecturer in Sociology at the LSE, who argued that the profession's focus on practical solutions, combined with the fact that social research was now concerned with the full range of social classes, meant that there had been insufficient involvement of social workers in the study of a changing society.<sup>47</sup> Social workers needed, he argued, to 'delineate the frontiers of social work itself' before they could 'consider what kinds of knowledge, gained from scientific inquiry, the social worker may draw upon to assist in his or her work'.<sup>48</sup> Professional squabbles, many of which had concerned the role of the sociological and psychological sciences in social work, were now hindering the profession's contribution to those same fields. This was an area where the ambiguity of social work limited its development.

Despite the obvious interchange between the social sciences and social work, there was still an element of mistrust between the two groups.<sup>49</sup> A large part of this was the focus, inherent in casework, on the unique circumstances and experiences of the individual, with the result that social workers were reluctant to extend their research findings beyond the specific case.<sup>50</sup> Since the ability to extrapolate

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<sup>46</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 7, 166-167.

<sup>47</sup> Terence Morris, 'The Social Worker and the Study of Society', *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 164.

<sup>48</sup> Terence Morris, 'The Social Worker and the Study of Society', *Case Conference*, 3.6 (November 1956), p. 163.

<sup>49</sup> Reg Wright, 'Editorial', *Case Conference*, 2.5 (September 1955), p. 1; T. S. Simey, 'Social Research and Social Casework: I', in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), p. 60.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth A. Sheldon, 'An Experiment in Group Work with Children', *Case Conference*, 6.8 (February 1960), p. 200.

conclusions about the whole from observations of its parts was an important aspect of post-war research culture, this was a serious issue.<sup>51</sup> Research workers also tended to dismiss social work's findings because they did not feel that there was sufficient control of the various factors to produce valid results; in turn, social workers were critical of the poor ethical conduct of social scientists in securing their data.<sup>52</sup> Both groups found plenty of evidence in their own principles to dismiss the other.

Nevertheless, social workers and social scientists came to appreciate that their cooperation was necessary, a fact underlined by the Seebohm Report's emphasis on collecting data on social problems in order to inform policy.<sup>53</sup> By the end of the period, the mechanisms of social research had come to play a large role in conceptions of the future of social work.<sup>54</sup> Rodney Lowe has argued that a 'permanent link between social workers and professional sociologists' was forged by the events surrounding the 'rediscovery of poverty' and the creation of CPAG,<sup>55</sup> but given the contested nature of this moment, as explored in Chapter 2, this is a contentious and ultimately misguided claim. It was not the identification of a common cause which united these two groups, but rather the pleasure of personal

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<sup>51</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7; J. Tuxford and N. Dennis, 'Research and Social Work', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 461.

<sup>52</sup> Kathleen Jones, 'Human Relations in Social Research', in BASW, *Research and Social Work* (London, 1970), pp. 23-25; J. Tuxford and N. Dennis, 'Research and Social Work', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 461; Gordon Rose, 'Social Work and Social Research', *Case Conference*, 1.4 (August 1954), p. 27; Roger Wilson, 'Introduction', in John Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate, A Study in Action Research* (London, 1964), p. xi.

<sup>53</sup> *Report of the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*, Cm. 3703, para. 455, para. 459. See also: D. V. Donnison, 'Seebohm: The Report and its Implication', *Social Work*, 25.4 (October 1968), p. 8; Stevenson, 'Welfare: Problems and Priorities', p. 89.

<sup>54</sup> J. Wallace McCulloch and Robert Kornreich, 'Black people and the social services departments: problems and perspectives', in Malcolm J. Brown (ed.), *Social Issues and the Social Services* (London, 1974), p. 146; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 158-159; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 173.

<sup>55</sup> Lowe, 'The rediscovery of poverty and the creation of the child poverty action group, 1962-68', p. 606.

connections, the pressures of policy, and an appreciation of the distinctive contributions they could each make to the study of society.

### **III                      The Role of Research in Social Work**

Despite the issues reported by both groups, it is clear that over the period social research was an everyday element of social work practice, both with and without the cooperation of social researchers and social scientists. This took on three broad forms. First, there was the systematic social research conducted by workers on their local areas and their client base: the routine nature of this meant that it was little mentioned in publications. Secondly, there was the growing tendency over the period for social workers to expand this routine research, to investigate their professional territory as a whole through both qualitative and quantitative assessment, usually as part of published investigations into the current status and role of social work. Third, there were the ‘action research’ projects, which sought to identify, describe, and address social problems.<sup>56</sup> There were cases, however, when social workers, usually as part of a wider network of social and medical service professionals, were able to extend this ‘action research’ to descriptions of new social phenomenon and ‘ordinary’ populations. Immigration, which presented new issues during this period and forced reconsideration of others, was one such example.

These three forms were by no means mutually exclusive: the local records routinely collected as part of everyday practice could, for example, be utilised for

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<sup>56</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, pp. 151, 153. Alternatively, Holman referred to this strain of research as ‘operational’ projects, while John Mack, a lecturer in citizenship at the University of Glasgow and an adviser for the Bristol Social Project, spoke of ‘operational research’. ‘Operational’ and ‘action’ both reflect the functional nature of these investigations. Holman, ‘Social Work Research Today’, p. 5; Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, p. 6.

quantitative analysis as part of larger projects. Despite the indistinct boundaries and difficulties of definition, I have decided to treat research in social work as existing in these three forms, since they are those suggested by the primary sources. Most importantly, they indicate the different roles which the processes and the outcomes of research could play in social work, and the various ways in which social workers could contribute to social investigation.

### **III.i Social Work Records and Social Research**

We begin with the routine social research conducted by social workers as part of their everyday roles. The most fundamental records kept by social workers were their case reports, descriptions of clients encountered and solutions planned. These were used to aid practice, as educational aids, and to ensure that a paper trail was available for cases which involved cooperation and coordination.<sup>57</sup> Although case notes have been a major tool in the historiography of social work, they are unrepresentative of the profession's relationship with social research. This is because, as useful as they were for the social workers who wrote (or dictated) them, these notes were often found to be inadequately comprehensive or precise to form the basis for any discussion of the profession or its social context.<sup>58</sup> This did not mean that routine case records could not be mined for research purposes, as Mike Savage recalls his aunt, a psychiatric social worker, doing in the late 1960s.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jones, 'Human Relations in Social Research', p. 19; Kent, *Social Work Supervision in Practice*, *passim.*, esp. p. 3; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, *passim.*; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 37-38; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 161; Wellcome, Winnicott, Clare., CC/148/13, Casework questions, c. 1950s-1960s, A report of a single day's work by a child care officer spent in escorting a pregnant unmarried girl aged 17½ to meet her own mother for the first time in 17 years.

<sup>58</sup> Jones, 'Human Relations in Social Research', p. 19; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, p. 23; Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, pp. 90-91; Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, p. 43.

<sup>59</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 245.

Nevertheless, the form in which most social work data were recorded spoke only to narrow social work concerns, and their literary, quasi-ethnographic form meant that attempts to construct coherent research findings from case reports were ineffectual.<sup>60</sup> Social workers increasingly discovered that numbers were, in more ways than one, what counted.

By the end of the period, Goldberg and Neill were emphasising how the 'keeping of simple, statistically analysable records' helped not only to follow patients, but also 'made it possible for us...to observe trends over time and to ask pertinent questions'.<sup>61</sup> The comparative power of numerical records was crucial: Dennis noted that a health visitor's work sometimes 'may only become apparent in the slight alteration in the statistics of health and sickness of the district',<sup>62</sup> while Lawson concluded that it was 'all prediction tables and rating scales nowadays'.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, social workers found that they needed to become increasingly comfortable with numbers, particularly the Cope-Chatterton index cards which were a regular feature of government administration.<sup>64</sup> At a 1969 conference on the values and priorities of welfare, Margaret Tilley argued that future students of social work would need 'to take a more scientific approach to social problems' with a greater

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<sup>60</sup> See particularly: Ferard and Hunnybun, *The Caseworker's Use of Relationships*; Pollard, *Social Casework for the State*; A. B. Lloyd Davies, 'Psychotherapy and Social Casework: II', in E. M. Goldberg et al. (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), pp. 36-43.

<sup>61</sup> Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 172.

<sup>62</sup> Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, p. 100.

<sup>63</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 19-20. On uses of the 'Cope-Chat' index, see: A. W. B. Simpson, 'The Judges and the Vigilant State', *The Denning Law Journal*, 4.1 (1989), p. 150; Elizabeth A. Murphy and Robert Dingwall, *Qualitative Methods and Health Policy Research* (Hawthorne, NY, 2003), p. 126. In *Shorn Lamb*, Charles Maule finds himself at odds with an officious Children's Officer over 'some beastly little form' she has invented: the CO is called Mrs. Chatterton. This is probably no coincidence, and is a good example of the knowing references of which Stroud was so fond. Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 237, 241.



interest ‘in research findings and in statistics.’<sup>65</sup> We should note, however, that these shifts were not universally popular. Some social workers felt frustration when centralised records threatened to undermine their discretion and their relationships with clients,<sup>66</sup> while others were uneasy at ‘the attempt to apply scientific measurement to social work intervention.’<sup>67</sup> Despite such objections, the trend was clear. Just as social scientists were taking an interest in interviews and the narratives of research subjects, social workers were discovering the value of numbers.

This was a trend which manifested itself both in the everyday practice of welfare and in attempts to build professional legitimacy. Over the course of the period, quantitative analyses of social work and its territory became a common feature of professional publications. A common theme here was the issue of manpower and staffing, which was addressed both in official investigations, such as the Younghusband Report, and in smaller studies of local supply and demand.<sup>68</sup> There were also attempts to utilise quantitative methods to study perceptions of social work, such as a ‘Pilot Research Project’ conducted in 1962 by Noel Timms, where he surveyed 144 people as to what they believed social work actually

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<sup>65</sup> Tilley, ‘The Social Worker’s Contribution to Welfare’, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> Letter from Margaret Hamilton, *Case Conference*, 12.2 (June 1965), p. 56. On clients viewing the keeping of records with suspicion, see: Enid C. Mills, ‘Mental Patients and Their Relatives in East London’, *Social Work*, 18.2 (April 1961), p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> Olive Stevenson, ‘Foreword’, in Ruth Evans, *Happy Families: Recollections of a Career in Social Work* (London, 1977), p. 10. See also: R. Huws Jones, ‘Is Our Social Worker Really Necessary?’, *The Almoner, A Journal of Medical Social Work*, 12.2 (1959), pp. 61-69, esp. pp. 66-69.

<sup>68</sup> Rogers and Dixon, *Portrait of Social Work*; Vic George and Nancy Hazel, ‘The Work of Two Children’s Departments’, *Social Work*, 27.1 (January 1970), pp. 23-25; *Social Work*, 21.1 (January 1964), *passim*. (this was a special issue on questions of manpower, with many quantitative methods used); Sylvia Watson, ‘Manpower in the Child Care Service: An Additional Note’, *Social Work*, 21.3 (July 1964), pp. 31-32; D. Allen, ‘Rationing and Choice in the Social Services’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Welfare – Values and Priorities* (London, 1969) pp. 45-47; MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/B15, Rough notes and drafts of articles, Draft for ‘Social Work Manpower and the Social Services’, 30 April 1971, esp. pp. 9-11. Although written after 1970, this paper gives a useful overview of the quantitative approaches to questions of manpower over the previous decade.

entailed.<sup>69</sup> Although social workers began to utilise the survey, their research objectives remained limited in scope, and they never employed it as the ‘instrument of modern rational governance’ which it became in the hands of other social researchers.<sup>70</sup>

### **III.ii Action Research and Developing Social Work Methods**

The most significant aspect of social work’s own research culture was that of ‘action research’, the attempt to accurately assess, describe, and measure the effects of social work intervention. Accurately defining ‘action research’ is admittedly a difficult task: in a sense, all social workers, by reflecting upon (and occasionally publishing) their triumphs and failures in the field, were engaging in ‘action research’.<sup>71</sup> There were a handful of projects, however, which set out to identify and address problems with the explicit purpose of conducting research. When assessing the nature and impact of such action research, we should recognise that the studies which have survived in publications or in archives and personal papers are probably only a sample of the projects undertaken,<sup>72</sup> although the complaints from Younghusband and Holman would imply that any research culture which did exist was less than vibrant.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Noel Timms, ‘The Public and the Social Worker’, *Social Work*, 19.1 (January 1962), pp. 3-7. See also: Evelyn H. Davison, ‘The Shape of Things to Come’, *Case Conference*, 3.2 (June 1956), pp. 31-35; Derek Jehu, ‘The Connotative Meaning of Social Work: A Semantic Differential Analysis’, *Social Work*, 27.1 (January 1970), pp. 11-15.

<sup>70</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 189.

<sup>71</sup> Much of the evidence in the previous chapters concerned the reflections of social workers on the practical, political, and theoretical issues encountered in their everyday work.

<sup>72</sup> One example is the twelve community development projects which were established in areas of high need in the late-1960s and early-1970s, the results of which were only published in generalised terms in the mid-1970s. See: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study*, Volume 2, pp. 246-247.

<sup>73</sup> Holman, ‘Social Work Research Today’, p. 5; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study*, Volume 2, p. 47.

We should also recognise that not all large-scale investigations into social work were necessarily action research. The studies undertaken by, amongst others, the Younghusband Committee and by Rogers and Dixon were concerned with the identification and description of shortfalls in staffing, but the scale of such research meant that the implementation of immediate solutions was impracticable. ‘Action research’, meanwhile, had an explicit focus on maintaining a connection between social science, social work, and social policy. This meant that it was favoured by, for example, Thomas Simey at Liverpool University as a way of ensuring that social workers were involved in research, and that social values continued to inform their work.<sup>74</sup>

There were, broadly speaking, two forms of action research: the quasi-ethnographic investigations into the physical and social conditions of social work clients, usually within specific communities, which had been present throughout the profession’s history,<sup>75</sup> and the more scientific studies which combined qualitative and quantitative data to assess the need for and the impact of social work intervention.

The ethnographic strain of social work was exemplified by the studies of ‘problem families’, and in fact, the pragmatic approach which social work took to this topic was indicative of its attitude towards social research in the post-war period. Both John Macnicol and John Welshman have examined how the involvement of social workers in these debates on the ‘problem family’, as both contributors and

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<sup>74</sup> Simey, ‘Social Research and Social Casework: I’, pp. 64-65. Simey’s paper was followed by another demonstrating how this ambition worked in practice: Mays, ‘Social Research and Social Casework: II’, pp. 70-76.

<sup>75</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, pp. 4-9, 13-14.

critics, was an integral part of their growing influence within the welfare state.<sup>76</sup>

Macnicol has also highlighted how ‘problem families’ were identified utilising administrative criteria, such as the number of agencies which were in contact with them, indicating one way in which routine welfare records could be transformed into sociological description.<sup>77</sup>

Even if social workers were critically engaged with these debates,<sup>78</sup> it was not, however, because of their relevance as social research, but because the ‘problem family’ constituted a major aspect of their professional territory. Although there was a concern with the quantity and the distribution of these families,<sup>79</sup> the reports produced were still focused on literary descriptions of discrete cases of squalor and delinquency.<sup>80</sup> The aim of social work intervention was to understand and help the individual ‘problem family’, rather than to describe the wider trend.<sup>81</sup> More importantly, the roots of the debate in war-time evacuation, and its association with eugenics and interwar notions of the ‘social problem group’,<sup>82</sup> meant that it was an ill-fit with a post-war focus on the ordinary and the average, and on nascent social phenomena.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, work with the ‘problem family’ was widely seen as the

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<sup>76</sup> Macnicol, ‘From ‘Problem Family’ to ‘Underclass’, 1945-95’, pp. 76-91, esp. pp. 88-90. Welshman, ‘The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the ‘Problem Family’, 1940-1970’, p. 457, 468-470. See also: Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, p. 107; Starkey, ‘The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968: The Case of Family Service Units’, p. 440.

<sup>77</sup> Macnicol, ‘From ‘Problem Family’ to ‘Underclass’, 1945-95’, p. 79.

<sup>78</sup> See especially: Noel Timms, ‘Social Standards and the Problem Family’, *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), pp. 2-10. This article was written in collaboration with a sociologist, indicating one way of moving beyond moralistic judgements about problem families.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example: Stephens (ed.), *Problem Families, An Experiment in Social Rehabilitation*, p. 4.

<sup>80</sup> See particularly: MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G3/2, Social Work: General, ‘Some Aspects of the Need for and Possibilities of Increased Family Casework Service in a Midland Industrial City’, by Jeanette Hanford [c. 1959].

<sup>81</sup> Margaret Whale, ‘Problem Families: The Case for Social Casework’, *Social Work*, 11.1 (January 1954) pp. 881-887

<sup>82</sup> Welshman, *Underclass*, pp. 45-86; Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, p. 110.

<sup>83</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, pp. 7, 133, 155; Todd, ‘Affluence, Class and Crown Street: Reinvestigating the Post-War Working Class’, pp. 501-518.

remit of voluntary services such as the FWA, who undertook the most prominent research in this area,<sup>84</sup> although this was also a pragmatic attempt to develop innovative techniques which could potentially transfer to the statutory services.<sup>85</sup> Even those aspects of social work with the greatest autonomy were still reluctant to seek sociological knowledge for its own sake.

As this work on the 'problem family' was drawing to a close, a new topic for research was emerging within social work. This was the attempt within the profession to study the needs of particular geographical communities. The Canford Families Project in Shoreditch (1956-60), the Brookfields Project in Birmingham (the late 1960s), the North Kensington Family Study (mid-1960s), and the Bristol Project (1953-1958), for example, all sought to investigate the effectiveness of combining different social work methods within urban and suburban settings.<sup>86</sup> Although the Bristol Project, labelled as 'action research' in the title of the resulting report, employed social scientists alongside social workers, the objective was nevertheless to 'establish practical means of tackling those stresses and strains which arise...in the form of delinquency and other disturbances.'<sup>87</sup>

These projects ultimately aimed to develop more effective welfare techniques, rather than a better understanding of society and its 'ordinary' populations. Since the proposed outcomes were often long-term solutions and thus a

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<sup>84</sup> Margaret Whale, 'Problem Families: The Case for Social Casework', *Social Work*, 11.1 (January 1954) pp. 881-887.

<sup>85</sup> Starkey, 'Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945', p. 248;

<sup>86</sup> Elizabeth Howarth *et al.* (eds), *The Canford Families: A Study in Social Casework and Group Work*; A.F. Robinson *et al.*, 'The Local Authority Social Services Bill: Comments from Three Social Workers', *Social Work*, 16.2, (April 1970), pp. 3-4; Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*. See also: LMA, Muriel Smith Papers, LMA/4196/06/001, North Kensington Project, Report to the North Kensington Family Study Committee for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1964 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 1965, pp. 1-5. On the Bristol Project, see also: Terence and Pauline Morris, 'Social Casework and the Healthy Community', *Case Conference*, 1.12 (April 1955), pp. 4-8.

<sup>87</sup> Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, p. 3.

form of social progress, these investigations sat uneasily with the social research culture of the period. Although many of these projects attempted to map the average experience of the residents within the research site, this was only to help locate those ‘abnormal’ cases which might need welfare intervention.<sup>88</sup> What sociological description there was in this branch of action research was done to contextualise the effects of social work intervention.

### **III.iv Action Research and Assessing Social Work**

The other variety of ‘action research’ utilised research methods, such as the use of control groups, to measure and demonstrate the impact of changes in welfare practice.<sup>89</sup> This meant that there was commonly a combination of qualitative methods, to describe social need and social work intervention, and quantitative methods to display the outcomes. This work was more characteristic of the latter part of the period, when the psychological self was being reconceptualised, from a mysterious entity which could only be glimpsed fleetingly to a series of variables which could be measured.<sup>90</sup> This form of action research necessitated control over factors contributing to the efficacy of the social worker’s input, and meant that this form of action research often took place in a single institution. For this reason, and because of the high standards of professionalism amongst almoners,<sup>91</sup> hospitals and

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<sup>88</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, pp. 228-229. For examples, see: Thomas, *Organising for Social Change*, pp. 38-43; Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*, pp. 78-82. This section considered the reactions of teenagers to suburban communities, but mainly in order to contextualise attempts at group work with a delinquent gang called ‘the Espressos’.

<sup>89</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 153.

<sup>90</sup> Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880-1970*, p. 127-128.

<sup>91</sup> Gladstone, ‘Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945’, p. 39.

general practices were a common site for this form of action research.<sup>92</sup> From the beginning of the period, social workers had been a part of research teams within medical settings.<sup>93</sup> In 1947, for example, almoner Jane Paterson worked alongside Frank Crew, then Professor of Public Health and Social Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, using records from the Dispensary as a basis for research into social medicine.<sup>94</sup> During a 1964 study into the experiences of patients at King's College Hospital, meanwhile, the resident social worker proved vital for the project because of the relationships she naturally developed with new admissions.<sup>95</sup> Social workers did not necessarily require the assistance of others to conduct small-scale research, and were occasionally, as a result of their training in social studies, expected to be able to plan and conduct opinion polls and surveys.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, as Zofia Butrym noted in her overview of medical social work, the contribution of social workers to research was 'usually of a very subsidiary nature and could not be regarded as independent research work in any sense of the word.'<sup>97</sup> This was a situation which Butrym would herself attempt to remedy with a study at Hammersmith Hospital, while Goldberg and Neill undertook a similar project in a Camden general practice at the end of the 1960s. E. M. Fairbairn, meanwhile, conducted research as part of a general practice team in an unnamed country town with a population of twenty thousand, co-writing the report with

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<sup>92</sup> A notable exception was a project by Vic George and Nancy Hazel, which compared the work of two children's departments, one rural and one urban. See: Vic George and Nancy Hazel, 'The Work of Two Children's Departments', *Social Work*, 27.1 (January 1970), pp. 23-25.

<sup>93</sup> For a short overview of these projects, see: Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>94</sup> Jane E. Paterson, 'Another Field – The Introduction of the Almoner to General Medical Practice', in Joan Baraclough *et al.* (eds), *One Hundred Years of Health-Related Social Work, 1895 - 1995. Then...Now...Onwards* (Birmingham, 1996), pp. 125-126.

<sup>95</sup> P. Hugh-Jones *et al.*, 'Patient's View Of Admission To A London Teaching Hospital', *The British Medical Journal*, 2.5410 (Sep. 12, 1964), p. 660.

<sup>96</sup> Packer, *Social Work*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>97</sup> Butrym, *Social Work in Medical Care*, p. 72.

general practitioner J. A. S. Forman.<sup>98</sup> All three of these sought to combine qualitative and quantitative assessment of needs, actions, and outcomes, and it is particularly notable in the study by Fairbairn and Forman that the same balance of description and measurement appears in both sections, suggesting a parity between doctor and almoner in their ability to produce knowledge.

As with other social work research, however, these projects were explicitly focused on generating knowledge about the territory of social work, and improving social workers' practice and their teamwork with other professions. Their work was not about describing society as it was, but as it could and should be. Crucially, although all of these medical action research projects took place within particular locales, their conclusions were generalised without any discussion of the limits on such extrapolation. This was not the social research of 'fleeting identities' to which Savage has alluded,<sup>99</sup> and yet neither was it an attempt to speak to national concerns, to survey the social landscape. Rather, this form of action research sought to investigate the everyday practices of social workers, and, as part of their professional expansion, to suggest ways in which their work could be made more efficient. This schism between social research and social work research is neatly exemplified by two articles which appeared in *Social Work*, one by E. M. Goldberg, then research officer for the National Institute of Social Work Training, and another by sociologist Enid Mills. Both involved surveys into local need, with a focus on the families of welfare clients.<sup>100</sup> However, whereas Goldberg was concerned with the role of social

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<sup>98</sup> Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*; Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*.

<sup>99</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 164.

<sup>100</sup> Enid C. Mills, 'Mental Patients and Their Relatives in East London', *Social Work*, 18.2 (April 1961), pp. 4-7; E.M. Goldberg, 'Working in the Community: What Kind of Help do People Need?', *Social Work*, 22.2-22.3 (April and July 1965), pp. 6-18. See also: Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 157.



workers in proposed solutions to gaps in provision, Mills used interviews alongside her survey to paint a complex picture of an East End community. Although the aforementioned community-based action research projects included such descriptive elements, they were ultimately in service of the conclusions on social work and its methods.

In their discussion of the experience of black people with the social services, J. Wallace McCulloch and Robert Kornreich saw what they labelled ‘applied or policy-orientated research’ as a serious fault with the welfare professions. These research projects, they noted, were ‘usually carried out in non-scientific ways’, involved ‘uncritical research into officially defined problems’, and demonstrated a ‘reliance upon conventional wisdom’.<sup>101</sup> This description, while perhaps overcritical, was certainly accurate. When we begin to peer deeper into the values behind social work research, the conclusion drawn by McCulloch and Kornreich (based upon the work of Juliet Cheetham), that social workers ‘see the problems they face as the fundamental problems and social work as the fundamental solution’, seems to hold weight.<sup>102</sup> In all of the action research projects, there is the assumption, sometimes more explicit than others, that the territory and professional recognition of social work needs to be expanded. Harold Perkin’s work would indicate that this is characteristic of the process of professionalisation,<sup>103</sup> but it does offer one reason why social work research existed uneasily on the borders of the social sciences, and

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<sup>101</sup> McCulloch and Kornreich, ‘Black people and the social services departments: problems and perspectives’, p. 147.

<sup>102</sup> Juliet Cheetham, *Social Work with Immigrants* (London and Boston, MA, 1972), cited in: McCulloch and Kornreich, ‘Black people and the social services departments: problems and perspectives’, p. 157.

<sup>103</sup> Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, pp. 6, 15-16.

why we should be sceptical about Savage's claim that social workers were 'the routine ground troops in the practice of social research'.<sup>104</sup>

#### **IV                      Immigration and Social Work Research**

The fact that social workers were focused on solutions to social and individual problems did not, however, necessarily preclude the profession from producing knowledge or from generating sociological description. In fact, in those instances when the very problem facing the social and medical services was ignorance about the client group, there was greater potential for social workers to play a key role in knowledge production. Given McCulloch and Kornreich's criticisms, it is perhaps a surprise that a prime example of this was immigration. Since social workers realised that they needed to understand the social and cultural aspects of the immigrant populations before they could properly identify and address their welfare needs, they were eager to engage with the research which was being undertaken into the new arrivals. Although social workers did discuss immigrants' use of the welfare services, this was part of their wider interest, also evident in some community action research, in describing the often ephemeral experiences of displacement. This next section considers the role of social workers in researching immigrant populations, and how this represented an atypical aspect of social work research culture. The access which social workers had to immigrants also meant that they were a useful tool in broader research projects. Ultimately, however, social workers still sat uneasily on the borders of the wider research culture, and their investigations into

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<sup>104</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 170.

immigrants, their needs, and their experiences were still characterised by the same pragmatic concerns as with other social work research.

As Jordanna Bailkin has argued, immigration presented one of the largest ‘growth areas of expertise’ in post-war Britain, predicated not on the belief that immigration was a new social phenomenon, but that it had taken on a dramatically new and rather threatening form.<sup>105</sup> New frameworks in which to study the impact of immigration, for both newcomer and host, began to emerge, notably the field of ‘race relations’.<sup>106</sup> This was further complicated by the fact that the arriving immigrants were, as Marcus Collins argues with regards to West Indians, ‘no silenced subalterns.’ They brought with them their own traditions of social work and welfare, and ‘boasted their own academics, produced their own social workers, even sent over their own governmental commissions to study migrant life in Britain.’<sup>107</sup>

Indeed, it was the West Indian population with whom social workers were primarily concerned,<sup>108</sup> to the extent that the FWA commissioned a report at the end of the 1950s specifically studying the experiences and expectations of those from the West Indies.<sup>109</sup> As Collins suggests, the new arrivals included social workers, some

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<sup>105</sup> Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, p. 23.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example: Waters, ‘“Dark Strangers” in Our Midst: Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963’, pp. 207-238; Miles, ‘The Riots of 1958: Notes on the Ideological Construction of ‘Race Relations’ as a Political Issue in Britain’, pp. 252-275; Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 26-32.

<sup>107</sup> Collins, ‘Pride and Prejudice: West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain’, p. 392. For examples, see: Clarence Senior and Douglas Manley, *The West Indian in Britain*, Norman MacKenzie (ed.), (London, 1956); Goetschius, *Working with Community Groups*, p. 50.

<sup>108</sup> Nadine Peppard, ‘Into the third decade’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1.2 (1972), pp. 93-94. The other major group with which social workers were concerned was immigrants from West Africa, with fostering a particularly frequent topic. See: Bailkin, ‘The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State’, pp. 87-121; Bailkin, *Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 95-131, 164-201; June Ellis, ‘The Fostering of West Africa Children in England’, in J. P. Triseliotis (ed.), *Social Work with Coloured Immigrants and their Families* (London, 1972), pp. 91-101.

<sup>109</sup> S. K. Ruck (ed.), *The West Indian Comes to England. A Report Prepared for the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities by the Family Welfare Association* (London, 1960). On the FWA and West Indians, see also: Bivins, *Contagious Communities*, p. 58.

of whom had a notable impact on English social work. For example, Albert Hyndman, a consultant to the Coloured People's Project in London, was contributing to the professional literature from the mid-1950s onwards,<sup>110</sup> while Peggy Antrobus arrived in Britain having already established her reputation through her training at the University of Birmingham and her work on the Commonwealth Save the Children Fund in St. Vincent.<sup>111</sup> Along with a number of British social workers, Hyndman and Antrobus noted that increasing immigration presented a new problem for social workers, as well as exacerbating existing issues.<sup>112</sup> While their previous experiences, particularly with working-class clients, would help in this regard, it would still be necessary to build a body of knowledge about how to best assist those immigrants who required welfare services.<sup>113</sup> This was further complicated by the fact that social workers seldom encountered 'normal' immigrants, since it meant that they had nothing against which to measure those who sought their help.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, there is a notable tendency towards exotic accounts of immigrants in the more personal accounts of the period.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> A. Hyndman, 'The Welfare of Coloured People in London', *Social Work*, 15.3 (July 1958), pp. 492-498; Hyndman, 'The West Indian in London', pp. 63-121.

<sup>111</sup> For more on transnational relations in post-war social work, see: Bray, 'Global Solutions and Local Needs: Transnational Exchanges in Post-War British Social Work'.

<sup>112</sup> A. Hyndman, 'The Welfare of Coloured People in London', *Social Work*, 15.3 (July 1958), pp. 492-494; Peggy Antrobus, 'Coloured Children in Care – A Special Problem Group?', *Case Conference*, 11.2 (June 1964), p. 44; Kay MacDougall, 'Future Clients and Colleagues', *Social Work*, 21.2 (April 1964), p. 16; Bessie Kent, 'The Social Worker's Cultural Pattern as it Affects Casework with Immigrants', *Social Work*, 22.4 (October 1965), pp. 15-16; Observer, 'Noted in the News', *Case Conference*, 5.5 (October 1958), p. 119; Braithwaite, *Paid Servant*, pp. 8-10; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, pp. 125-126.

<sup>113</sup> Wood *et al.*, 'The West Indian in the Provinces', pp. 159, 167; Bessie Kent, 'The Social Worker's Cultural Pattern as it Affects Casework with Immigrants', *Social Work*, 22.4 (October 1965), p. 18; Hyndman, 'The West Indian in London', p. 121.

<sup>114</sup> J. A. G. Griffith *et al.*, *Coloured Immigrants in Britain* (London *et al.*, 1960), p. 37; A Hyndman, 'The Welfare of Coloured People in London', *Social Work*, 15.3 (July 1958), p. 492; Cheetham, *Social Work with Immigrants*, p. 195, quoted in: Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 2*, p. 203. For more on romanticised images of immigrants, see: Waters, "'Dark Strangers' in Our Midst", pp. 212-213.

<sup>115</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 56; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 72-75; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 110; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 62.

As befit the social work research culture of the time, both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilised to assess the challenge posed by immigration. Although quantitative research was evident from the late-1950s, when those Citizens Advice Bureaux which were under the supervision of the FWA began to keep 'special statistics' on their 'coloured callers',<sup>116</sup> there was still a lack of qualitative accounts of casework with immigrant populations by the mid-1960s.<sup>117</sup> Social workers had, however, been taking a keen interest in the accounts of immigration which were emerging in the social sciences and from the Institute of Race Relations,<sup>118</sup> especially after the riots in Notting Hill.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, reviews of these texts in the major journals offered social workers a foundation on which to begin their own discussions of immigration.<sup>120</sup>

Much of the research conducted by social workers themselves focused on immigrant's experiences of assimilating themselves into their host culture, a process complicated by their often romantic preconceptions of English society.<sup>121</sup> For this reason, many of their investigations were similar to other social work research

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<sup>116</sup> Hyndman, 'The West Indian in London', p. 88. For a study of immigration which heavily relies on quantitative records of immigration, see: John W. Davies, "'Thursday's Child has Far to Go'", *Case Conference*, 14.8 (December 1967), pp. 298-303.

<sup>117</sup> Bessie Kent, 'The Social Worker's Cultural Pattern as it Affects Casework with Immigrants', *Social Work*, 22.4 (October 1965), pp. 15-16.

<sup>118</sup> Bailkin, 'The Postcolonial Family?', p. 107. For examples, see: Michael Banton, *White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People Towards Coloured Immigrants* (London, 1959); Patterson, *Dark Strangers*; Edith Clarke, *My Mother Who Fathered Me: A Study of the Family in Three Selected Communities in Jamaica* (London, 1957). On the impact of the third text, which 'became a bible for social workers', see: Peppard, 'Into the third decade', p. 94.

<sup>119</sup> Observer, 'Noted in the News', *Case Conference*, 5.5 (October 1958), p. 119; Philip Mason, 'Foreword', in J. A. G. Griffith *et al.*, *Coloured Immigrants in Britain* (London *et al.*, 1960), p. vii; Peppard, 'Into the third decade', p. 95. On the Notting Hill riots, see: Bivins, *Contagious Communities*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>120</sup> A. Walker, 'White and Coloured' (book review), *Case Conference*, 6.9 (March 1960) p. 235; H. O. Judd, 'The West Indian Comes to England' (book review), *Case Conference*, 6.9, (March 1960), p. 236; Anneliese Walker, 'The Irish in Britain by John Arthur Jackson. Indian Immigrants in Britain by Rashmi Desai. West Indian Immigrants and the London Churches by Clifford S. Hill.' (book review), *Case Conference*, 10.9 (March 1964), p. 285.

<sup>121</sup> Collins, 'Pride and Prejudice: West Indian Men in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain', p. 412.

projects but with a much greater emphasis on perception and subjectivity, with some concluding that it was not racial difference which presented an issue, but people's feelings about colour.<sup>122</sup> Even predominantly quantitative research could still revolve around perceptions of racial difference, such as a discussion of the role of colour in the decision-making process of a children's department by lecturer Robert Foren and child care officer I. D. Batta.<sup>123</sup>

As part of the focus on perceptions, a number of social work research projects emphasised the psychological aspects of the immigration experience. A notable example of this was the research undertaken by John Samuels and Josephine Klein into an area of an unnamed industrial city which had experienced a sizeable influx of immigrants.<sup>124</sup> Although they were interested in developing social work methods which would prove effective with these new populations, they had a clear focus on the 'psychological realities' of the immigrants', meaning, they argued, 'that the "facts" listed below may be true, false, or out of context. The method is not a fact-finding one.'<sup>125</sup> For Samuels and Klein, the 'psychological realities' of the immigrants was a research interest in its own right. Although they were interested in social work and writing for a social work journal, we should note, however, that neither Klein nor Samuels were themselves social workers.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, we can

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<sup>122</sup> John R. Lambert, 'Strategies for a Multi-Racial Community', in Augustine John, *Race in the Inner City: A Report from Handsworth, Birmingham* (London, 1972), p. 43; John Triseliotis, 'Immigrant School Children and their Problem of Adjustment', *Case Conference*, 9.7, January 1963pp. 187-192. Frank Bodman, 'Child Care and Child Guidance', *Case Conference*, 7.10 (April 1961), p. 269; Goldberg and Neill, *Social Work in General Practice*, p. 134.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Foren and I. D. Batta, 'Colour' As a Variable in the Use Made of a Local Authority Child Care Department', *Social Work*, 17.3 (July 1970), pp. 10-15., esp. p. 15.

<sup>124</sup> John Samuels and Josephine Klein, 'A Use for Group Discussion in an Area of Great Social Change', *Case Conference*, 10.9 (March 1964), pp. 263-267. The article makes clear that the research notes were written up by Samuels, while Klein provided the introduction and conclusion.

<sup>125</sup> John Samuels and Josephine Klein, 'A Use for Group Discussion in an Area of Great Social Change', *Case Conference*, 10.9 (March 1964), pp. 263-264.

<sup>126</sup> Samuels was a research student in the Department of Social Administration at the University of Birmingham, while Klein was a research fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford.

view their work as one part of (and a vital step in) the recurring social work interest in the psychology of immigrants, and particularly the psychological strain of immigration.<sup>127</sup> The apogee of this trend was the work done by Bessie Kent, an almoner and lecturer at the University of Hull, to construct a framework of practice which took account of the complications caused by cultural differences between the British caseworker and the immigrant client.<sup>128</sup>

#### **IV.i The Role of Social Workers in Research on Immigration**

Although social workers were willing and able to produce and engage with sociological descriptions of immigrants and the immigration experience as an end in itself, their main contribution to research in this area was, as with other research projects,<sup>129</sup> their privileged access to clients and their extensive records.<sup>130</sup> This was particularly true for immigrants, who had yet to learn how to play the role of research subject.<sup>131</sup> This aspect of social work's position was exemplified by Evelyn

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<sup>127</sup> See, for example: A CARD Officer, *Two Cultures*, (London, [1969]); Walker, 'Coloured Family + White World = Stress', pp. 12-14; John Lenton *et al.*, *Immigration, Race and Politics. A Birmingham View* (London, 1966), p. 32; University of Warwick Library, Sivanandan Collection of the Institute of Race Relations, RC451.5.A2.H3, Farrukh Hashmi, 'Community Psychiatric Problems Among Birmingham Immigrants', Paper given at Sussex, University, Centre for Multi-Racial Studies, Anglo-French Conference, 1st, Brighton, September 1968; Audrey K. Arnold, 'The Newcomers and their Problems in Finsbury, London', *Midwife and Health Visitor*, 2.7 (July 1966), p. 297; Albert Hyndman, 'The West Indian in London', p. 144.

<sup>128</sup> See, for example: Bessie Kent, 'The Social Worker's Cultural Pattern as it Affects Casework with Immigrants', *Social Work*, 22.4 (October 1965), pp. 14-22. For an approving analysis and application of Kent's ideas, see: McCulloch and Kornreich, 'Black people and the social services departments: problems and perspectives', pp. 160-162.

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Howarth, 'Conclusions', in Elizabeth Howarth *et al.* (eds), *The Canford Families: A Study in Social Casework and Group Work* (Keele, 1962), p. 229. P. Hugh-Jones *et al.*, 'Patient's View Of Admission To A London Teaching Hospital', p. 660

<sup>130</sup> Nadine Peppard, 'The local community', in Richard Hooper (ed.), *Colour in Britain* (London, 1965), pp. 169-170; University of Warwick Library, Sivanandan Collection of the Institute of Race Relations, HV1421.S7, Paul Stephenson, Conference: Multi-Racial Britain: Is the Youth Service Meeting the Challenge of Young Coloured People in Coventry, January 1969, p. 1; Arnold, 'The Newcomers and their Problems in Finsbury, London', p. 298; Walker, 'Coloured Family + White World = Stress', pp. 12-14.

<sup>131</sup> By the mid-1960s, when research on immigration was picking up pace, many working-class British families had learnt how to act during the research encounter. See: Lawrence, 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England', pp. 224-226.

Apte, a social worker in Paddington, and her involvement in a 1965 study conducted in her area by the Institute for Race Relations.<sup>132</sup> As part of the project, on the West Indian population's use of the local and welfare services,<sup>133</sup> Apte conducted forty-eight interviews with families on their cultural characteristics and attitudes towards medical care.<sup>134</sup> Apte was used for this purpose because she 'did not appear to represent any threat of authority' to the immigrant families,<sup>135</sup> and because her detailed knowledge of the local area meant that she could locate itinerant families.<sup>136</sup> The project also utilised the case records of health visitors in the area, and Apte's local knowledge proved useful in verifying this information.<sup>137</sup>

The case of Evelyn Apte is thus an example where a social worker played a key role within a research project. In fact, this is one of the clearest instances of social workers acting as the 'routine ground troops' of social research.<sup>138</sup> However, it is evident that while Apte's contribution was essential, she remained a practical welfare worker rather than a sociological observer, so that, for example, the therapeutic value of the interviews which she conducted is emphasised.<sup>139</sup> This, along with the authors' complaint that the health visitor records included insufficient data from the homes of those in the higher social class brackets,<sup>140</sup> indicates a

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<sup>132</sup> Catriona Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants: A Study of One-Year-Olds in Paddington* (London, 1970).

<sup>133</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, pp. 81-89.

<sup>135</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, p. 82. It is not entirely clear why this was, although the report does hint that immigrant families were already accustomed to discussing their lives with welfare workers from visits to the infant welfare clinic. It is unlikely, as might be suggested, that Apte was herself West Indian.

<sup>136</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, p. 83.

<sup>137</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, pp. 12-21.

<sup>138</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 170.

<sup>139</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, p. 84.

<sup>140</sup> Hood *et al.*, *Children of West Indian Immigrants*, p. 12.



difference in values between the social researchers, with their need for representative records, and the welfare professionals, with their targeted intervention.

This is not to say that social workers were dismissive of their contribution to social research on immigrants. In fact, they could be very protective of this role, as shown by their reaction to anthropologist Katrin Fitzherbert's book, *West Indian Children in London*, which gave some consideration to existing welfare provision for immigrant families.<sup>141</sup> Despite the fact that Fitzherbert was generally complimentary about social workers, and even worked as an Assistant Child Care Officer with Lewisham Children's Department to validate her results,<sup>142</sup> her suggestion that the hypocrisy of British welfare culture might be detrimental to successful practice was met with derision, as was her work as a whole.<sup>143</sup> The territory which social workers occupied within social research culture may have been limited, but it was nevertheless part of their professional image which they were eager to defend.

Although the experience of immigration seemed to offer social workers a way to contribute to the growth of expertise in the post-war period, many of the roles which they adopted were reminiscent of their routine roles within research culture. While it is true that they engaged with and even produced sociological observations in a way not evident in other spheres, we should understand that this was an intermediary step. The collection and discussion of this new knowledge was ultimately aimed towards pragmatic purposes, as it was with so much social work research. Before they could address the social and individual problems faced by

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<sup>141</sup> Fitzherbert, *West Indian Children in London*. On Fitzherbert as an anthropologist, see: Beth Jacobs, 'Katrin Fitzherbert, *West Indian Children in London*' (book review), *Caribbean Studies*, 8.2 (July 1968), p. 87.

<sup>142</sup> Fitzherbert, *West Indian Children in London*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 41-42, 93, 106.

<sup>143</sup> Robert Holman, 'West Indian Children Living in London' (book review), *Case Conference*, 15.7 (November 1968), p. 274; Letter from Elizabeth Radford, *Case Conference*, 15.9 (January 1969), p. 355.

immigrant populations, social workers had to describe them, but such accounts were of limited sociological depth. Social workers still existed on the borders of wider social research culture, but their aims and values as welfare professionals meant that this was a position which they accepted.

## **V                      Conclusions**

If we return to Mike Savage's argument that social workers were, for a time at least, the 'routine ground troops of social research', we can conclude that it exaggerates the extent to which social workers were part of contemporary social research culture. If we study the front-line of social investigations, we often find social workers there in some form, where they were useful not only for their access, but also because people were more accustomed to playing the role of welfare clients than of social research subjects. The presence of social workers was, however, a reflection of their position in society and in the welfare state rather than in the sphere of social research.

In addition, we find social workers engaged in attempts to assess the territory of their work and the effects of their intervention. This was done using a variety of techniques and utilised a range of measures. Given that, as we have seen in previous chapters, social workers were primarily pragmatic, this is not a surprise. Yet we should also note that, as with concepts from the social sciences, they engaged in a certain amount of 'looting' of social research techniques. Some of the characteristics of social research in this period complemented the priorities of social workers, and could be incorporated into the profession's research culture. Other aspects, meanwhile, seemed less appealing, and the mistrust which developed between social

workers and social researcher belies the increasingly separate values of the two groups.

A large part of this was the realisation that while social workers were well-placed to conduct social research, this was in tension with their professional values. In her conclusions on the *Canford Families* project, Elizabeth Howarth noted that the families studied could not have been accessed by anyone but social workers, since their involvement was contingent on help which only they could provide.<sup>144</sup> In other cases, social workers actively rejected the possibility of conducting research on their clients. At the Manchester University Settlement, for example, the staff, despite the prestige offered by the production of knowledge, shied away from social surveys in the mid-1960s, since they ‘might lead to working class neighbours feeling like microbes placed beneath the microscopes of clever, middle class academics.’<sup>145</sup> Yet the pressure to justify social work methods and to assess their results was on-going, and was related not only to the image of social workers amongst fellow welfare professionals, but also within the wider spheres of policy and the social sciences.

From the relationship between social work and social research culture, we can take two insights. First, there was a culture of practical research within social work, which had the objective of identifying and addressing issues, and assessing social work intervention. This had a broad range, from the everyday reflections of social workers on the effectiveness of their work, to wider research projects which were carefully constructed around particular problems, locations, or specialisms. Secondly, it is clear that social research in its post-war form was a disparate set of techniques and values, and these could be borrowed and applied selectively. This

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<sup>144</sup> Howarth, ‘Conclusions’, p. 229.

<sup>145</sup> Michael E. Rose and Anne Woods, *Everything Went On at The Round House: A Hundred Years of the Manchester University Settlement* (Manchester, 1995), p. 82.

meant that social workers could adopt the techniques and the insights of those undertaking social research without needing to adhere to their principles, while social scientists could work alongside social workers with no requirement that they share their pragmatic focus. Despite the obvious mistrust which existed between the two groups, they enjoyed a relatively fruitful, occasionally cordial relationship.

While it would be misleading to maintain that social workers were the ‘routine ground troops’ of social research, they nevertheless made a useful contribution to this sphere, and had professional connections with the social sciences from which they benefitted. This notion, that different values need not be an impediment to a good working relationship is a consistent theme in the next chapter. It is at the personal level, rather than at the professional, that the best relationships are formed. The next chapter, which concerns the benefits and issues of ‘teamwork’ in the welfare state, investigates how social workers coordinated their skills and services with each other and with other professions, and how cooperation between individuals helped to mitigate some of the tensions which could result.

## **5 Social Work Practice and Teamwork**

### **I Introduction**

The final chapter of this thesis considers social work as a practice by discussing the role and effectiveness of ‘teamwork’, both within and around social work. We have already seen in previous chapters how social workers’ interactions with other professions were an integral part of their role, and constituted one of their most significant contributions to the social and medical services. This role of supporting other professionals involved facilitating their communication with clients, so a key component of a social worker’s training was acquiring a comprehension and an awareness of the different concepts and languages employed within the social and medical services. Social workers were defined by their immediate colleagues and their clients as well as by the particular institutional and community settings in which they operated, but their capacity to support those providing and utilising the welfare state often depended on their ability to cooperate with colleagues across the full range of the social and medical services. They were frequently on the margins of multi-professional teams, but this position in the gap between those providing services and those using them was one central to the practice of social work. In examining teamwork and its effectiveness, therefore, we can not only better understand social work and its contribution to post-war society, but also the acts of coordination and cooperation which were integral to the welfare state.

Throughout this chapter, I use the term ‘teamwork’ to collectively refer to the two main ways in which social workers interacted with others within the welfare state and post-war society: coordination, often formal and professional, and cooperation, usually informal and rooted in personal connections. This distinction

has been best explored by Kathleen Slack in her study of administration and interprofessional relationships within the welfare state.<sup>1</sup> Coordination, she argued, represented the often formal and centralised attempt to ensure that services acted in ways which would not overlap or hinder the work of professionals in other branches of the welfare state, usually by passing legislation or by introducing new processes and procedures. Cooperation, meanwhile, was less structured, and reflected the relationships between specific professionals, support workers, and the public. This cooperation was sometimes a pre-arranged and regular part of their practice, but there were also examples where it was a singular response to particular needs or gaps in provision. As Slack noted, however, the lines between coordination and cooperation were often blurred.<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, I have chosen the term ‘teamwork’ when both cooperation and coordination were present.<sup>3</sup> When possible, I have separated the two, and tried to show how they did and did not interact, but in many cases they were too entangled for such a demarcation to be made. The term ‘teamwork’ is also useful insofar that it reflects that collaborative approaches to problems could be effective (that is, the team worked), but also that engaging with colleagues and other professionals could be a taxing and confusing experience (that is, the team was itself work). This latter issue is exemplified by a letter which lecturer Pauline Shapiro received from a former child care student, where she told her once-tutor that “‘co-ordination does not

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction had, however, been discussed earlier, for example in: A. F. C. Bourdillon, ‘Voluntary Organizations to Facilitate Co-Operation and Co-Ordination’, in A. F. C. Bourdillon (ed.), *Voluntary Social Services: Their Place in the Modern State* (London, 1945), pp. 164-193, esp. pp. 164, 192.

<sup>2</sup> Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, *passim.*, but esp. pp 203-204.

<sup>3</sup> Similar usages of the term ‘teamwork’ can be seen in: Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975’, pp. 309-336; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*.

always mean co-operation"... "The ability...to handle officials of other Departments carefully sometimes seemed to be of far greater importance than the ability to handle clients well.""<sup>4</sup> There is another binary which is central to this chapter, and one which relates to but does not precisely match that of coordination and cooperation: teamwork in theory and teamwork in practice. Not only was there a discrepancy between idealised coordination and the realities of pragmatic cooperation, there was also a tendency amongst social workers to hold negative views of other professions while willingly cooperating and establishing personal relationships with actual professionals. Many social workers felt their local policeman, administrator, or consultant to be an exception to the general rule.

This chapter begins by examining and assessing teamwork practice between social workers, and then broadening the discussion to include teamwork with other professions. Since teamwork within social work was an integral part of social work's relations with other professions, this is an artificial distinction. However, this structure allows a clearer understanding of the successes and failures of teamwork practice, of the solutions which it offered and the problems which it created. It also helps us to better locate the causes for these solutions and problems, whether they emerged from the structures of society and the welfare state or from particular relationships between individuals and professions. Nevertheless, we should understand from the outset that social workers were frequently members of more than one team, and were often defined within one setting by their connection to the other. Within a hospital, the social work role of the almoner took precedence; at a conference, the medical aspect was key. For this reason, we need to pay attention not

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<sup>4</sup> Shapiro, 'The Caseworker, the Welfare Officer and the Administrator in the Social Services: I', p. 82.

only to discussions around and the practice of teamwork, but also to the personal experience, the emotional aspect, of working in a team.

This ambition, however, is dependent on the available sources. Discussions of teamwork in abstract or idealised terms are relatively frequent in the professional literature, and from these discussions we can infer some common teamwork practices, their intentions, and their problems. The oral testimonies and the biographical sources augment this understanding, although the available examples often concern those exceptional instances when teamwork caused breakthroughs or enduring problems. Of course, we can use these exceptions to attempt an educated guess at what ‘normal’ teamwork looked like, as well as recognising that the lack of everyday examples is a reflection of how welfare professionals viewed teamwork as a routine aspect of their practice, and one little worthy of note. In fact, the absence of such examples in the professional literature and the oral histories is only emphasised by its presence in those texts written as introductions to the profession for public audiences, such as Edwin Packer’s *Social Work*, or in evidence submitted to government commissions.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, however, we have more material with which to reconstruct how welfare professionals and policy-makers thought teamwork *should* operate, and less evidence of how teamwork operated in practice and how it felt to operate as part of a team.

This makes assessing social work’s contribution to teamwork, and teamwork’s contribution to the welfare state, that much harder. On the whole, however, it does appear that interprofessional teamwork was a positive aspect of the

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<sup>5</sup> Edwin Packer, *Social Work* (London, 1964); MSS.463/EY/G1/4, Younghusband Papers, Social Work: General ‘Seebom’, Evidence presented to the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services Chairman F. Seebom Esq. By the Association of Family Caseworkers, July 1966, p. 3.



social and medical services, and that the contribution of social workers was significant. This was especially the case when cooperation based on professional discretion and personal relationships, rather than formal attempts to coordinate services, constituted the foundations for teamwork. When workers had the freedom and the opportunity to negotiate for themselves their professional territory, this was frequently beneficial for themselves, their colleagues, and their clients. Attempts to codify informal teamwork through legislation, even when the official stance was to allow coordination to happen organically, were, however, seldom successful.

## **I.i Existing Discussions of Teamwork**

There exists scant discussion of teamwork as a historical phenomenon, both in the form of cooperation and of coordination, within the existing literature. In fact, of all the chapters in this thesis, this present discussion is the one with the least-established conceptual foundations. Some useful work has been done in the social sciences on interprofessional welfare work, much of it addressing the difficulties presented by fragmented and uncoordinated services. However, this literature pays only limited attention to the existence of teamwork in the early decades of the welfare state, and the focus on the final quarter of the twentieth century means that they offer little in the way of a framework with which to historicise teamwork.<sup>6</sup> Much of the otherwise fine work on the historical foundations and growing pains of the welfare state, meanwhile, has given little space to issues of professional cooperation and

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example: Karin Crawford, *Interprofessional Collaboration in Social Work Practice* (London, 2012), pp. 20-21; Katherine Pollard *et al.*, 'The Need for Interprofessional Working', in Gillian Barrett *et al.* (eds), *Interprofessional Working in Health and Social Care: Professional Perspectives* (New York and Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 8-9; Scott Reeves *et al.*, *Interprofessional Teamwork for Health and Social Care* (Chichester and Ames, IA, 2010), pp. 15-16; Audrey Leathard, 'Policy Overview', in Audrey Leathard (ed.), *Interprofessional Collaboration: From Policy to Practice in Health and Social Care* (Hove and New York, 2004), pp. 12-13.

coordination, tending to focus instead on the individual expansion of particular professions or the establishment of certain administrative or bureaucratic practices.<sup>7</sup> As a result, some of the messier and more informal aspects of welfare practice have been neglected.

One reason for this has been the tendency to treat the state as some disciplinary monolith, a nexus of interests which were coherently and effectively pitted against those of welfare clients.<sup>8</sup> Of the eight theoretical positions on the welfare state which Derek Fraser identifies, almost all treat state professionals in this undifferentiated manner.<sup>9</sup> Such an approach was, as Bernard Harris has argued, a necessary step in moving beyond the triumphalism of the post-war period, and in incorporating the experiences of those who used the welfare services.<sup>10</sup> It was also a useful step in considering professional interests and the growth of expertise.<sup>11</sup>

While this chapter does not argue that there was no professional elitism, or that social problems were not judged to be amenable to professional intervention,<sup>12</sup> it does wish to complicate this view by considering the practice of teamwork within the welfare state, including the problems which it was sought to address and the

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example: Clarke and Newman, *The Managerial State*; Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*; Hughes, 'Picking over the Remains': the Welfare State Settlements of the Post-Second World War UK', pp. 3-37; Page, *Revisiting the Welfare State*.

<sup>8</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 1, 10, 13-14.

<sup>9</sup> Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 2-10.

<sup>10</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 3. For examples, see: Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*; Harris, *The Social Work Business*; Vincent, *Poor Citizens*; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*; Clarke and Cochrane, 'The Social Construction of Social Problems', pp. 3-42.

<sup>11</sup> Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, p. 4. For examples, see: Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, pp. xi-xiv, pp. 1-16, esp. p. 15; Le Grand, *Motivation, Agency, and Public Policy*, pp. 4-7; Vernon, 'The Social and Its Forms', p. 156; Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 7-10; Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 150-151; de Swaan, *In Care of the State*, pp. 226-247; Rose, 'Engineering the Human Soul: Analyzing Psychological Expertise', pp. 351-369; David Armstrong, 'Medicine as a profession: times of change', *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 301.6754 (3 October 1990), pp. 691-693.

<sup>12</sup> Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', pp. 96, 102; Burnham, *The Social Worker Speaks*, p. 135.

issues which emerged from these interactions. If, as Lowe has argued, the welfare state sought to replace the 'patch-work of competing, and often excessively competitive, agencies' of the interwar period,<sup>13</sup> this chapter takes the next step of considering how competition and preconception persisted alongside and were even reinforced by the practice of coordination and cooperation in the welfare state.

There has already been some work which, while stopping short of sustained analysis of teamwork as a concept in itself, has paid attention to related issues. Much of this has emerged from an interest in the 'mixed economy of welfare', and an appreciation of how social care was provided by a range of statutory, voluntary, and community resources, particularly the family.<sup>14</sup> This work, David Gladstone has argued, 'suggests the need for closer exploration of the interrelationships between the sectors, the tensions that have been created and the ways in which they have been resolved.'<sup>15</sup> As part of this interest in the 'mixed economy of welfare', there are a number of useful analyses of the relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors and the blurring of the boundaries between the public and the private.<sup>16</sup>

Although there is some analysis of the relationship between voluntary and statutory social workers, this chapter is predominantly concerned with relationships

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<sup>13</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 285.

<sup>14</sup> See particularly: David Thomson, 'Welfare and the Historians', in Lloyd Bonfield *et al.* (eds), *The World We Have Gained: Histories of Population and Social Structure. Essays presented to Peter Laslett on his Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford and New York, 1986), pp. 355-378; Jane Lewis, 'Family provision of health and welfare in the mixed economy of care in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries', *Social History of Medicine*, 8.1 (1995), pp. 1-16. For discussions of this trend, see: Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*, pp. 1-2; Jane Lewis, 'The Voluntary Sector and the State in Twentieth Century Britain', in Helen Fawcett and Rodney Lowe (eds), *Welfare Policy in Britain: The Road from 1945* (Basingstoke and New York, 1999), pp. 52-68; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Gladstone, 'Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945', p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, 'Society and the state in twentieth-century Britain', p. 104. For examples, see: Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, esp. pp. 93, 160-161; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, esp. pp. 293-295, 338, 351; Starkey, 'Can the Piper Call the Tune? Innovation and Experiment with Deprived Families in Britain, 1940-1980s: The Work of Family Service Units', p. 573-587.

within the professional sector, an area which has received limited, albeit valuable, attention. Welshman, for example, has discussed the convergence of professional concerns around the ‘problem family’, and the problems which this caused.<sup>17</sup> Chris Nottingham and Rona Dougall’s discussion of almoners in Scotland has emphasised their collaboration with other professionals within the hospital,<sup>18</sup> while John Stewart has emphasised the importance of hierarchical teamwork within the child guidance clinic.<sup>19</sup> Stewart’s project was influenced by considerations of the team in studies of the history of science and medicine, particularly Steve Sturdy and Roger Cooter’s work on the role of management and cultures of science in changing medical practices.<sup>20</sup> Such work has been particularly useful for understanding issues of hierarchy within different stages of the scientific process and for reassessing relationships between professionals and support workers. It has not, however, offered a conceptual framework with which to understand teamwork as a historical phenomenon, hence the need in this chapter to consider, for example, the disparity between formal coordination and informal cooperation.

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<sup>17</sup> Welshman, ‘The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the ‘Problem Family’, 1940-1970’, pp. 457-476.

<sup>18</sup> Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975’, pp. 309-336.

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, esp. pp. 35-58; Stewart, ‘I Thought You Would Want to Come and See His Home’: Child Guidance and Psychiatric Social Work in Inter-War Britain’, pp. 111-127; Stewart, ‘The scientific claims of British child guidance, 1918-1945’, pp. 407-432.

<sup>20</sup> S. Sturdy and R. Cooter, ‘Science, scientific management, and the transformation of medicine in Britain, c.1870-1950’, *History of Science*, 36.114 (1998), pp. 421-466, esp. pp. 447-449. See also: Christopher Lawrence, ‘A Tale of Two Sciences: Bench and Bedside in Twentieth-Century Britain,’ *Medical History*, 43.4 (1999), pp. 421-49; Andrew J. Hull, ‘Teamwork, Clinical Research, and the Development of Scientific Medicines in Interwar Britain: The “Glasgow School” Revisited’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 81.3 (2007), pp. 569-592.

## II The Policy Framework for Teamwork

Over the period there were a number of policies which sought to promote coordination and to codify good teamwork practice. Social work, due to its particular existence in the gaps and on the margins, was a common target for such legislation, and it was these policies, along with a choice selection of articles and monographs by social workers, which highlighted issues of coordination and cooperation across the period. Broadly speaking, there was a steady progression from the informal teamwork precipitated by the uncertainties of the war to the Seebohm Report, which formally attempted to solve issues of coordination between different branches of social work through a thorough reorganisation of the profession's structure. Across this period, different Acts and government memoranda sought to define and redefine the foundations of teamwork, and the timing of Seebohm meant that it was a natural moment for social workers and their colleagues to reflect on the issues which had arisen.

After the war, in which Home Office policy had sought to ensure that collaboration between local councils, especially in London, were unconstrained by boundary disputes and financial concerns,<sup>21</sup> the first step in addressing issues of coordination was the introduction of the welfare state itself. Although social work was only included as an afterthought,<sup>22</sup> it is worth noting that one of the aims of the Children's Act (as recommended by the 1946 Curtis Committee) was to prevent children at risk from slipping through the gaps of ill-coordinated services.<sup>23</sup> Shortly

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<sup>21</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 84.

<sup>22</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 668; Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 51; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 366; Hennessy, *Having It So Good: Britain in the Fifties*, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969', p. 630; Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, pp. 136-137; Payne,

thereafter, on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1950, the Home Office, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, three organisations who had at least some stake in the efforts of social workers, released a joint circular, entitled ‘Children Neglected or Ill Treated in their own Homes’. This document aimed to encourage better cooperation between departments within the same local authority and between statutory and voluntary services by instigating coordinating committees. The charge was eagerly taken up by social workers still buoyed by the new welfare legislation,<sup>24</sup> although, as we shall see, these coordinating committees enjoyed limited success, and then not in the manner initially intended. Nevertheless, the introduction of committees to go alongside the case conferences already commonplace within social work formed the basic foundations for much formal teamwork over the period.

Until the mid-1960s, there was little further attention paid to issues of teamwork by policy-makers, although the debates across the period about whether social work training should be generic or specialist in nature had an impact on the place of teamwork,<sup>25</sup> and shaped the landscape in which the Seebohm Committee began its deliberations. In 1959, the Younghusband Report sought to expand social work teams by adding another grade of worker to the hierarchy,<sup>26</sup> while the Ingleby Report of 1960 underlined the need for better coordination of services, especially with regards to the family, in tackling juvenile delinquency. The Ingleby Report also included a memorable call for ‘Some door on which they can knock, knowing that

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*The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 54; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jack Hanson, p. 8;

<sup>24</sup> ASW, *Children Neglected or Ill-Treated in Their Own Homes*; Housden, *The Prevention of Cruelty to Children*, p. 308; Leaper, *Community Work*, p. 73; Pugh, *Social Work in Child Care*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Oakley, ‘The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method’, pp. 154-173.

<sup>26</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, pp. 219-222.

their knock will be answered by people with the willingness to help them.’<sup>27</sup> This phrase became something of a dictum for the coordination of services, and seemed to lose any connection with the Report in which it had originated.<sup>28</sup> Along with the 1963 Children’s Act, a direct result of the Report, Ingleby emphasised the importance of coordination for preventative welfare work.<sup>29</sup>

By the mid-1960s, however, the uses and abuses of teamwork were firmly on the social work agenda. Much of this was due to the establishment of the Seebohm Committee and the publication of their Report in 1968. Even if they had doubts about the outcome of the Report, many of Cohen’s interviewees recalled that the rationale behind generic social work was very strong,<sup>30</sup> and it is clear that there was much enthusiasm for the close coordination and integration of services.<sup>31</sup> Since the Seebohm Report and the subsequent Local Authority Act of 1970 marked a pronounced shift in the nature of social work and its interprofessional relations, we shall return to it for closer assessment at the end of the chapter.

The Committee began its deliberations, we should note, in a period when matters of coordination, and in particularly their administrative dimension, were becoming a central theme in the social work literature.<sup>32</sup> A notable example was

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<sup>27</sup> Committee on Children and Young Persons, Report of the Committee on Children and Young Persons, Cmnd. 1191 (London, 1961), p. 9, quoted in: Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, p. 230.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example: Somerville Hastings and Peggy Jay, *The Family and the Social Services* (London, 1965), p. 9; B. J. Kahan, ‘Preventative Work by Children’s Departments: Two Points of View. Part 2’, *Social Work*, 18.1 (January 1961), p. 23; Donald Ford, ‘Introduction to the Report’, *Social Work*, 18.1 (January 1961), p. 4. Issue 18.1 of *Social Work* was a special issue on the Ingleby Report, one of the few treatments of it in the literature. The phrases ‘door to knock on’ and ‘the door on which they knock’ appear divorced from their original context.

<sup>29</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: 1950-1975, A Follow-Up Study, Volume 1*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>30</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 21; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 22; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Chester French, pp. 18-19.

<sup>31</sup> Welshman, ‘The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the ‘Problem Family’, 1940-1970’, p. 472; Harris, ‘State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past’, pp. 670-671; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example: W. B. Harbert, ‘Co-ordination – A Beginning’, *Case Conference*, 12.9 (March 1966), pp. 307-311; Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*; Forder, *Social Casework and*

Olive Stephenson's influential article on the trials of coordination in a 1963 issue of *Case Conference*, which had the express intention of reinvigorating a conversation which had 'become a little stale' by discussing the 'interdepartmental rivalries' suggested and then neglected by the Ingleby Report.<sup>33</sup> Stephenson argued that coordination was both a problem and a solution, and that while 'Sectional loyalties...are inevitable and even necessary at the fieldwork level', they threatened to affect the 'vision of the social services as a whole'.<sup>34</sup> This contrast between the theory and the practice of teamwork was at the heart of discussions on its role in welfare practice. As we shall see, the legislation and policies discussed in this section were limited in their effectiveness, but could be repurposed by professionals for their own informal needs.

### III Teamwork Practice within Social Work

As Katherine Pollard *et al.* argue, the concept of a team can cover a range of different relationships and arrangements, and teams can emerge, succeed, and fail for a variety of reasons.<sup>35</sup> The reflections of social workers and their colleagues within the social and medical services on the experience of collaboration and communication contain a number of different formulations of what their 'team' actually was and the purpose which it served. Social work teams in rural or isolated areas could easily consist of a single person: Jane Sparrow recalled meeting a worker from Wales who was 'the single children's officer/probation officer/moral welfare

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*Administration*; D. V. Donnison *et al.*, *Social Policy and Administration. Studies in the Development of Social Services at the Local Level* (London, 1965); Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*.

<sup>33</sup> Olive Stephenson, 'Co-ordination Reviewed', *Case Conference*, 9.8 (February 1963), p. 208.

<sup>34</sup> Olive Stephenson, 'Co-ordination Reviewed', *Case Conference*, 9.8 (February 1963), p. 212.

<sup>35</sup> Pollard *et al.*, 'The Need for Interprofessional Working', p. 10.



worker, etc., all rolled into one large woman.’<sup>36</sup> The majority of social workers, however, were embedded in departments or agencies particular to their function, and it was their work here which constituted their most common and their simplest teamwork. Although the purpose of this chapter is to consider teamwork between social workers of different specialisms and between social workers and other professionals, it is worth considering that many social workers spent most of their time either with clients or with social workers from their particular field.

Many accounts of social work teams discuss the moral and practical support which they offered: Keith Hiscock, for example, told Burnham that ‘*the team leader was wonderful...the team was everything*’.<sup>37</sup> Others, meanwhile, describe the difficulty of working with those who had different values or approaches to the social work task.<sup>38</sup> Although discordant teams rarely survived for long, the skills of any welfare worker, as Kenneth Brill noted, might be needed just as much in the office as in the field.<sup>39</sup> In fact, he added, social workers should always be positive about their wider team, since the client’s impression of the cohesiveness of the agency was an important ingredient in its therapeutic efficacy.<sup>40</sup>

This was also true, Brill argued, for broader teamwork, where other welfare professionals could be just as ‘contra-suggestible.’<sup>41</sup> The difficulties of multi-professional teamwork could come as a surprise to those trained within the smaller world of social work,<sup>42</sup> with such issues arguably enhancing the feeling of

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<sup>36</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> Keith Hiscock, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 130. Italicised in the original. See also: Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 181; Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 88; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 30-45.

<sup>38</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 31-37, 40-42; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 237, 241; ‘Richard Pool’, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 115. ‘Richard Pool’ was a pseudonym.

<sup>39</sup> Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 47.

<sup>41</sup> Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1*, p. 149.

community amongst social workers, who found that many of the frustrations they faced in dealing with other professionals were also present in other branches of their own profession.<sup>43</sup> The social work team was thus a useful resource for discussing the difficulties and the idiosyncrasies of the wider clinical, legal, or child care setting. Their position across two teams was a crucial part of social workers' contribution to teamwork, but also proved useful in enduring the tribulations of cooperating and coordinating services. We begin, then, with an assessment of how social workers worked with each other, and then expand this discussion to consider the place of social workers within the collaborative practices of the welfare state.

### **III.i Teamwork Between Social Workers**

As previous chapters have shown, the social worker's role included guiding clients to and through the social and medical services, which frequently meant cooperating with other professionals, including other social workers. Aside from the formal demands of legislation and policy, there were three main situations which necessitated teamwork: common clients, common problems, and common territory. All three of these scenarios, which were not mutually exclusive, could lead to the formal coordination of services or to informal cooperation between social workers, or a combination of both.

One aspect of teamwork central to social work was the sharing of information. The main channel for the official coordination of information was the case conference: although these could be constituted entirely of social workers, they

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<sup>43</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, pp. 22-23; Jean M. Snelling, 'Psychiatric Social Work and Social Casework in Other Fields: I', in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), p. 14.

were more commonly multi-professional undertakings, so we shall return to them later. There were, however, administrative practices to ensure the sharing of relevant information between social work departments. For example, the probation service was obliged to send a Form 23 to the Area Children's Officer whenever a child was to be prosecuted, which then initiated a process of cooperation between the child care and the probationary services.<sup>44</sup> In fact, the probation and the child care services were routinely required to compile reports on young offenders,<sup>45</sup> and both reserved the option of consulting with the relevant psychiatric department.<sup>46</sup> Other organisations, meanwhile, set up liaison committees or specific professional groups when a common interest was identified.<sup>47</sup> An extension of this, again formalised but discretionary, was the sharing of knowledge and training, particularly on issues of mental well-being and public health.<sup>48</sup>

The routine sharing of information seems to have been successful, although there were two common barriers to efficient practice: too many agencies becoming involved in a single case, and the attitudes of different departments towards confidentiality. Cecil French's recollections of the Children's Department in Bedford are a good example of the latter issue: while very keen on acquiring information from other services, they took great refuge in the powers of confidence and

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<sup>44</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 39, 204-205; Snelling, 'Psychiatric Social Work and Social Casework in Other Fields: I', p. 14; Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*, pp. 126-147; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 128; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 76; Donnison *et al*, *Social Policy and Administration*, p. 98; Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, pp. 174-181.

<sup>46</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, *passim*., but esp. pp. 28-37, 134-140; National Institute for Social Work Training, *Introduction to a Social Worker*, pp. 73-95; Cochrane, *Social Work for Jill*, p. 96; Phyllida Parsloe, *The Work of the Probation and After-Care Officer* (London, 1967), p. 90.

<sup>47</sup> Jacka, *The ACCO Story*, pp. 71, 76; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 96.

<sup>48</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, p. 30; Joan M. Smith, 'The Child Guidance Clinic Psychiatric Social Worker and the Waiting List', *Case Conference*, 2.2 (June 1955), p. 24; Elisabeth Hunter, 'The Relationship between the Public Health Nurse and the Social Worker', *Social Work*, 16.1 (January 1959), pp. 2-9.

confidentiality, making it virtually impossible to get any information back from them.<sup>49</sup> In fact, issues of confidentiality often made for a generational schism, with younger social workers seeing it as an integral element of the client relationship, while those who were older argued that it reflected a lack of confidence in their colleagues.<sup>50</sup> In addition, many social workers recognised that principles of confidentiality obscured clarity in the discussion of cases with other professionals,<sup>51</sup> with the result that some social workers allowed themselves some leeway in their application.<sup>52</sup>

Even when social workers and their departments willingly shared information, this could lead to poor welfare practice if the next step, intervention, was uncoordinated. In fact, Audrey Harvey's 1960 critique of social work, *Casualties of the Welfare State*, centred on the fact that both overlapping services and gaps in provision stood in the way of the efficient processing of clients' problems.<sup>53</sup> In their evidence to the Seebohm Committee in July 1966, the Association of Family Caseworkers gave the example of a family with a mentally-ill mother who was evicted from their house. This case ultimately involved not only a mental welfare officer and the housing department, but also a child care officer, a family caseworker, and an almoner, many of whom were unaware that the family was known to other services.<sup>54</sup> The involvement of a greater number of workers may

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<sup>49</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Irvine, pp. 18-19; Letter from M. Brooke-Willis, *Case Conference*, 12.4 (September 1965), p. 123; ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work*, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> Corner, 'Moral Problems Met in Social Work', pp. 20, 24-25

<sup>52</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, pp. 17-18. See also: Winnicott, 'Face to Face with Children', p. 48.

<sup>53</sup> Audrey Harvey, *Casualties of the Welfare State* (London, 1960).

<sup>54</sup> Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/4, Social Work: General 'Seebohm', Evidence presented to the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services Chairman F. Seebohm Esq. By the Association of Family Caseworkers, July 1966, p. 3. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 22. The counter-example to the involvement of too many social workers is, of

have meant more manpower, but without the coordination of both information and action, cases threatened to become unmanageable. The best practice, it seemed, was passing on cases to those colleagues best equipped to deal with them rather than just extending the numbers involved. Many social workers, however, did not feel that they had sufficient knowledge of their colleagues' precise roles to do this with any confidence.<sup>55</sup> This could easily lead to issues of 'over-visiting', whereby too many social workers (and other professionals) were involved to have any positive impact.

One way in which social workers tackled such issues was by developing semi-formal arrangements, often overflows from case conferences and coordinating committees, on the sharing of information. One example of this unspoken agreement was the informal policy of sharing any new information gleaned about families with the agency responsible for the children.<sup>56</sup> Edwin Packer provided a long list of further arrangements in his introduction to social work, the most notable example being the discretionary diffusion and collation of information about children and families between almoners, probation officers, child care officers, and psychiatric social workers.<sup>57</sup> These relationships were professional in nature, but existed outside the administrative systems of the welfare state, and are a good example of personal cooperation aiding the coordination of services.

Other social workers took a more personal approach by establishing regular but informal appointments to discuss cases with colleagues. As well as referrals

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course, the issue of undiscovered need, with no worker immediately available to families and individuals: see: Helen Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>55</sup> Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, p. 203; Clare Winnicott, 'Casework and Agency Function', *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), p. 178; Jessica Seth-Smith, 'The New Look in Family Casework', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), pp. 448; E. H. Davison, 'The Contribution of the Casework Agencies', *Case Conference*, 10.10 (April 1964), p. 311.

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Brill, *Children, not Cases. Social Work for Children and their Families* (London, 1962), pp. 58, 109.

<sup>57</sup> Packer, *Social Work*, p. 63.

through the official channels,<sup>58</sup> health visitor Linda Dennis noted a number of professional friendships in her autobiography, including a relationship with an almoner whom she knew only through telephone conversations, and her regular lunches with the health visitor from the next district, Jane, whose clinic was preferred by some of Dennis' families because it was located in a shopping centre.<sup>59</sup> Although the practice of sharing information among social workers has presumably existed since social work began, it appears that in the wake of the welfare state it became an integral and self-conscious part of professional practice.<sup>60</sup> The fact that some social workers, however, consistently failed, whether consciously or not, to share with other departments all the information they held on common clients, remained a problem.<sup>61</sup> Issues of coordination could be effectively circumvented through personal relationships, but this was dependant on individual workers.

Of those social workers who did choose to share information as part of personal relationships with their colleagues, many did so based on a shared territory. One of the key features of social work practice, and one which is present in the oral testimony yet almost invisible in the professional literature, was the operation of a 'patch' system.<sup>62</sup> Through the patch system, the social worker could develop close links with local foster families, invaluable in a crisis,<sup>63</sup> and develop the knowledge of and presence in the community integral to social work.<sup>64</sup> As well as cultivating their own patch, social workers also doubled up to support colleagues in their area of

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<sup>58</sup> Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, pp. 56, 106.

<sup>59</sup> Dennis, *Families Are My Concern*, pp. 45, 82.

<sup>60</sup> 'Foreword to Second Edition', in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>62</sup> Prynne, 'Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship', pp. 105-106.

<sup>63</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 65, 106; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 118.

<sup>64</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 76; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 94-96; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 86-90, 190-193.

practice, which meant, for example, that one could count on the assistance of nearby social workers of the opposite gender.<sup>65</sup> Conversely, problems could arise if social workers were too geographically dispersed: Cecil French told Cohen that when he worked in Bedford, the three social work departments were all at least a mile and a half apart, making it ‘damned near impossible to communicate!’<sup>66</sup>

As well as allowing social workers to share information about and to lend practical support in addressing common issues, the geographical elements of teamwork also provided many social workers with a way to cope with the emotional labour of everyday practice. Probation officer Joyce Rimmer, for example, developed a series of ‘bolt holes’, mostly the offices of colleagues, where she called in when she had been shouted at and ‘*called names you did not quite understand*’.<sup>67</sup> Peter Hewitt managed to combine emotional support and the sharing of information: as a diagnostic social worker at the end of the period, he kept up to date on cases in the Children’s Department and the Welfare Offices by visiting for lunch.<sup>68</sup> We should not presume, however, that friendships between social workers meant cooperation: a handful of Burnham’s interviewees got on with colleagues from other departments without ever endeavouring to work with them.<sup>69</sup>

There were some attempts to make such cooperation an official part of welfare work, such as the Camden Medical Officer of Health’s request that social

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<sup>65</sup> Tom Grant, quoted in: Prynn, ‘Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship’, p. 106.

<sup>66</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 19. On this issue more broadly, see: Peter R. Day, ‘Rivalry at Work’, *Case Conference*, 12.1 (May 1965), p. 10. This lack of spatial integration was partially a result of the lack of new offices built for the operation of the welfare state. In 1954 less than one in ten of the 408 Area Offices had been built since 1948: Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 139. It was also a result of the different geographical boundaries of the three services which constituted the NHS’s tripartite structure: John Stewart, ‘The Political Economy of the British National Health Service, 1945–1975: Opportunities and Constraints?’, *Medical History*, 52.4 (2008), p. 462.

<sup>67</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 128. See also: Spencer, *Stress and Release in an Urban Estate*.

<sup>68</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 135.

<sup>69</sup> Burnham, *Social Workers Speaks*, p. 128.

workers ‘consult informally with each other and also with professional workers involved with family work’.<sup>70</sup> However, as George Haynes astutely argued in 1966, during a one-day conference on social services and young people, ‘co-ordination, in a sphere where spontaneity was so important, should in no way be imposed from above.’<sup>71</sup> The discretion of the individual worker to develop their own relationships, both personal and professional, was paramount. The informal connections of practice did not translate into formal policy.

### **III.ii Teamwork in the Care of Children**

The previous sections have suggested that the coordination of information did not necessarily imply the coordination of action, and that personal relationships, emotions, and attitudes all had a role to play within teamwork amongst social workers. Such issues were particularly present in the care and protection of children. These cases often began with child care officers, for whom finding temporary accommodation for neglected children and evicted families was a common task, with the result that close links existed between field workers and the staff of residential institutions.<sup>72</sup> However, almoners and probation workers might also call on residential services if they knew in advance that those with children would be spending time in hospital or prison, and the care of the elderly, often neglected in

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<sup>70</sup> *The Health of Camden, a weekly bulletin from the Medical Officer of Health*, 1.28, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1965, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> LMA, London Council of Social Service and Related Organisations, ACC/1888/440/26, NCSS: related organisations, Standing Conference of Councils of Social Service, Conferences Other Than National Standing Conference of Councils of Social Service, One Day Conference For Secretaries of Social Service On Voluntary Service By Young People, held on Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> 1966, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 42-48. See also: Elizabeth Pugh, ‘The Development of Residential Child Care’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Institutional Care* (London, 1967), pp. 28-37; C. A. Floud, ‘Residential Staff and the Child Care Officer’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Institutional Care* (London, 1967), pp. 50-56; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 5.



both the historiography and the contemporary literature, often required liaison between those in the field and those running homes.<sup>73</sup>

Once temporary lodgings had been secured, social workers had more time to construct longer-term solutions or to allow short-term problems to pass.<sup>74</sup> The effectiveness of such solutions was, of course, dependant on the quality of the accommodation on offer. Some institutions acquired poor reputations, and even those which appeared effective might be hit by scandal.<sup>75</sup> In areas where accommodation was particularly hard to come by, those in the legal system were not above bringing parents before the court on charges of neglect and deprivation, effectively forcing the local children's department to take any offspring into care. Such manoeuvring tended to sour relations between child care officers, the courts, and other social workers.<sup>76</sup>

The bigger issue for matters of teamwork, however, was the mistrust which existed between field workers and those based in residential settings.<sup>77</sup> Even when child care workers admitted that Homes could help people, they still dismissed the notion that they were therapeutic; there was a pervasive belief that a real family,

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<sup>73</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 49; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 107-108. On the elderly: Helen Anthony, *Medical Social Work: A Career in Hospital and Community* (Reading, 1968), pp. 26-27; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 106. There is some work on the care of the elderly, but the volume does not reflect the extent to which this group was a welfare concern, although this is partially because it tends to focus on the relatively greater present policy issues regarding care of the elderly. See: Robin Means and Randall Smith, *From Poor Law to Community Care: The Development of Welfare Services for Elderly People 1939-1971* (Bristol, 1998); Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford, 2000); Jill Manthorpe and Steve Iliffe, *Depression and Later Life* (London, 2005).

<sup>74</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 112, 190; Margaret Robinson, 'The Family as the Client', *Case Conference*, 14.9 (January 1968), pp. 338-342; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 118.

<sup>75</sup> Christopher Holtom, 'The Role of the Professional Caseworker in a Residential Setting', *Case Conference*, 5.6 (November 1958), pp. 141; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 143-156, 168-170; Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 26.

<sup>76</sup> Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, p. 98.

<sup>77</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 7-8, 78-79; Cochrane, *Social Work for Jill*, p. 98.

however poor, was superior to an artificial one.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, Jane Sparrow commented in her diary *cum* autobiography that ‘whilst a residential worker, I regarded the few probation officers and child care officers I met as fairly weak creatures who evaded the daily sweat of living alongside explosive clients’.<sup>79</sup> C. A. Floud argued in a 1967 conference paper that the issue lay in the very different approaches to the child: the child care officer wanted them to reflect on and talk about their old home, while the residential worker wanted to supply a new one.<sup>80</sup> In this way, social workers could engage in conscientious coordination of services, putting their doubts about colleagues to one side in order to effectively cooperate, but differing values could undermine the efficacy of such teamwork.

Residential workers were antagonised further by the consistent attempts of their colleagues in the field to place children with foster families, which, Ursula Behr recalled, implied that ‘what they were doing was a very poor second best.’<sup>81</sup> This was a period when residential workers faced a severe lack of status in the eyes of the public, and a consequent struggle to attract new staff, with the result that there was by the 1960s, John Adams has argued, ‘an increasing realisation that residential care services were in crisis’.<sup>82</sup> Social workers paid this little mind, preferring to emphasise their work with ‘non-professionals’ such as foster families,<sup>83</sup> although

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<sup>78</sup> Kenneth Brill, ‘Case Conference or Jamboree? (A Year’s Social Work in a Children’s Reception Home)’, *Case Conference*, 1.1 (May 1954), p. 13; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 71-72. See also: Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, pp. 371-372; Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>79</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. xii.

<sup>80</sup> Floud, ‘Residential Staff and the Child Care Officer’, p. 53.

<sup>81</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> John Adams, ‘The Last Years of the Workhouse, 1930-1965’, in Joanna Bornat *et al.* (eds), *Oral History, Health and Welfare* (London and New York, 2000), p. 109.

<sup>83</sup> Kay McDougall, ‘Thinking Aloud – On Basic Social Work Teaching’, *Case Conference*, 8.10 (April 1962), p. 266; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/61, Constitution and foundation, Letter to Miss Dyson from Agnes Crosthwaite, 18 July 1945; King, ‘First Things First’, p. 8; Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 12.

connotations of amateurism were persistent.<sup>84</sup> The strength of kinship networks, especially in working-class neighbourhoods, meant that social workers were also required to develop cordial relations with residents, a fact noted by both Peter Willmott and Enid Mills whilst conducting social research in London.<sup>85</sup> Those living in proximity to ‘problem families’, for example, could choose to assist welfare workers by offering information and a watchful eye, but they could also, especially if they became envious of the assistance offered to social work clients, choose to hinder state intervention.<sup>86</sup>

### **III.iv                    The Role of the Voluntary Sector in Teamwork**

One way in which statutory social workers could gain a foothold in potentially hostile communities was by turning to their colleagues in voluntary organisations, which ranged from small, local-based services to nationwide organisations. The relationship between these two spheres was one of the most important for teamwork within social work. Although statutory and voluntary social workers frequently had clients, problems, and territory in common, they nevertheless developed separate yet interlinked identities. Part of the social work role of signposting the welfare state did, of course, involve deciding whether clients would be best served by voluntary or

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<sup>84</sup> Brill, *Children, not Cases*, pp. 59, 61; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/16, Constitution and foundation, A Memorandum for the Consideration of the Social Workers’ Group, What is a Social Worker?, 12<sup>th</sup> March [1940]; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, p. 80. This interacted with the growth of expertise on parenting: Bernini, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-War Europe*, pp. 105-106; Davis, *Modern Motherhood*, pp. 112-141.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Willmott, ‘Social Administration and Social Class’, *Case Conference*, 4.7 (January 1958), p. 196; Enid C. Mills, ‘Mental Patients and Their Relatives in East London’, *Social Work*, 18.2 (April 1961), pp. 4-7. See also: Snelling, ‘Psychiatric Social Work and Social Casework in Other Fields: I’, p. 14.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor and Rogaly, ‘‘Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type’: Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963’, p. 451; Collins, *Modern Love*, p. 103.

statutory assistance, so close relations and a certain awareness of the boundaries were useful, especially when they coexisted in the same setting.<sup>87</sup>

This was recognised by Joan Kirkpatrick, who had experienced both sectors, and who commented in 1959 that between voluntary and professional workers ‘there should be two-way traffic of referral and interpretation, so that the latter may send straightforward cases to the voluntary organisations, and the former may be encouraged to advise applicants with personal problems underlying a financial need to go to those who have the training and the skill to give more comprehensive help.’<sup>88</sup> In fact, social workers recognised that voluntary services such as the Samaritans and advice centres might provide clients with what Joan Collins tellingly labelled ‘the respectable and acceptable link’ to statutory provision.<sup>89</sup> We should note that this representation of the voluntary sector as the straightforward cousin of the advanced statutory services was not a universal one. Burnham reported that many of the social workers he interviewed had great admiration for the innovative techniques being developed by the voluntary services, even if they were reluctant to incorporate them into their own practice. Others, however, felt that the voluntary sector’s lack of responsibility and authority made it ‘a soft touch, easy going and odd-balls.’<sup>90</sup>

On the whole, however, state organisations were keen to establish links with the voluntary sector, and the volunteers were in turn content with the larger role the state had taken with regards to welfare. It certainly seems that the sharing of

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<sup>87</sup> Timms, *The Receiving End*, p. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Joan E. Kirkpatrick, ‘The Use of Material Help in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 6.4 (September 1959), p. 86.

<sup>89</sup> Collins, *A New Look at Social Work*, p. 11.

<sup>90</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 116. See also: Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain*, pp. 101-121.

resources, be they the human resources of the voluntary organisations or the financial means of the state, was relatively commonplace.<sup>91</sup> This was a shift from the pre-welfare state arrangements, when voluntary organisations could still fund workers in institutions, such as psychiatric social workers in a hospital.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, the increasing prominence of statutory work, even if the mixed economy of welfare still took precedence over any semblance of state monolith, did provoke questions of identity among the more-established of the voluntary groups.<sup>93</sup> At the same time, the spectre of full professional status offered by the Seebohm Report led some social workers to turn their backs on their colleagues in the voluntary sector, especially when the contrast was sharpened by different qualifications.<sup>94</sup>

On the whole, teamwork between statutory and voluntary social workers was seen as a successful aspect of the welfare state, not least because those concerned felt that, contrary to their expectations,<sup>95</sup> voluntary practice proved to be a useful extension of statutory provision, while the spirit of voluntarism was strengthened by the greater involvement of the state.<sup>96</sup> Not only were organisations which combined statutory and voluntary effort, such as the Citizen's Advice Bureaux, held up as archetypes of good coordination,<sup>97</sup> but it was also felt that as the social services and society became more complex, and the need for teamwork that much greater, the

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<sup>91</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 293.

<sup>92</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Molly Bree, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain*, p. 297; Donnison *et al.*, *Social Policy and Administration*, pp. 176-200.

<sup>94</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 136.

<sup>95</sup> Higson, *The Story of a Beginning*, p. 142; Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, pp. 93, 160-161.

<sup>96</sup> Morris, *An Adventure in Social Work*, p. 37; Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 286; MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/8/2/5, Publications, Report of Conference, 1942, Social Changes Due to the War and their Significance, p. 36; 'Voluntary Social Service and Family Life', *Social Work*, 7.3 (July 1950), p. 443.

<sup>97</sup> 'Voluntary Social Service and Family Life', *Social Work*, 7.3 (July 1950), p. 444.

voluntary and statutory sectors would be able to evolve in tandem,<sup>98</sup> although this was a target which was reassessed throughout the period.<sup>99</sup> Some even felt that voluntary workers could and should hold the status of full colleagues of their statutory equivalents, or that the two were effectively interchangeable.<sup>100</sup> We must not forget, however, that this sentiment only existed in matters of teamwork, and that the presence of the well-meaning but ill-advised voluntary effort could still be a constant frustration to those social workers employed by the state.<sup>101</sup>

As Frank Prochaska has rightly identified, the welfare state ‘proved less than monopolistic, and there were plentiful opportunities to work with it or alongside it.’<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, many in the voluntary sector still felt that the cost of access to state resources was the loss of their autonomy to innovate and experiment.<sup>103</sup> It is probably most accurate to say that, although the two spheres kept their distance, their work was complementary: Cyril Smith, who was involved in both, was confident that even if the remit of these groups increasingly overlapped, ‘the State maintains its supremacy in the field of specialist services, the Family its supremacy in general services, and the Benevolent Individual straddles the two.’<sup>104</sup> For particular issues, notably the rediscovery of poverty, the boundaries between state, voluntarist, and

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<sup>98</sup> Smith, ‘Work in the community’, p. 68; Arthur Collis, ‘Casework in a Statutory and Voluntary Setting’, *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 452.

<sup>99</sup> Donnison *et al.*, *Social Policy and Administration*, pp. 197-199.

<sup>100</sup> MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B/2/1/16, Constitution and foundation, A Memorandum for the Consideration of the Social Workers’ Group, What is a Social Worker?, 12<sup>th</sup> March [1940]; *The A.S.W. News*, October 1966, p. i.

<sup>101</sup> Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 43. For examples, see: Collins, *A New Look at Social Work*, p. 12; Letter from Veronica H. Weeks and Margaret Torbett, *Case Conference*, 10.4 (September 1963), p. 10; *The A.S.W. News*, July 1964, p. i; Brill, *Children, not Cases*, p. 61.

<sup>102</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 160. See also: Matthew Hilton and James McKay, ‘The ages of voluntarism. An introduction’, in Matthew Hilton and James McKay (eds), *The Ages of Voluntarism: How We Got to the Big Society* (Oxford and New York, 2011), pp. 5-16.

<sup>103</sup> Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 161.

<sup>104</sup> Smith, *People in Need*, p. 85.

family welfare became particularly porous.<sup>105</sup> The relationship between the voluntary and the statutory spheres was particularly close within social work, but the best teamwork practice here was characterised by each sector recognising the limits of its influence, and allowing the other to continue their existing work without feeling the need to intervene.<sup>106</sup>

### **III.v Social Work Hierarchies and Teamwork**

Recognition of one's own role was integral to good teamwork between the voluntary and the statutory spheres. This was also true for teamwork within statutory social work itself, where it was important to recognise the distinctive skills of specialist colleagues. However, as we have already seen, many social workers felt themselves to be ignorant of the precise roles of their colleagues in other branches of the welfare state.<sup>107</sup> This led to a number of (often humorous) stereotypes of different branches of social work,<sup>108</sup> as well as an implicit hierarchy within the profession, which the interviewees of both Cohen and Burnham could still recall and were happy to recount. Jack Hanson felt that it was the psychiatric social workers who were at the top because of their very specialised skills, while child care was somewhere in the middle, and probation officers, the group whom Alan Cohen felt were at the summit when he was training, were for Hanson situated outside of the hierarchy.<sup>109</sup> Cecil French also put psychiatric social workers at the top of the pecking order, but, since

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<sup>105</sup> Hilton and McKay, 'The ages of voluntarism. An introduction', pp. 8, 16.

<sup>106</sup> Vincent, *Poor Citizens*, p. 139.

<sup>107</sup> Clare Winnicott, 'Casework and Agency Function', *Case Conference*, 8.7 (January 1962), p. 178; Jessica Seth-Smith, 'The New Look in Family Casework', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), pp. 448; E. H. Davison, 'The Contribution of the Casework Agencies', *Case Conference*, 10.10 (April 1964), p. 311.

<sup>108</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 24, 134-135.

<sup>109</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jack Hanson, pp. 10-11.

‘they were so far away in ivory towers that they didn’t know what the hell it was all about’, this was to the detriment of the profession. Remarking that they saw him and his fellow mental welfare officers ‘as being something less than the dust between their chariot wheels’, French clearly took delight in telling Cohen how he corrected his psychiatry lecturer so often that she suggested he take the lectures instead.<sup>110</sup>

On the whole, it is difficult to determine how this hierarchy translated into practice. There is certainly no consensus in the secondary literature. While John Stewart concluded that psychiatric social workers, as a result of their superior training, saw themselves as ‘distinct from, and more professional than, more traditional social workers’, Rona Ferguson found much the same sentiment amongst the almoners.<sup>111</sup> Although such rivalries were probably conducive to continuing professionalisation,<sup>112</sup> they could also act as a cause of stress and a barrier to comradeship.

We should note that, as well as training and education, the particular clients and non-social work colleagues of each branch of social work played a role in their image. Peter Leonard compared conceptions of two social workers who enjoyed professional prestige, the psychiatric social worker and the FSU caseworker, arguing that the false stereotypes around their methods and their clients (respectively, the cooperative parents of the maladjusted child versus the disorganised and immature parents of the ‘problem family’) nevertheless had an impact on how such workers were seen by other agencies, and thus on how they chose to cooperate with them.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, pp. 13, 19.

<sup>111</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 41; Ferguson, ‘Support Not Scorn: The Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s’, p. 44.

<sup>112</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 182.

<sup>113</sup> Peter Leonard, ‘Family Casework and the Child Guidance Clinic’, *Social Work*, 20.2 (April 1963), p. 3.



George Chesters claimed that it was the probation officer's relationship with judges and magistrates, the psychiatric social worker's ability to understand and interpret the jargon of the psychiatrist, and the almoner's connection to the doctors, which gave them their prestige.<sup>114</sup> Teamwork between social workers was, to a considerable degree, affected by the teams they operated in outside of social work.

In fact, one of the main ways in which social workers could help their colleagues in other specialisms was by acting as gateways to other professionals. Psychiatric social workers helped child care officers talk to psychiatrists about their charges,<sup>115</sup> moral welfare workers were a natural link to the local clergy,<sup>116</sup> and general practitioners were commonly accessible thorough almoners.<sup>117</sup> Although the various stereotypes within social work may have caused some unease, they also helped to give some idea of where that particular worker's skills might lie, and the way in which they might help with broader teamwork. On the whole, a social worker was defined, especially within the profession,<sup>118</sup> by the broader, non-social work team in which he or she operated, and each worker was expected to face issues particular to this setting.<sup>119</sup> Their position in the gaps between services frequently meant that social workers were commonly defined as existing on the boundaries of the team in which he or she worked. As we have seen in previous chapters, this was a position which proved productive in some ways and challenging in others.

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<sup>114</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, p. 11.

<sup>115</sup> Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 137-138; Long, "'Often there is a Good Deal to be Done, but Socially Rather Than Medically': The Psychiatric Social Worker as Social Therapist, 1945-1970", pp. 229, 238.

<sup>116</sup> Heasman, *Christians and Social Work*; Hall and Howes, *The Church in Social Work*; Higson, *The Story of a Beginning*.

<sup>117</sup> Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*; Madge Dongray, 'Social Work in General Practice', *The British Medical Journal*, 2.5106 (November 15, 1958), pp. 1220-1223; Collins, *A New Look at Social Work*, p. 11.

<sup>118</sup> Prynn, 'Reflections on past social work practice: The central role of relationship', pp. 99-100.

<sup>119</sup> Snelling, 'Psychiatric Social Work and Social Casework in Other Fields: I', p. 14.

An appreciation of social work's contributions to non-social work teams and to the wider multi-professional culture of the social and medical services, as well as the problems they faced, is thus essential. In fact, because social workers were dispersed across a range of settings, they more commonly worked with other professions than with their own. Almoners, for example, clearly spent more time with doctors than with other social workers, even if they never achieved full status as medical colleagues. Multi-professional teamwork raised issues similar to those experienced between social workers, and, since professional rivalry and negative preconceptions were arguably greater, teamwork as a whole across the welfare state was more liable to seriously fail. However, social workers, with their skills as mediators and interpreters, were a major resource in mitigating this problem.

#### **IV Social Work and Broader Teamwork Practice**

For social workers, interprofessional teamwork took two main forms: as a routine part of everyday practice, such as psychiatric social workers' relationships with psychologists and psychiatrists in child guidance clinics,<sup>120</sup> and responses to, as with teamwork within social work, common clients, problems, and territory. Some branches of social work had particular associations with other professions, although these were not necessarily complimentary: almoners, for example, had to contend with their image as the doctors' 'handmaidens'.<sup>121</sup> Others, notably child care, had connections to a number of different fields but lacked one obvious long-standing

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<sup>120</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*.

<sup>121</sup> Grace Dedman, '1946-1973: Reconstruction and Integration: Social Work in the National Health Service', in Joan Baraclough *et al.* (eds), *One Hundred Years of Health-Related Social Work, 1895 - 1995. Then...Now...Onwards* (Birmingham, 1996), p. 42; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 16.

relationship, resulting in indifference from other professions.<sup>122</sup> Even those branches of social work which had long-standing associations and relationships with particular professions still had to battle to establish a role for themselves as full colleagues. As Chris Nottingham has observed, both in his own work and in his research with Rona Dougall, insecure professionals such as social workers relied on acceptance, support, and a measure of good-will from policy-makers, more established professionals, and even the discerning public.<sup>123</sup>

Gaining acceptance or justifying one's presence within a multi-professional setting was thus an important aspect of teamwork within the welfare state. This was complicated by the fact that many social workers found that they were expected to prioritise their everyday multi-professional teams. Children's officers, for example, would privilege information gathered by those employed within the child care services, while magistrates preferred reports from those social workers within the court system.<sup>124</sup> The majority of these were probation workers, who in fact faced a struggle to maintain their social work identity, and the discretion which came with it, within the legal system.<sup>125</sup> A similar dilemma was faced by social workers in medical settings, who were reluctant to become an official part of the health services lest it lead to what Geraldine Aves titled 'wing-clipping'.<sup>126</sup>

This section discusses social workers' experience of teamwork in three particular areas, all of them demonstrating a different facet of this feature of welfare

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<sup>122</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 76.

<sup>123</sup> Nottingham, 'The Rise of the Insecure Professionals', pp. 445-475, but esp. pp. 459, 465-466; Nottingham and Dougall, 'A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975', pp. 314-318. See also: Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 - 1955*, p. 55.

<sup>124</sup> Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, p. 178.

<sup>125</sup> King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>126</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Geraldine Aves, p. 20.

practice. We shall see how social workers established themselves in medical teams through developing relationships and through demonstrating their professional and ethical credentials, and how the behaviour of elite medical professionals, such as consultants, could prove detrimental to good teamwork practices. By contrast, social workers found a niche for themselves in the legal system with relative ease, and their close relationship with the police force demonstrates that areas of effective teamwork were not necessarily represented in the professional literature. Finally, we examine administration, a field which was perhaps even more important than social work in facilitating good teamwork practices in the social and medical services. However, the preconceptions which social workers held about their administrative colleagues meant that they often acted in a manner which was detrimental to the success of their work.

#### **IV.i Teamwork in the Medical Setting**

From the late nineteenth century onwards, almoners had battled to justify their presence as social workers and as administrators within hospitals.<sup>127</sup> In the post-war period, however, their welfare role became dominant. The work of almoners finally received official approval from the Royal College of Physicians in their 1943 Report on Social and Preventative Medicine,<sup>128</sup> and recognition across the sector followed in the Cope Committee's Report of 1951.<sup>129</sup> Their endeavours to prove their worth

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<sup>127</sup> Sackville, 'Thomas William Cramp, Almoner: The Forgotten Man in a Female Occupation', pp. 96-100; Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>128</sup> Dedman, '1946-1973: Reconstruction and Integration: Social Work in the National Health Service', p. 22; Nottingham and Dougall, 'A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975', p.312. This struggle to gain acceptance from their medical colleagues was a major reason why almoners did not initially join the BFSW. See: MRC, ASW, MSS.378/ASW/B2/1/20, BFSW Constitution, Correspondence, Letter from Lady Almoner to Mrs Crosthwaite, April 4th 1940.

<sup>129</sup> Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study*, Vol. 1, p. 145.

were helped by the war, which unsettled the strict hierarchies of the interwar period.<sup>130</sup> Doris Thorton remembered how ‘referrals came less often as a prescription the doctor ordered, and more often as a request along the lines of “I cannot do a thing about her arthritis. Can you do anything about her loneliness?”’<sup>131</sup> In such moments of desperation, the social worker’s particular contribution became more valuable.

Despite wartime changes and a focus on teamwork in the planning of the National Health Service,<sup>132</sup> many almoners began their work in post-war period only to find that, in practice, consultants still saw their clinical team, the social worker included, as inferior colleagues, there to serve their own indisputable judgement.<sup>133</sup> Many responded to this by developing friendly relationships with the other staff, although this endeavour relied on the involvement of experienced and respected social workers.<sup>134</sup> Ultimately, as reported by Francesca Ward, each worker needed to demonstrate not only their professional abilities to gain acceptance within the team and from consultants, but also their ethical reliability.<sup>135</sup> This was particularly important with nurses, who were often sceptical about the spread of the social

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<sup>130</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 4; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Molly Bree, p. 19. The effect of the war on traditional class and professional relations is a common theme in the secondary literature. See, for example: Anne Digby, *British Welfare Policy: Workhouse to Welfare* (London, 1989), pp. 54-55; Gladstone, ‘The welfare state and the state of welfare’, pp. 2-5; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, pp. 246-248; Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945*, p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> Thorton, ‘Hospital Social Work in Wartime’, p. 120. See also: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 90.

<sup>132</sup> John Stewart, ‘Ideology and Process in the Creation of the British National Health Service’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 14.2 (2002), p. 119.

<sup>133</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Mary Sherlock, p. 10; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 89.

<sup>134</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, pp. 7-8.

<sup>135</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 20; Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975’, p. 326.

services.<sup>136</sup> Since patients were frequently referred to the almoner by the wider medical team, such practical and personal measures were crucial.<sup>137</sup>

Psychiatric social workers had a similar experience. Both Edgar Myers and Molly Bree found that upon starting work they received little recognition from either the psychiatrist or the hospital system as a whole, finally determining that they would have to fashion a niche for psychiatric social work themselves.<sup>138</sup> Bree complemented these efforts by allying herself alongside the ‘three other Ishmaels with no proper place within the tribal set-up’, the occupational therapist, the physiotherapist and the medical superintendent's clerk.<sup>139</sup> Psychiatric social workers had the added issue that, despite the demise of the ‘ancient, in-bred institution’ in which they had formerly worked, there was still limited comprehension of their role. In an example of social workers using their professional networks to address issues in their particular field, many psychiatric social workers, spurred on by the encouragement of Sybil Clement Brown, began increasingly to look for positions outside of the hospital.<sup>140</sup>

A handful of these psychiatric social workers went into child guidance clinics, an institution developed with social work in mind, and cited by Noel Timms as a prime example of good teamwork practice.<sup>141</sup> This was principally because while the social worker led on community issues and the psychiatrist was dominant

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<sup>136</sup> Rona Ferguson, ‘Recollections of life ‘on the district’ in Scotland, 1940-1970’, in Joanna Bornat *et al.* (eds), *Oral History, Health and Welfare* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 155-156; Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975’, p. 319; Ferguson, ‘Support Not Scorn: The Theory and Practice of Maternity Almoners in the 1960s and 1970s’, p. 52.

<sup>137</sup> Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, pp. 94-95; Dedman, ‘1946-1973: Reconstruction and Integration: Social Work in the National Health Service’, pp. 28-29.

<sup>138</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, p. 19.

<sup>139</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Molly Bree, p. 17.

<sup>140</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Molly Bree, pp. 16-17.

<sup>141</sup> Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 219-220.

in clinical matters, the three professions became increasingly flexible as to the tasks they took on.<sup>142</sup> This was helped by the fact that the three professions employed in child guidance frequently underwent some training together, leading to a good knowledge and appreciation of each profession's aptitudes.<sup>143</sup> Timms did note, however, that cooperation and coordination tended to be significantly stronger in diagnosis than in treatment.<sup>144</sup> Effective teamwork at one stage did not necessarily imply good teamwork throughout.

The case of child guidance indicates that an effective way of facilitating good teamwork practices was through education. Ann Loxley, an almoner, spoke of how she and her fellow students picked up, through a series of lectures from mostly London-based consultants, 'the dominant jargon and culture of the setting in which we were to work.'<sup>145</sup> Common training also helped in the socialisation of social workers, promoting shared knowledge and informal relationships at an early stage.<sup>146</sup> This could have the effect of weakening ties with other branches of social work,<sup>147</sup> as did the fact that almoners were encouraged to engage with medical colleagues and to read medical literature.<sup>148</sup> This could be counteracted, however, if the individual worker had access to a strong local social work community, or through a good relationship with their supervisor.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 176.

<sup>143</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, p. 6.

<sup>144</sup> Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 219-220. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 8; Stewart, 'The scientific claims of British child guidance, 1918-1945', p. 422.

<sup>145</sup> Loxley, 'Training with the Institute of Almoners: 1958', p. 130. See also: Nottingham and Dougall, 'A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975', p. 323.

<sup>146</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, p. 6; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 20.

<sup>147</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 34.

<sup>148</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 21; Loxley, 'Training with the Institute of Almoners: 1958', p. 132.

<sup>149</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 16.

Even those social workers who succeeded in establishing themselves still faced the practical issue of managing expectations of their role. Helen Anthony found that the doctors and nurses ‘just wanted me to magic away any of the personal difficulties which prevented the patient falling in exactly with their plans’, and that her popularity with the staff depended on how much easier she could make their tasks.<sup>150</sup> Madge Dongray, meanwhile, felt that she was expected ‘to perform miracles’ and ‘to relieve the doctor of all those painful situations in which he felt unable to be effective in his own right.’<sup>151</sup> Nottingham and Dougall noted that almoners, aware of their small numbers, had to learn to prioritise those areas where they could have the greatest impact, even if this meant leaving some demands for their input unanswered.<sup>152</sup> Although doctors did eventually come to accept and appreciate almoners,<sup>153</sup> there was little evidence that they ever respected them.<sup>154</sup>

We should note that almoners were by no means the only social workers to find teamwork with doctors a trying affair. Both Ruth Evans and Olive Reiner complained that medical professionals passed on complex cases to child care

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<sup>150</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 32, 35.

<sup>151</sup> Dongray, ‘Social Work in General Practice’, p. 43.

<sup>152</sup> Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975’, p. 320.

<sup>153</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 123; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 20. On the contribution of the social worker to the doctor’s work, see: A. A. Baker and Louis Minski, ‘Social Adjustment Of Neurotic Patients After Prefrontal Leucotomy’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.4742 (Nov. 24, 1951), pp. 1239-1243; N. E. Rankin and Jean Dance, ‘Case Of Acute Haemorrhagic Leuco-Encephalitis’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.4996 (Oct. 6, 1956), pp. 808-809; Harold E. R. Wallace and Marion B. H. Whyte, ‘Natural History Of The Psychoneuroses’, *The British Medical Journal*, 1.5115 (Jan. 17, 1959), pp. 144-148.

<sup>154</sup> On doctors being dismissive of social workers, see: Dedman, ‘1946-1973: Reconstruction and Integration: Social Work in the National Health Service’, p. 29; Olive Stephenson, ‘Co-ordination Reviewed’, *Case Conference*, 9.8 (February 1963), p. 210; Dongray, ‘Social Work in General Practice’, p. 43. For examples, see: D. N. Hardcastle, ‘The G.P. And E.C.T.’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.4639 (December 3, 1949), p. 1297; Charles A. Hutt, ‘Problems Of Practice To-Day’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.5412 (Sep. 26, 1964), p. 821; R. C. Wofinden, ‘Health Centres And The General Medical Practitioner’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.5551 (May 27, 1967), pp. 565-567; S. Brandon, ‘The Role of the Medical Teacher in Social Work Education’, *Case Conference*, 15.6 (October 1968), p. 224; S. T. Mildinhal, ‘The Role of a Mental Health Social Worker – Do You Agree?’, *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), p. 183; Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, p. 86.



departments whilst maintaining an air of arrogance and secrecy. Since she had to encourage uncooperative families to trust the decisions of doctors, Evans found this unequal relationship doubly frustrating.<sup>155</sup> Mental welfare officers, meanwhile, found doctors to be wildly unhelpful in those cases when people might need to be removed from their homes: when Ken Powls gained the legislative discretion to ignore the recommendations of doctors that he remove patients, they reacted by reminding him that his decision could result in the patient's suicide.<sup>156</sup> The dismissive attitude of medical professionals towards patients and clients, especially those with psychological issues, also threatened to undermine the welfare practice of the team.<sup>157</sup> Within the welfare state as a whole, doctors were largely unwilling to engage with other professions, especially in the community,<sup>158</sup> but such was their influence that their refusal to cooperate could have serious personal and organisational ramifications.<sup>159</sup> The power and knowledge possessed by doctors was an integral cog in many teamwork processes, but their air of superiority towards their colleagues in less-established professions presented some issues.<sup>160</sup>

#### **IV.ii Social Workers and Teamwork with the Legal Professions**

Social workers had a comparatively simple introduction into the legal system and the courts, where they soon gained sufficient confidence to challenge judicial decisions

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<sup>155</sup> Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 150; Olive Reiner, 'Naught for Your Comfort', *Case Conference*, 15.11 (March 1969), p. 432. On the issue of confidentiality, see: Joan Brandon, 'Personal View', *The British Medical Journal*, 1.5692 (February 7, 1970), p. 361.

<sup>156</sup> Powls, *Many Lives*, p. 63. See also: Val Burnham, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 110. For a more positive view from doctors of mental welfare officers in the community, see: G. Milner *et al.*, 'The Team System And Admissions To A Mental Hospital', *The British Medical Journal*, 1.5327 (February 9, 1963), pp. 389-390.

<sup>157</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 13; Joyce Rimmer, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 119.

<sup>158</sup> Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880-1970*, pp. 89, 109.

<sup>159</sup> Langan, 'The Contested Concept of Need', pp. 9-10.

<sup>160</sup> Lowe, 'Postwar Welfare', p. 369.

which they deemed detrimental to clients' welfare.<sup>161</sup> Social workers from all branches were keen to advocate welfare and casework instead of prison sentences, which led to some unease amongst social workers about the explicit authority of the legal system.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, it was social workers who, as Eghigian *et al.* have argued, 'more than any other group of professionals...came to serve as the bridge between social services and criminal law.'<sup>163</sup> Even if probation officers, according to George Chesters, had 'the ear of the magistrates and the judges',<sup>164</sup> they often held more permissive values than their colleagues.<sup>165</sup>

This, however, was mitigated by a knowledge of and a respect for the roles and skills of other professionals. In the case of the legal system, this was partially fostered by the fact that some social workers (including Eileen Younghusband) acted as magistrates themselves,<sup>166</sup> and by the fact that social workers were often invited to informal meetings between the professions.<sup>167</sup> The main issue which judges and magistrates had with social workers, deciphering the frequently-psychoanalytic jargon of their reports, could be easily solved by enlisting the help of a probation officer.<sup>168</sup> Social workers were not above lampooning the po-faced formalities of the court (and we can assume that magistrates and judges had their opinions about social workers),<sup>169</sup> but an acknowledgement of professional boundaries and the existence of

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<sup>161</sup> Lawson *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 81, 108-110; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ilse Westheimer, p. 13.

<sup>162</sup> Phyllida Parsloe, 'Through the Eyes of the Probation Officer', *British Journal of Social Work*, 2.1 (1972), pp. 21-26; Parsloe, *The Work of the Probation and After-Care Officer*, pp. 22-23; King, *The Probation and After-Care Service*, pp. 185-193.

<sup>163</sup> Eghigian *et al.*, 'Introduction: The Self as Project: Politics and the Human Sciences in the Twentieth Century', p. 22.

<sup>164</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, p. 11. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 30.

<sup>165</sup> Jones, *Eileen Younghusband: A Biography*, p. 106.

<sup>166</sup> Jones, *Eileen Younghusband: A Biography*, pp. 106-107.

<sup>167</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ilse Westheimer, p. 14. On the importance of the pub for social work relationships, see also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 7; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, p. 8; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>168</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, p. 12; Stroud, *Touch and Go*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>169</sup> Lawson *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 77-81; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 28-37.

clear links between the court and social work departments meant that this was an instance where teamwork was effective.

The role of social workers within the court system was relatively well-documented in the professional literature, although the oral histories and autobiographical sources indicate that their relationship with the police in the field was an integral part of their welfare practice. As French told Cohen, 'I had a very close (I think we all did) and special relationship with the police. Because the police were the first line that got most of the calls.'<sup>170</sup> Aside from their obvious connection to probation work, and their often-neglected teamwork with child care workers,<sup>171</sup> the police offered a source of support when working with dangerous clients or those involved in criminal activity. Indeed, Ken Powls reported that during his work as a mental welfare officer, he would sometimes call for police support when dealing with violent patients,<sup>172</sup> while local police officers were often useful for retrieving those who had escaped from institutions, not least because their reach extended across local authority and professional boundaries.<sup>173</sup>

In turn, members of the police force were keen to enlist the help of social workers, especially to help with emergencies involving psychiatric illness or abandoned children, although they found the restricted working hours of social work departments to be a frustration.<sup>174</sup> Social workers were often summoned to cases by a

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<sup>170</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 17.

<sup>171</sup> Snelling, 'Psychiatric Social Work and Social Casework in Other Fields: I', p. 14; Timms, *Social Casework, Principles and Practice*, pp. 126-147; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 26-37; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 76; Donnison *et al*, *Social Policy and Administration*, p. 98; Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, pp. 174-181. For a more theoretical analysis of children and the law in this period, see: Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate*, pp. 7-12.

<sup>172</sup> Ken Powls, *Many Lives*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>173</sup> Kenneth Brill, 'Case Conference or Jamboree? (A Year's Social Work in a Children's Reception Home)', *Case Conference*, 1.1 (May 1954), p. 13; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>174</sup> Jackson, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969', p. 636.

telephone call or the arrival of a police car at their home; Ken Powls was even pulled out of church on a Sunday evening by the local constable.<sup>175</sup> It was once again, however, the informal connections which social workers had with their local constabulary which made the difference, both in terms of acquiring information and getting cooperation from other social, medical, or military services.<sup>176</sup>

This does raise the question of why social workers' relationships with local police were so close, and why this fact is not more apparent in the professional literature. With regards to the former, it seems that police and social workers saw themselves as points on the same continuum, that there was an essential element of social work to policing, and an authoritarian aspect to social work.<sup>177</sup> We should note, however, that social workers preferred informal cooperation with the police, and were loath to use any terms in their reports, such as 'neglected', which might result in formal legal intervention.<sup>178</sup> Social workers were also concerned that explicit cooperation might lead welfare clients to conflate the disciplinary force of the law with the more caring function of the welfare services, especially since public knowledge about the police was that much greater than about social work.<sup>179</sup>

Social workers seemed to be happy to associate with the police, but reluctant to be associated with them, such as when Jane Sparrow, during her student days, enlisted the help of a local policeman in finding a house she was scheduled to visit

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<sup>175</sup> Powls, *Many Lives*, p. 59; Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 104; Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 109; Stroud, *Shorn Lamb*, pp. 107, 111; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 122.

<sup>176</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 128. Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 104.

<sup>177</sup> Jackson, 'Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969', pp. 623-648, esp. pp. 625, 637, 647.

<sup>178</sup> Macnicol, 'From 'Problem Family' to 'Underclass', 1945-95', p. 80.

<sup>179</sup> D. E. G. Plowman, 'The Role of the Social Worker. A Psychologist's Comments', *Case Conference*, 4.6 (November 1957), p. 171. This was not a baseless concern: as Karen Healy has demonstrated, 'activists frequently conflate the power exercised by social workers with other forms of professional power, such as that exercised by doctors, lawyers or counsellors'. Karen Healy, *Social Work Practices: Contemporary Perspectives on Change* (London, 2000), p. 23.

but made sure to turn him out before she actually arrived.<sup>180</sup> Nevertheless, the relationship between social workers and the police indicates that good teamwork practice was not necessarily heralded in the professional literature. Although social workers and police officers may have had different public images, there was enough common ground in practice for them to engage in routine collaboration.

#### **IV.iii Social Workers and Administrators**

We can contrast this relationship with that which social workers had with administrators. Whereas they had cooperated with the police despite some obvious differences in principles, social workers' attitude towards the administrative aspects of the social and medical services was more fractious. We should note that the label of 'administration' covered a wide range of roles, including those responsible for assessing the effectiveness of the welfare services and those who had made the transition from field to desk to take up management roles. For this reason, the lines between management, administration, and practice could be subtle.<sup>181</sup> Social workers of all levels were still expected to maintain a case-load, indicating that administration were seen as insufficiently important to be a role in itself, whilst those who were tasked with directing social work were accorded little status within their local authority.<sup>182</sup>

Although (or perhaps because) social workers were compelled to cooperate with the administrative services,<sup>183</sup> they felt that this branch of the welfare state had

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<sup>180</sup> Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 8. See also: Noel Timms, 'The role of the social worker', *New Society*, 3 Sep 1964, p. 20.

<sup>181</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Sybil Clement Brown, p. 14. Some social work roles had historically been primarily administrative, such as pre-NHS almoners: Burt, 'Social work occupations in England, 1900-39: Changing the focus', p. 754.

<sup>182</sup> Brown, 'Introduction', pp. 4, 7.

<sup>183</sup> Hall, 'The coming of social work', p. 24; Wickwar and Wickwar, *The Social Services*, p. 281.

aims inherently contrary to their own. In fact, as we saw in Chapter 1, social workers felt responsible for protecting their clients against the impersonal administrative culture of the welfare state.<sup>184</sup> As Timms noted, the administrator was one of the figures against whom social workers identified themselves,<sup>185</sup> principally because he or she sought to fit clients into pre-conceived categories, which social workers felt was contrary to their own approach.<sup>186</sup> This view of administration within social work is perhaps explained by Clarke and Newman's work on the organisational settlement: given the choice between the paths of professionalism or bureaucracy, social workers opted for the latter despite being trained for the former, with the result that they had to actively identify themselves *against* the administrative machine.<sup>187</sup>

On closer inspection, however, we find a more complex story, one which revolves around social workers feeling alienated by administration as an impersonal structure, but aided by administrators as people. A number of the social workers interviewed by Burnham and Cohen reported that the support of administrative staff enabled them to focus on their casework duties,<sup>188</sup> with Snelling concluding that although they could be 'rivalrous' (*sic*), administrators were on the whole 'great

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<sup>184</sup> ASW, *Notes on the Ethics of Social Work* (Wallington, 1953), p. 19. See also: Richard M. Titmuss, 'The Administrative Setting of Social Service: Some Historical Reflections', *Case Conference*, 1.1, (May 1954), p. 9; Shapiro, 'The Caseworker, the Welfare Officer and the Administrator in the Social Services: I', p. 82; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Margaret Simey, p. 14; Joan Eyden, 'The Reorganisation of the Social Services from the Caseworker's Point of View', *Case Conference*, 3.10 (April 1957), p. 302; Kuenstler, 'What is Social Group Work?', p. 24.

<sup>185</sup> Noel Timms, 'The Boundaries of Casework', *Case Conference*, 4.5 (October 1957), p. 140. See also: Rogers and Dixon, *Portrait of Social Work*, p. 163; *The A.S.W. News*, July 1962, p. i; Letter from Dorothy Hodgeson-Nicoll, *Case Conference*, 15.2 (June 1968), p. 53.

<sup>186</sup> R. Wood, 'Personal and Professional Attitudes and Conduct of the Social Worker', in ASW, *Morals and the Social Worker, A Report of the Conference September 18th – 20th, 1959* (London, 1959), pp. 37-38; Arthur Collis, 'Casework in a Statutory and Voluntary Setting', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 457; Dorothy M. Deed, 'Casework and its Administrative Setting', *Case Conference*, 1.11 (March 1955), p. 8.

<sup>187</sup> Clarke and Newman, *The Managerial State*, pp. 5-7. See also: Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society*, p. 14.

<sup>188</sup> Hilary Corick, Carol Clark, and Keith Hiscock, quoted in: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 134; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 14; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ilse Westheimer, p. 13.

allies'.<sup>189</sup> In fact, there was the strong possibility that social workers posed more of an issue to administrators than the other way round. Helen Anthony reported that the administrative team in her hospital were glad to finally have an almoner who answered the phone, implying that her predecessors had ignored this side of their job.<sup>190</sup> Joan Lawson, who spoke warmly of her administrative colleagues, reported the view of Miss O'Grady, the Children's Officer who ran her department, that administration should support social casework, while social workers did not exist to serve 'the local government machine.' However, Lawson noted that O'Grady, with her motto of 'Humanism, not bureaucracy, that's what we want,' was often the main impediment to effective care.<sup>191</sup> There is indeed a lack of evidence, official or anecdotal, that social workers ever strived to ease the work of the administrative services. As Lipsky has argued, this is an almost inevitable result of street-level bureaucracy, whereby the field worker exercises a discretion which is not available to those tasked with administering the welfare process.<sup>192</sup>

On balance, social workers and administrators both had clear roles, but neither had the sufficient information or insight to appreciate the contribution of the other profession. Cecil French had a foot in both camps, which gave him the advantage, he argued, that 'I could talk both lots of language and I could be rude to social workers because, on the one hand, they complained about administrators and at the same time they refused to administer. And I could equally be rude to administrators because they didn't appreciate the approach of social workers.'<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 14;

<sup>190</sup> Helen Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 23.

<sup>191</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>192</sup> Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, *passim.*, but esp. pp. 18-25.

<sup>193</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Cecil French, p. 29. See also: Dorothy M. Deed, 'Casework and its Administrative Setting', *Case Conference*, 1.11 (March 1955), pp. 7-9; Kay Wells, 'Administrative Work – Notes from a Project in Casework Administration', *Social Work*, 17.4 (October 1960), p. 106.

Over the course of the period, as social workers became increasingly familiar with administrators and with management concepts,<sup>194</sup> social workers began to view administrative work as complementary, rather than detrimental, to their own. They realised that engaging with administration was not only necessary but might also expand the remit and clientele of social work.<sup>195</sup> Kathleen Slack, meanwhile, argued in *Social Administration and the Citizen* that good teamwork was good administration,<sup>196</sup> while Esping-Andersen has emphasised that it is only with ‘the rise of modern bureaucracy’ that a welfare state becomes possible.<sup>197</sup>

Nevertheless, this did not necessarily mean that, in practice, social workers began to assist administrators in their efforts to ensure well-coordinated services. Much as the frequently dismissive attitude of doctors towards social workers had the effect of undermining good teamwork, so too did the preconceptions which many social workers held about administrators. Critical appraisals of social work even argued that these colleagues had retreated from the difficulties of the field to the comfort of the desk,<sup>198</sup> and that bureaucracy was preventing social workers from

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<sup>194</sup> Duncan Smith, ‘Communications and Change in the Social Services’, *Social Work*, 24.2 (April 1967), p. 18. Concepts from management could also have the effect, however, of formalising personal relationships, which led to increased tension between social workers and administration. See: Margaret Thomas, ‘Role Understanding as a Function of Good Communication? An Examination of Roles in the Personal Social Services’, *Social Work*, 27.3 (July 1970), p. 8.

<sup>195</sup> O. Stevenson, ‘Implications for Social Workers’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Administration* (London, 1966), p. 21. See also: Kenneth Brill, ‘Preventative Work by Children’s Departments: Two Points of View. Part 1. – A Countryman’s View’, *Social Work*, 18.1 (January 1961), p. 13; S. Watson, ‘The Place of Administration in Social Work’, in ASW, *New Thinking About Administration* (London, 1966), pp. 9-14; Duncan Smith, ‘Communications and Change in the Social Services’, *Social Work*, 24.2 (April 1967), p. 18.

<sup>196</sup> Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*. See also: Donnison *et al.*, *Social Policy and Administration*; Parker, *Local Health and Welfare Services*, p. 14.

<sup>197</sup> Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, p. 13.

<sup>198</sup> Robert F. Edon, ‘Do People Really Matter?’, *Case Conference*, 11.7 (January 1965), p. 223. See also: Letter from A. F. Hughes, *Case Conference*, 12.1 (May 1965), p. 13. Lipsky has argued that transition is relatively common, since those who choose to withdraw from the field seldom do so completely: Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy*, pp. 143-144.



fulfilling their proper political function.<sup>199</sup> Many social workers were content to critique rather than address the deficiencies of welfare administration.<sup>200</sup> This was, admittedly, not without reason,<sup>201</sup> but the dismissive and uncooperative attitude of professions like social work only exacerbated the issue. Rodney Lowe has argued that, throughout the period, the quality of welfare provision was dependant ‘on the administrative capacity of local government’, which was ‘widely agreed to be defective’.<sup>202</sup> The porous boundaries of this part of the social services, as well as the complex relationship between the field worker and the administrator, indicate that the story may in fact be more complex. This was an area of the social and medical services where better teamwork practices, especially informal cooperation, would have made a difference, not least because the administrator held much of the responsibility for the efficient coordination of services.

## **VI Social Workers and Multi-Professional Teamwork**

Perhaps ironically, matters of administration lay at the heart of the main site of multi-professional work within the welfare state, the meeting. If social workers did not engage in interprofessional teamwork as part of their everyday practice, then this was the most common context in which they met their professional colleagues. As we saw when we discussed the policy framework for teamwork, these meetings were predominantly case conferences and coordinating committees: Alan Cohen, when interviewing Ursula Behr, described the latter as ‘rather a grand affair where

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<sup>199</sup> Francis M. Yanney, ‘The Case for “Pressure Politics” in Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 16.5 (September 1969), p. 167.

<sup>200</sup> Jones, *State Social Work and the Working Class*, p. 50.

<sup>201</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, pp. 98-101; Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 292.

<sup>202</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 101.

discussions about strategy were held, and responsibility for cases agreed', while the former 'were more about tactics really in relation to a family'.<sup>203</sup> Both statutory and voluntary agencies reserved the power to call such meetings, and the attendees were commonly both professionals and members of the public. It is little surprise, then, that Bronwen Rees complained that 'Nearly all welfare officers and social workers suffer from a plethora of committees'.<sup>204</sup> As much as we might picture welfare practice as occurring in the field and the institution, we should recognise that meetings with other professionals could fill much of the welfare worker's diary.

Social workers viewed their barrage of meetings in a variety of ways. Robina Addis commented that it felt 'rather as an honour to serve on them', and that they were her 'life lines'.<sup>205</sup> This was partially because they offered an opportunity to work alongside experts in their respective fields, perhaps why Rees saved her best formal attire for such meetings,<sup>206</sup> but also because they served to underline problems and strengths common across the profession, as well as between social work and other professions.<sup>207</sup> As Behr reported, however, the process was 'very time consuming. All getting there and talking and not always to the point.'<sup>208</sup>

In addition, these meetings could stray from their intended purpose, with coordinating committees often dissolving into case conferences, so that specific clients were discussed rather than general strategy.<sup>209</sup> Such issues were further complicated by the presence of members of the public, whose 'unfounded value

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<sup>203</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 14.

<sup>204</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 80.

<sup>205</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Robina Scott Addis, pp. 11, 35.

<sup>206</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 10. 1

<sup>207</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 26; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 14; National Council of Social Service (eds), *Community Organisation: Work in Progress*, p. 13.

<sup>208</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 14.

<sup>209</sup> Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, p. 220.

judgements and old notions of social organisation' could, according to children's officer and lecturer Arthur Collis, 'exert pressures on a caseworker just as severe as those which are possible within a local authority.'<sup>210</sup> More than public pressure, however, it was the sheer variety of different professions in attendance, usually with their own interests and agendas, which caused problems.<sup>211</sup> Olive Stevenson, in her influential article on coordination, noted that while some professionals were concerned with therapeutic intervention, others, such as Housing Officers, felt themselves to be present as 'guardians of Society's resources', looking to ensure that taxpayers were not exploited.<sup>212</sup> Even if agreement on information could be reached within the meeting room, a coordinated plan of action did not necessarily result. This is exemplified in multi-professional responses to the issue of the 'problem family'.

## **VI.i Multi-Professional Approaches to the 'Problem Family'**

We have already seen, in the section on social workers cooperating in the care of children, how easily a multitude of services could become involved in a single case. In fact, one article from the *Manchester Guardian*, quoted by J. B. Tremlow at a 1956 conference on social work in the neighbourhood, gave the perhaps generous estimate that the time spent on a single family by the various voluntary and statutory services could total more than sixty years.<sup>213</sup> The cases on which these multi-

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<sup>210</sup> Arthur Collis, 'Casework in a Statutory and Voluntary Setting', *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 459. See also: Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, pp. 155-156; Letter from Mary Keenleyside, *Social Work*, 16.2 (April 1959), p. 51; Joan E. Kirkpatrick, 'The Use of Material Help in Social Work', *Case Conference*, 6.4 (September 1959), p. 85; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Margaret Simey, p. 14.

<sup>211</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 82; Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 179-181; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 77.

<sup>212</sup> Stevenson, 'Co-Ordination Reviewed', pp. 208-210. See also: Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 179-181; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 77.

<sup>213</sup> J. B. Tremlow, 'The Abiding Task of the Good Neighbour', in *Social Work in the Neighbourhood report of the proceedings of the Joint Conference of Councils of Social Service and Community Associations 13-15 July 1956 at the University of Nottingham* (London, 1956), p. 23.

professional committees focused were often particularly challenging for the inextricable connections between the various problems, be they housing, poverty, health, or education: as a voluntary worker ventured at a case conference, ‘The problems in this family simply swarm all over each other.’<sup>214</sup> Overall, the attempts within the welfare state to coordinate services in an effort to address the existence of problem families and the resources expended on them had limited success, and may even have led to wider problems for both clients and professionals. The topic of ‘problem families’ is an excellent example of how the practice and the theory of teamwork could come into conflict.

Although concern around problem families predated the instigation of coordinating committees and case conferences,<sup>215</sup> there was indeed a sense that it were given a fillip by post-war legislation.<sup>216</sup> It is crucial to note that while there was a large number of professions present, the position of social workers in the gaps and on the margins, their connections with multiple departments, and their familiarity with the families and communities under discussion, meant that they felt particularly well-equipped to contribute to discussions of ‘problem families’, and were not afraid to present their professional involvement as crucial.<sup>217</sup> We know from other accounts, however, that, although the Children’s Department was frequently a key

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<sup>214</sup> Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 180. See also: Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, p. 174.

<sup>215</sup> On discussions of problem families, see: Welshman, ‘The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the ‘Problem Family’, 1940-1970’, pp. 457-476; Philip and Timms, *The Problem of ‘The Problem Family’*; Taylor and Rogaly, “‘Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type’: Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942-1963”, pp. 429-453. On discussions of problem families before the beginning of formalised case conferences, see: Mary Richardson, ‘A Letter of Work Amongst Problem Families’, *Social Work*, 7.2 (April 1950), pp. 425-432; Stephens (ed.), *Problem Families, An Experiment in Social Rehabilitation*; Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*.

<sup>216</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jack Hanson, p. 8.

<sup>217</sup> Sidney I. Briskin, ‘Some Aspects of Family Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 10.6 (November 1963), p. 162. See also: Barbara N. Rogers, ‘The Administrative Setting of Social Service, Some Practical Implications’, *Case Conference*, 1.3 (July 1954), p. 13. Joan M. Smith, ‘The Child Guidance Clinic Psychiatric Social Worker and the Waiting List’, *Case Conference*, 2.2 (June 1955), p. 23. Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, p. 82

voice,<sup>218</sup> most multi-professional discussions were led by experienced doctors or those working in the higher echelons of public health.<sup>219</sup> Both Welshman and Starkey have argued that these formal meetings were often the primary battleground for struggles over control of the various medical and social services, and this is strongly borne out by the attempts by social workers to portray themselves as central to identifying and addressing the key issues.<sup>220</sup>

The prestige to be gained by tackling the problem family, as well as the fact that while information was shared and responsibility was assigned, actual actions were not, meant that 'over-visiting' became a serious problem, and one caused, or at least aggravated, by multi-professional meetings. This was largely because, as Marian Penny told Burnham, the diagnostic abilities of the social and medical services had overtaken the ability to take meaningful action, so that every worker thought that he or she knew the origins and thus the solution of the issue, and thus felt compelled to visit the family.<sup>221</sup> The fact that, as I have already mentioned, many coordinating committee meetings dissolved into case conferences meant that information was shared at the explicit expense of delegating action and intervention.<sup>222</sup> Much as with child guidance clinics, the diagnostic strengths of teamwork did not translate into better service provision. Clear leadership or the direction of a skilful chair could help to ensure clear practical outcomes, but this was

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<sup>218</sup> Starkey, 'The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968: The Case of Family Service Units', p. 439.

<sup>219</sup> Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 82; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 129; Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 179-181.

<sup>220</sup> Welshman, 'The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the 'Problem Family', 1940-1970', p. 471; Starkey, 'The Medical Officer of Health, the Social Worker, and the Problem Family, 1943 to 1968: The Case of Family Service Units', pp. 421-441.

<sup>221</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 114, 133; 'Editorial', *Case Conference*, 2.4 (August 1955), p. 4; Rees, *No Fixed Abode*, p. 15; Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 8.

<sup>222</sup> Slack, *Social Administration and the Citizen*, p. 220.

not always present (or, indeed, recognised).<sup>223</sup> Tackling problem families was, however, an issue which demanded more resources than child guidance, so this disparity between coordinating information and coordinating action was much more severe.

By the end of the period, the issue of over-visiting had received official recognition as a serious problem, with a discussion paper prepared by the Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers (established in 1963 to consider matters of professional unification) admitting that such uncoordinated intervention was ‘not only uneconomic from the point of view of the community but frustrating for the social workers and confusing for the people being helped.’<sup>224</sup> As this discussion paper hinted, the issue of over-visiting had a detrimental effect on welfare clients as well as on the professionals, with Joan Eyden observing that in such cases, ‘even if Mrs. Brown was not a problem-mother to begin with she very soon becomes one.’<sup>225</sup> Many clients became what social workers called ‘case-hardened’ or ‘welfare-wise’,<sup>226</sup> and this self-perpetuating status gave the family (usually the mother) a measure of control over the various professions gathered on their doorstep.<sup>227</sup> In fact, Forder noted that some clients gained a certain prestige within

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<sup>223</sup> For an example of positive leadership, see Ilse Westheimer’s recollections of Dr Whiles, the Director of the Nottingham County Clinic in the post-war period: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ilse Westheimer, p. 13. On the effects of poor leadership, see: Sparrow, *Diary of a Student Social Worker*, p. 4.

<sup>224</sup> MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/2, Social Work: General “Seeböhm”, Family Services, pamphlets, correspondence, circulars, papers 1965, Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers, Discussion Paper No. 1, The Re-Organisation of Social Work Services, p. 3.

<sup>225</sup> Joan Eyden, ‘The Reorganisation of the Social Services from the Caseworker’s Point of View’, *Case Conference*, 3.10 (April 1957), p. 302. See also: Robina S. Addis, “‘The Neglected Child and the Social Services’” (review article), *Social Work*, 11.3 (July 1954), p. 963.

<sup>226</sup> Shelia Kay, Alan Davies and Stanley Ambrose, ‘From Psychiatric Social Work to Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 23.2 (April 1966), p. 20; Augustine John, *Race in the Inner City: A Report from Handsworth, Birmingham* (London, 1972), p. 30.

<sup>227</sup> Macnicol, ‘From ‘Problem Family’ to ‘Underclass’, 1945-95’, p. 85. For reflections in the primary literature: Peter R. Day, ‘Rivalry at Work’, *Case Conference*, 12.1 (May 1965), p. 11; ‘The Paediatrician’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.5702 (Apr. 18, 1970), p. 172; Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, p. 101; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 114-126.

their communities from their skilful negation of the welfare services.<sup>228</sup> The work of both Peel and Welshman reminds us that this notion of the working-class man or woman outsmarting the well-meaning but clueless visitor was by no means limited to this time-period,<sup>229</sup> but it is worth noting for the purposes of the present discussion that teamwork could sometimes play into the hands of clients by alerting them to their ‘problem family’ status, and thus allowing them to keep the social services in the dark.

Whether it was the professionals or the family itself who came off the worse in these encounters, it was not only an example of the limits of teamwork, but also of its complicity in its own failings. The problem family demonstrates how cooperation around the committee table did not translate into, and in fact hindered, coordinated practice on the street. In fact, some social workers dismissed claims that over-visiting was an issue, arguing that overlapping services ‘may exist more in the wounded feelings of workers and administrators than in reality’, and were preferable to service failure.<sup>230</sup> Nevertheless, over-visiting clearly constituted a failure of teamwork, and the increasing professional prestige and advancing diagnostic skills of those involved were a hindrance rather than a help. In this, social workers were as guilty as the other professionals seeking to advance their professional prestige.

## **VI.ii            Multi-Professional Teamwork and Emotional Support**

There were other areas, we should note, where a multi-professional approach proved invaluable, just as there were aspects of teamwork where the contribution of social

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<sup>228</sup> Forder, *Casework and Social Administration*, p. 190.

<sup>229</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*; Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded, 1880-2000*. See also: Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science*, pp. 273-274.

<sup>230</sup> National Council of Social Service (eds), *Community Organisation: Work in Progress*, p. 18.

workers was vital. Throughout the thesis, we have touched on the role of emotional labour within welfare work, often with regards to the difficulties of navigating the emotions of clients and to social workers' use of emotions as part of their techniques in the field. We also saw earlier in this chapter how the social work team could act as a solace to the individual worker. This was also true with larger multi-professional teams, but here, many social workers reported playing a key role in the emotional support of colleagues. Their background in helping people to understand their own feelings and those of them around them meant that they were well-placed to engage with the emotional strain wrought by welfare work.

This aspect of social workers' contribution to teamwork was particularly evident during the war, when the experience of hostilities, especially within medical settings, was a cause of stress and despondency. Snelling recalled how colleagues, especially the younger, less-experienced doctors and nurses, would flee to the social work office to talk 'about these patients that they found so terribly upsetting. These young men that were obviously going to die, very slowly or quickly. There was real support work that one had to do to the staff.'<sup>231</sup> Likewise, Enid Warren reported that, after bombing raids and peaks in demand for services, it was commonly social workers who would 'pick up the bits so that you could keep people's egos up a bit.'<sup>232</sup> A crucial part of their acceptance into pre-existing teams, this role continued within the NHS, where social workers became an integral part of what Helen Anthony identified as the 'safety valves for feelings of inadequacy and anger'.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, p. 17. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 12.

<sup>232</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Enid Warren, p. 14.

<sup>233</sup> Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, p. 96. See also: Helen Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, pp. 58-59; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Jean Snelling, pp. 17-18; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 12.



This was largely because social workers continued to sit on the periphery of the central medical team, where their freedom of movement around the institution meant that they did not ‘have to bear all the day-to-day stresses of the ward’.<sup>234</sup> The social worker’s exterior status explicitly worked in their favour, since it meant that they provided an accessible yet sufficiently detached space for the discussion of emotional work.

Another aspect of this contribution to the emotional stability of the team was the suppression of one’s own feelings, a crucial element within emotional labour.<sup>235</sup> This was applicable to all social workers. Winnicott explicitly told Cohen that part of the social worker’s professional task was engaging with emotionally-fraught issues, such as deciding the fate of children, without adding to the strain of the discussions involved.<sup>236</sup> This role was apparent not only in institutions,<sup>237</sup> but also in communities and with informal carers.<sup>238</sup> The emotional labour of social work could thus prove useful in dealing with those who applied and then failed to become foster parents,<sup>239</sup> or with fellow professionals who felt that they were powerless to intervene or help in long-term cases.<sup>240</sup> A further element of this was delegating sensitive responsibilities within the clinical team, such as an example cited by Anthony Forder when it fell to the almoner to assign a consultant to tell a patient she

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<sup>234</sup> Anthony, *Medical Social Work*, p. 45. See also: Dedman, ‘1946-1973: Reconstruction and Integration: Social Work in the National Health Service’, p. 42.

<sup>235</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p. 7.

<sup>236</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Clare Winnicott, p. 5. See also: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p. 12; Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, p. 89.

<sup>237</sup> Checking the progress of clients who were in institutions was a routine part of many field workers’ duties, and it is clear from personal accounts that this was also helpful for supporting residential workers. See, for example: Stroud, *Touch and Go*, pp. 186-187; Evans, *Happy Families*, pp. 133-134, 159.

<sup>238</sup> E.M. Goldberg, ‘Working in the Community: What Kind of Help do People Need?’, *Social Work*, 22.2-22.3 (April and July 1965), p. 13.

<sup>239</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 68-71; Noel Timms, ‘Foster Parents and the Child Care Service (1)’, *Case Conference*, 7.5 (October 1960), pp. 111-117.

<sup>240</sup> Jessica Seth-Smith, ‘The New Look in Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 448.

was a terminal case.<sup>241</sup> In addition, social workers could work to remove the stigma of emotional displays, both amongst welfare clients and professionals.<sup>242</sup> This was important at a time where concerns about the physical and psychological effects of improperly expressing emotions were becoming established.<sup>243</sup>

By allowing other professionals an emotional outlet or by mitigating the emotional issues they faced, social workers helped them to continue their work with clients and colleagues in a professional manner, thus contributing to the wider culture of cooperation within multi-professional teams. Hochschild, in an extension of Erving Goffmann's work, has highlighted the importance of front- and back-room personas in emotional work; social workers allowed colleagues to maintain their caring and professional image by offering them an outlet for their unacceptable feelings.<sup>244</sup> This was particularly true for male professionals, for whom overt displays of emotion were especially taboo.<sup>245</sup> The patriarchal and familial

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<sup>241</sup> Forder, *Social Casework and Administration*, p. 183. In fact, Nottingham and Dougall found that almoners were largely responsible for changing the policy whereby patients and their families were not informed about a terminal diagnosis. Nottingham and Dougall, 'A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975', p. 321.

<sup>242</sup> Letter from Diana R. Paice, *Case Conference*, 2.9 (January 1956), p. 16; R. C. Wright, 'Social Work Education', *Case Conference*, 4.3 (July 1957), p. 85.

<sup>243</sup> Mark Jackson, *The Age of Stress: Science and the Search for Stability* (Oxford, 2013), p. 221; Hera Cook, 'From Controlling Emotion to Expressing Feelings in Mid-Twentieth-Century England', *Journal of Social History*, 47.3 (2014), pp. 627–646; Wills, 'Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950–1970', pp. 169, 178. For more on the historical construction of the proper and improper expression of feeling, see: Sheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', pp. 209–214, 215–217.

<sup>244</sup> Gray, *Face to Face with Emotions in Health and Social Care*, p. 1

<sup>245</sup> Victoria Robinson and Jenny Hockey, *Masculinities in Transition* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 159–160; Gray, *Face to Face with Emotions in Health and Social Care*, pp. 154–154. On the role of gender in establishing the hierarchy of the team, see also: Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, p. 57; Nottingham and Dougall, 'A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975', p. 336.

connotations of this arrangement were, and still are, a common feature of the gendered division of emotional work within health and social care teams.<sup>246</sup>

It is likely that this aspect of social workers' contribution to teamwork in the welfare state is under-represented in the primary literature, since those responsible for emotional labour have been shown to dismiss it as a necessary role of little note.<sup>247</sup> Nevertheless, social workers could, by facilitating the healthy expression of emotion amongst their beleaguered colleagues, and of voluntary workers and family carers, assist in maintaining the standards of care and professionalism within the medical and social services. In the case that this emotional labour threatened to become overwhelming, the social worker could always, as we saw earlier, fall back on the support of other social work teams.

### **VI.iii Multi-Professional Approaches to Practical Issues**

As well as their knowledge of and familiarity with emotional issues, the practical skills of social workers also allowed them to contribute to collaborative projects within the welfare state. A major component of this was, as we saw in the first chapter, helping to ensure efficiency by guiding people through and to the relevant branch of the medical and social services. Although they were not the only profession with a gatekeeping function, the general practitioner being the other notable example,<sup>248</sup> the fact that they were content to delegate cases beyond their

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<sup>246</sup> Gray, *Face to Face with Emotions in Health and Social Care*, p. 6; Lawton, 'The Myth of Altruism: A Psychohistory of Public Agency Social Work', pp. 265-308; Heraud, *Sociology and Social Work*, p. 256.

<sup>247</sup> Gray, *Face to Face with Emotions in Health and Social Care*, pp. 154, 158.

<sup>248</sup> Langan, 'The Contested Concept of Need', p. 10; Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 665.

professional competence meant that they were arguably the most effective.<sup>249</sup>

Rodney Lowe has suggested that social workers commonly failed to ‘discharge all the responsibilities which they sought to reserve for themselves’.<sup>250</sup> Their ability to guide people to the relevant services, as well as a willingness to assist other professionals by helping to remove or mitigate administrative and bureaucratic obstructions, means that this argument does not stand up to scrutiny.<sup>251</sup>

Their particular skills meant that social workers were also frequently involved in projects which required both a keen knowledge of local service and provision and a measure of interpersonal insight. A common example of this was addressing unemployment. J. Hope Wallace gave the example at the 1956 ‘Boundaries of Casework’ conference of a psychiatric social worker who worked with the Employment Board to try and get those with psychiatric illnesses back into work. Although the social worker involved in the first project faced difficulties in explaining their various skills to the other groups involved, the project was deemed a success: of the forty-one people selected, twenty were in employment by the end.<sup>252</sup> Another positive example was cited by E. M. Fairbairn at the end of the period, when staff in the Youth Employment Service drew together personnel from the Ministries of Labour and of Social Security, officials from the Mental Welfare and the Welfare

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<sup>249</sup> L. Ratoff and Barbara Pearson, ‘Social Case-Work In General Practice: An Alternative Approach’, *The British Medical Journal*, 2.5707 (May 23, 1970), pp. 475-477; Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, pp. 25, 45; Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, *passim*, but esp. pp. 11, 102; Dedman, ‘1946-1973: Reconstruction and Integration: Social Work in the National Health Service’, pp. 22, 34; Timms, *Social Casework*, pp. 122-124; Ziman, ‘Medical Social Work’, p. 130.

<sup>250</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 291.

<sup>251</sup> Butrym, *Medical Social Work in Action*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>252</sup> J. Hope Wallace, ‘The Caseworker, the Welfare Officer and the Administrator in the Social Services: II’, in E. M. Goldberg *et al.* (eds), *The Boundaries of Casework. A report on a residential refresher course held by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, Leicester, 1956. Second Edition* (London, 1959), p. 91. See also the work of Eugene Heimler on helping ‘work-shy’ clients, discussed in: Long, ‘Changing public representations of mental illness in Britain 1870-1970’, pp. 150-151.

Departments, and those from general practice, to discuss the placing of disabled youngsters in Barnstable.<sup>253</sup>

We do not have enough details to determine why these collaborative efforts worked, but the well-defined objective, the employment of particular groups, was probably a key factor. Whereas with child guidance and ‘problem families’, diagnosis was strong and action weak, the clear criteria for success in these practical projects helped ensure and measure their accomplishments. Within this topic we can also point to the action research projects discussed in the previous chapter, many of which identified and sought to address particular social problems, sometimes generating solutions applicable to a variety of contexts. This relied on the social worker’s ability to offer practical assistance to community groups and families, but also their capacity for psychological and sociological insight. In fact, these projects were commonly an explicit case of social workers initiating collaboration and communication within particular settings, so all the practical and emotional skills which social workers used with their professional colleagues remained relevant. Much of the literature has emphasised the co-existence of the statutory and voluntary sectors, and the case of social work indicates that cooperation, and even coordination, were possible given a profession with suitable skills and attitudes. Social work, with its distinct role of helping people to understand and assist each other, was such a profession.

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<sup>253</sup> Forman and Fairbairn, *Social Casework in General Practice*, p. 85.

## VII                      The Seebohm Moment

Much of this chapter has discussed the ways in which social workers cooperated with each other and the professions around them, and how such informal, personal relationships were often more effective than attempts at the formal coordination of services. Nevertheless, the story of social work in this period is dominated by the transition towards a major moment of coordination. This was the creation of the generic social worker on the recommendation of the Seebohm Report, an event which, as Noel and José Parry argued a decade later, ‘affirmed the claims of social work to professionalism.’<sup>254</sup> The Seebohm Report and the resulting Local Authority Act were concerned with more than just the coordination of services, although it was certainly a key issue.<sup>255</sup> The shift which the Report precipitated meant that the culture of teamwork, at least amongst social workers, discussed in this chapter largely came to an end. It thus provides a framework to reflect on how teamwork operated within the welfare state, and when and why it was effective.

We should note that the Seebohm Report, with its conclusion that social work should be a single profession rather than a collection of specialist branches, was the culmination of a long-term shift towards generic social work, for which the various pieces of legislation mentioned in section II of this chapter were also relevant. Whether social workers received generic or specialist training had, of course, some impact on the shape and appearance of the teams in which they worked. The concerted movement of the profession towards generic training was initiated by debates at the LSE over the course of the 1950s; if we are to understand the context and significance of the Seebohm moment, we need to have some awareness of the

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<sup>254</sup> Parry and Parry, ‘Social work, professionalism and the state’, p. 43.

<sup>255</sup> Jonathan Dickens, ‘Social Work in England at a Watershed—As Always: From the Seebohm Report to the Social Work Task Force’, *British Journal of Social Work*, 41.1 (2011), pp. 24, 26.

machinations which preceded it. Ann Oakley has offered a revealing analysis of this particular issue as part of her research into her father, Richard Titmuss, noting that it reflects not only changing attitudes within the profession, but also the relationship between (predominantly female) social work tutors and their (predominantly male) academic colleagues in the social sciences, and particularly those from social administration..<sup>256</sup> The rivalry which she discusses between Eileen Younghusband and Kay McDougall, respectively representing generic and specialist training, is one which has intrigued many historians of social work.<sup>257</sup> It is Oakley's use of this moment to illuminate the broader 'history of the socials', especially the gendered clash between the pragmatism of social work and the theory- and policy-driven social sciences, which makes it so useful.<sup>258</sup> This tension between the professional image of social work and the practicalities of its role was present throughout the period.

As might be evident from her appearance throughout this thesis, Younghusband had already had a significant impact on the shape of social work education in this period. Even before her influential Report of 1959, she had written reports on social work training for the Carnegie Trust in 1947 and 1951.<sup>259</sup> In 1953, the Carnegie Trust agreed to sponsor a pilot project to begin generic social work training at the LSE; in the event, this 'Carnegie Course' sat uneasily alongside the

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<sup>256</sup> Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', pp. 154-173.

<sup>257</sup> For examples, see: Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 118; Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', pp. 156-157.

<sup>258</sup> Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', pp. 160-162.

<sup>259</sup> Eileen Younghusband, *Report on the Employment and Training of Social Workers. Prepared for the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust* (Edinburgh, 1947); Eileen Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain: A Supplementary Report on the Employment and Training of Social Workers* (Dunfermline, 1951).

established specialist courses focusing on child care and mental health.<sup>260</sup> When Titmuss put McDougall in charge of integrating the two approaches in 1957, Younghusband resigned, prompting a swell of protest from a number of partner organisations, the Carnegie Trust included.<sup>261</sup> Younghusband returned as an advisor on the Carnegie Course, which slowly expanded to include the specialist courses offered, an important step in the process by which generic training became the accepted mode of professional social work education.<sup>262</sup> Nevertheless, the complexities of this affair give us some idea of the difficult task which faced the Seebohm Committee, and set the agenda for a decade of Reports and legislation (such as the Ingleby Report and the Children's Act of 1963) which determined the context of the Seebohm moment and its significance. We should also appreciate that the increasing prominence of community work and disenchantment with casework, often a specialist pursuit, were also trends which lent themselves towards a more generic form of social work.<sup>263</sup>

The mixture of personal, institutional, and political factors is one of the reasons why examining the consequences of the Seebohm Report for social workers in the field is, I would argue, one of the biggest challenges for the historian of post-war social work. Another issue is that the position which it held within social work culture shifted so dramatically. The Report was initially greeted with optimism and approval, although there were doubts and some disappointment that it did not go

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<sup>260</sup> <sup>260</sup> Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', p. 159.

<sup>261</sup> Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', p. 159.

<sup>262</sup> Oakley, 'The History of Gendered Social Science: a personal narrative and some reflections on method', p. 160.

<sup>263</sup> These are both discussed in Chapter 3, and especially with regards to training in section VI.



further in its recommendations.<sup>264</sup> Over the next twenty years, however, the enthusiasm created by the arrival of the new social services departments turned, as Linda Challis argued, ‘first to disenchantment and then to despair’.<sup>265</sup> The majority of the sources which we have were either created in the cautious confidence present in the years after the Report was published (the professional literature) or from the period when the Seebohm project had been widely deemed a failure (the interviews conducted by Alan Cohen).<sup>266</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, the social workers who discussed Seebohm with Cohen all took the view that it was a good idea, that the rationale was clear, but that its implementation had a series of negative effects.<sup>267</sup> There is throughout the project a sense that social work had lost something by the early 1970s.

One of the aspects of the profession which a number of Cohen’s interviewees mourned was its particular culture of teamwork. The immediate aftermath of the Report involved a huge swell in the number of meetings between social workers: Carol Clark recalled a ‘series of ‘love-ins’’, while Hilary Corrick gave these

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<sup>264</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Case Conference*, 15.4 (August 1968), p. 130; C.R. Akhurst, ‘Comment’, *Social Work*, 25.4 (October 1968), p. 2; *The A.S.W. News*, April 1970, p. vii. See also: Joan Cooper, *The Creation of the British Personal Social Services 1962-1974* (London, 1983), pp. 68-120; Brown, ‘Introduction’, p. 3; Parry and Parry, ‘Social work, professionalism and the state’, p. 43; Harris, ‘State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past’, p. 671; Bamford, *A Contemporary History of Social Work*, pp. 1, 19-20.

<sup>265</sup> Linda Challis, *Organising Public Social Services* (Harlow, 1990), quoted in: Gladstone, ‘Introducing the personal social services’, p. 167. See also: Dickens, ‘Social Work in England at a Watershed—As Always: From the Seebohm Report to the Social Work Task Force’, p. 29.

<sup>266</sup> Furthermore, secondary analyses of the story of the Seebohm Report have typically relied on outdated accounts, especially two from social workers of the time: Penelope Hall, *Reforming the Welfare: The Politics of Change in the Personal Social Services* (London, 1976); Cooper, *The Creation of the British Personal Social Services, 1962-1974*. For examples of this trend, see: Dickens, ‘Social Work in England at a Watershed—As Always: From the Seebohm Report to the Social Work Task Force’, pp. 24-28; Harris, ‘State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past’, p. 671; David Gladstone, ‘Introducing the personal social services’, in David Gladstone (ed.), *British Social Welfare: Past, Present and Future* (London, 1995), p. 167. The historiography of social work is still missing a discussion of Seebohm which adequately traces its changing role in the profession’s culture and identity.

<sup>267</sup> See, for example: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Chester French, pp. 18-19; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 21.

meetings the euphemistic title of ‘*Seebohmising*’.<sup>268</sup> For a period there was optimism that informal cooperation would continue within the new frameworks of coordination. However, many social workers, despite their new professional status, were reluctant to leave their specialist roles behind.<sup>269</sup> They may have been exasperated by the arrogance and ignorance of their colleagues from other professions, and may have found common ground with other social workers as a result, but they had worked hard to create a niche in other areas of the welfare state, and these broader teams had become an important part of their identities as welfare workers. Both formally and informally, this was now being lost.

Elizabeth Gloyne reflected the general mood when she lamented how the confidence of the new social service departments had largely meant that they neglected to develop ‘a good, honest, equally respecting working relationship with other professions’.<sup>270</sup> Despite their new professionalism, social workers trained after 1970 often lacked the requisite specialist knowledge and experience to convince other professionals that they were worthy colleagues,<sup>271</sup> and this professional status also meant that social workers, rather surprisingly, lost a certain amount of discretion over the people with whom they cooperated.<sup>272</sup> By removing social workers from the gaps between services and making them more visible, the shift towards genericism

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<sup>268</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 140.

<sup>269</sup> Lawson, *Children in Jeopardy*, pp. 111-112; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 163.

<sup>270</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Elizabeth Gloyne, p. 22.

<sup>271</sup> Jackson, ‘Care or Control? The Metropolitan Women Police and Child Welfare, 1919-1969’, p. 646; Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940-1975’, pp. 333-334; Ferguson, ‘Recollections of life ‘on the district’ in Scotland, 1940-1970’, p. 156; Stevenson, *Reflections on a Life in Social Work*, pp. 71-72; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Chester French, p. 19; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ursula Behr, p. 21.

<sup>272</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Ilse Westheimer, p. 13; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 28; Evans, *Happy Families*, p. 163.

also made them more powerless.<sup>273</sup> Many of the positive aspects of multi-professional teamwork, such as offering emotional support and sharing skills and knowledge, were diminishing, and a number of social workers lost contact with mentor figures.<sup>274</sup> The social services were certainly better coordinated, but in reducing informal teamwork and discretion, something significant was lost.

### **VII.i Seebohm and Welfare Clients**

This is admittedly a view of the Seebohm Report and its implications which focuses on the experiences of welfare professionals. In fact, this was one of the major criticisms made of the Report, that it was ultimately in the interests of these professions rather than the people whom they served,<sup>275</sup> with Rodney Lowe labelling it as ‘a prime example of the professional elitism and conceit which so tarnished the reputation of the classic welfare state.’<sup>276</sup> Although it is not within the confines of this thesis to consider at length how the Seebohm Report and the Local Authority Act affected clients’ experiences of welfare teamwork, there are some indications that, in the short term at least, it had a detrimental effect.

For a start, the structural changes required by the Local Authority Act required a great deal of bureaucratic upheaval, with the result that many social work teams were painfully aware that the social services had, albeit briefly, become even more confusing and intimidating for clients.<sup>277</sup> Some of the attempts formerly made by social workers to ensure a well-coordinated and informed service were explicitly

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<sup>273</sup> Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975’, p. 336.

<sup>274</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, p. 142.

<sup>275</sup> Dickens, ‘Social Work in England at a Watershed—As Always: From the Seebohm Report to the Social Work Task Force’, p. 29.

<sup>276</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 281.

<sup>277</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 139–143.

reversed. One example, as recounted to Burnham by Peter Hewitt, was the shredding of records on clients which had been painstakingly collected and collated, although the local knowledge which each specialist brought to the new Departments helped remedy this.<sup>278</sup> It was also clear that social workers were forced to work in areas where they had little experience, so many persistent issues, such as presumptions about clients and the emotional labour of the field, were aggravated.<sup>279</sup> Although they were enthusiastic about the future, social workers recognised that these were years of chaos.

Perhaps most importantly for welfare clients, a lot of the choice which came with specialised services was removed. Reg Wright recalled how clients, faced ‘with a monopoly in welfare’, were reduced ‘to a kind of powerless position’.<sup>280</sup> There is the suggestion in accounts from the period that social workers were keenly aware that the intended service (and its workers) might not be the best or the preferred one for the client.<sup>281</sup> This was a key part of the discretion afforded to social workers, who were often keen to act in the best interests of the client. Elizabeth Gloyne described how, faced with a particularly uncooperative and elderly patient, she was able to handle the situation by delegating her responsibilities to the hospital’s dietician, with whom the patient had struck up an instant rapport.<sup>282</sup> The system prior to the Local Authority Act gave the social worker more opportunity to honour the wishes of the client, but this was largely lost after 1970. Attempts at professional coordination trumpeted that there would

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<sup>278</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>279</sup> Burnham, *Social Worker Speaks*, pp. 140, 142.

<sup>280</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Reg Wright, p. 27. See also: Arthur Collis, ‘Casework in a Statutory and Voluntary Setting’, *Social Work*, 15.2 (April 1958), p. 456.

<sup>281</sup> See, for example: Letter from W. Locket, *Social Work*, 7.3 (July 1950), p. 462; Muriel A. Cunliffe, ‘Family Casework’, *Social Work*, 17.1 (January 1960), p. 11.

<sup>282</sup> E. R. Gloyne, ‘The Social Focus of Medical Social Work’, *Case Conference*, 8.5 (October 1961), pp. 134-135.

be a single door on which to knock, but what many clients found was that there was only one door from which to choose.

## VIII Conclusions

This chapter has principally examined the ways in which social workers were coordinated and chose to cooperate with colleagues, both within and from outside the social work profession, and its implications for practice. There is some indication that good teamwork meant more efficient welfare services for the public, but the more common focus was the outcome of poor communication and uncoordinated services. Discussing the investigations of the Ingleby Committee, of whom he was a member, magistrate Donald Ford reported that they had found services which were concerned with ‘professional pride and hope of professional status, rather than...the needs of those it sought to serve, both as individuals and families.’<sup>283</sup> The situation was little better by the end of the decade, when according to Bessie Kent, services were ‘so fragmented and riddled with inter-departmental rivalry, so extravagant with scarce resources, and so administratively rigid that no client can be adequately served.’<sup>284</sup> This is particularly evident in the fact that coordinating committees, established to ensure that responsibility for specific families, problems, and areas were clearly demarcated, were frequently used by workers as case conferences, a sacrifice of long-term planning for the sake of short-term solutions.

If attempts to coordinate the work of various professionals, institutions, and agencies did work, it was frequently because of the room left by policy for

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<sup>283</sup> Donald Ford, ‘Introduction to the Report’, *Social Work*, 18.1 (January 1961), p. 4.

<sup>284</sup> B. Kent, ‘What’s Wrong with the Social Work Services?’, *Case Conference*, 13.11 (March 1967), p. 375. See also: MRC, Younghusband Papers, MSS.463/EY/G1/4, Social Work: General “Seebohm”, Evidence presented to the Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services Chairman F. Seebohm Esq. By the Association of Family Caseworkers, July 1966, pp. 1-2.

discretion. Informal arrangements often crystallised around formal connections, so that, for example, the required sharing of information on new cases could be managed with a phone call or an office visit rather than instigating a case conference. The cooperation of social workers and their colleagues was more effective than attempts to ensure that their services were coordinated; in fact, the cooperative practices of welfare professionals frequently helped to mitigate the issues caused by poor coordination. An element of personal choice was crucial. Social workers may have believed that the police represented an authoritarian approach which they wished to avoid, but they also knew that the power of the law had its uses. Likewise, doctors may have been dismissive of social workers both in- and outside the hospital, but they appreciated their contribution enough to allow them a place in the medical team.

In this way, good cooperation was both a means and an end in itself. It made for a team which worked, and it helped to lessen the burden of working within a team. Social workers were, relative to their influence, especially adept at instigating and encouraging good teamwork practices. A major part of this was their skill with emotional labour, but their practical expertise was also useful. Both of these aspects of the social work contribution relied on their membership of both a regular team, whether it was in the hospital, the clinic, or the courtroom, and of the professional team which was social work.<sup>285</sup> Good teamwork practice was, however, very much a personal matter. This was not so much because different workers needed to get along, but because a mutual understanding and a respect for of different professional objectives and values were crucial.<sup>286</sup> Nevertheless, social workers and other

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<sup>285</sup> See especially: Timms, *Social Casework*, p. 181.

<sup>286</sup> See especially: Elizabeth Hunter, *Social Work* 16.2 (April 1959), p. 53. This was a reply to: Letter from G. M. Whitfield, *Social Work* 16.2 (April 1959), p. 52.

professionals often preferred to deal with people, especially if they already had a working relationship, rather than organisations. This might mean occasionally bending the proper procedures, such as making contact through a personal phone call rather than by establishing a paper trail.<sup>287</sup> As ever, personal discretion, or at least the space to exercise it, was crucial.

Given the number of different professions in the welfare state, not to mention those engaged in voluntary work and informal care, teamwork was an inevitable part of everyday practice. It seems amiss, therefore, to attempt to assess its effectiveness. It does appear, however, that good teamwork could be easily expanded, and the very best examples could in fact go a long way to mitigating the effects of poor teamwork. Although some particular issues, such as the care of children, necessitated coordination and cooperation, it was possible to minimise teamwork if the practical and emotional strains threatened to undermine the effectiveness of welfare provision and practice. Although social work was an integral part of teamwork, due to its eclectic knowledge base and its position in the gaps and on the margins, this is not to say that it was essential. As with post-war society as a whole, however, the gaps commonly bridged by social workers, particularly between institutions and neighbourhoods, between professionals and bureaucrats, and between different values and professional languages, would have been more pronounced.

By the time the Local Authority Act came into being in 1970, the contribution of social work to such matters was diminishing. This marked the end of a period when the practice of social workers helped to ensure that the different teams across the welfare state, whether they were in the medical setting, concerned with

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<sup>287</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, George Chesters, p. 21. On the importance of forms and records, see: Marsh, *The Welfare State*, pp. 80-81. See also section III.i of Chapter 4 in this thesis.

child care, or based in the courts, were connected. With the benefit of hindsight, those interviewed by Cohen and Burnham could see that something had been lost.<sup>288</sup> This regret was best described by Francesca Ward, who, when Cohen asked how she and her colleagues dealt with the stresses of hospital work, replied:

It becomes very much a team process in which the separate contributions of each are very clearly recognised and marked out, while yet there's a little field of overlap which you really can share. This I consider is team work at its healthiest and most helpful. And I've been very sorry to see it diminish. It seemed to me the ideal way of working with sick people<sup>289</sup>

We can map with some precision the practical benefits of teamwork, and we can get some sense of where it failed. The emotional aspects, meanwhile, the security offered by friends, colleagues, and the sense of contributing to and being supported by something larger than oneself: this is somewhat harder to recover. I suspect, however, that everyone, especially those of us engaged in particularly solitary endeavours, can empathise

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<sup>288</sup> See especially: MRC, Cohen Interviews, Rose Mary Braithwaite, p. 24.

<sup>289</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Francesca Ward, p.12.



## Conclusion

We began this thesis with the musings of David Donnison on the (ultimately useful) ambiguous role of the social worker. Over the previous chapters we have examined how this arose out of social work's position in the gaps and on the margins of the social and medical services, of post-war society, and of the psychological and social sciences. The place which social work occupied in these structures meant that its task was ultimately a reactive one, helping clients to effectively recognise and address their needs and those of their families and communities, acting to mediate change, and looking to bridge the gap between different spheres of the welfare state. Social work is, after all, a profession defined by response and reaction.<sup>1</sup> Aspects of social work which might have seemed more proactive, such as facilitating participation, implementing preventative services, or conducting social research, were, at least in part, responses to social, political, and academic shifts.

Even if social work was ultimately an afterthought, or, as Lowe has argued, a 'Cinderella' service,<sup>2</sup> this was not necessarily to its detriment. Its position in the gaps and on the margins proved productive in a number of ways,<sup>3</sup> and it required not only a breadth of knowledge and experience, but also the ability to adapt to the volatile dispositions of both clients and colleagues. At the same time, social work was not alone in finding a place in the spaces between existing structures, nor did it expect to have a monopoly in this area.<sup>4</sup> The voluntary sector also sought to address the gaps

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<sup>1</sup> Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lowe, 'Postwar Welfare', p. 366.

<sup>3</sup> McLaughlin, *Social Work, Politics and Society*, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Powell, *The Politics of Social Work*, p. 15; Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 160; Hilton and McKay, 'The ages of voluntarism. An introduction', pp. 5-16; Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, pp. 292-293.

in provision and service, and social workers saw this group as valuable if inexperienced allies. The fact that the social services as a whole, to say nothing of social work, were dwarfed by the amount of informal care which still took place meant that social workers were fully aware that they could only support, and never supplant, this aspect of post-war society.<sup>5</sup> In addition, institutions like the Citizen's Advice Bureau helped people to access and utilise the social services,<sup>6</sup> and other professionals, notably general practitioners, reiterated repeatedly their focus on the person as well as the disease.<sup>7</sup>

For this reason, I do not wish to contend that social work was essential to the operation of the welfare state. Had the profession never developed in the way that it did, then many of its functions would have eventually been performed by other professions, by the voluntary sector, and by the family, albeit with less cohesion. It was rather from the range of roles which it performed and its very status as 'a polymorphous phenomenon' that social work derived much of its professional identity and influence.<sup>8</sup> In mediating and interpreting between different professional, public, and academic interests, social workers necessarily incorporated some of their own principles, so that these spheres came to bear traces, however indistinct, of social work's influence.

We should also note that the therapeutic, political, and professional aspects of social work discussed over the previous chapters, including its positions in the gaps

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<sup>5</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 285.

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Blaiklock, 'Advising the citizen: volunteering and the Citizens Advice Bureau in post-war Britain, 1939-64' (PhD thesis, King's College London, 2013); Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830-1990*, p. 295.

<sup>7</sup> Fisher, 'General Practice Outmoded?', p. 1541; MRC, Cohen Interviews, Kay McDougall, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 158. See also: Walter Lorenz, *Perspectives on European Social Work – From the Birth of the Nation State to the Impact of Globalisation* (Opladen, Germany, and Farmington Hills, 2006), p. 8.

and on the margins, were not specific to post-war England.<sup>9</sup> Walter Lorenz has indicated that social work came to occupy the ‘in-between spaces’ within a number of European contexts,<sup>10</sup> and the existence of transnational networks with both North America and the Commonwealth indicates at least some similarity in professional roles and knowledge.<sup>11</sup> English social workers, even if they operated under different legislative, religious, and social influences, clearly had much in common with colleagues across the United Kingdom.<sup>12</sup> Neither was the place of social work at this time specific to its period: the profession has long taken on the role of mediating between different groups, whether it was the strategy of ‘reveal and appeal’ utilised by Victorian philanthropists or the task of providing a bridge between services and users still present today.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, the particular ways in these roles played out, in theory and in practice, was a reflection of the specific social, cultural, and political formations of post-war England. Social work inevitably reflects and refracts the particular context

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<sup>9</sup> Jones, ‘The Best of Times, the Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment’, pp. 486-490; McGregor, ‘History as a Resource for the Future: A response to ‘Best of Times, Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment’, pp. 1630-1644, esp. pp. 1633-1637.

<sup>10</sup> Lorenz, *Perspectives on European Social Work*, p. 18. See also: Walter Lorenz, ‘Personal social services’, in Jochen Clasen and Richard Freeman (eds), *Social Policy in Germany* (New York and London, 1994), pp. 148-169; de Swaan, *In Care of the State*, p. 227.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example: Karen Lyons and Sue Lawrence, ‘Social work as an international profession: Origins, organisations and networks’, in Sue Lawrence *et al.* (eds), *Introducing International Social Work* (Exeter, 2009), pp. 110-111; David Cox and Manohar Pawar, *International Social Work: Issues, Strategies, and Programs* (Thousand Oaks, CA, *et al.*, 2006), pp. 5-7; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, pp. 38, 68, 81-82, 205; Thomas, *The Making of Community Work*, p. 19 Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain*, p. 76; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 56; Stewart, *Child Guidance in Britain, 1918 – 1955*, pp. 16-17; Bray, ‘Global Solutions and Local Needs: Transnational Exchanges in Post-War British Social Work’.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example: Nottingham and Dougall, ‘A Close and Practical Association with the Medical Profession: Scottish Medical Social Workers and Social Medicine, 1940–1975’, pp. 309-336; Younghusband, *Social Work in Britain, 1950-1975: A Follow-Up Study, Vol. 1*, pp. 250-255. Even within England, of course, there was considerable regional variation: Peter Howlett, ‘The ‘Golden Age’, 1955-1973’, in Paul Johnson (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change* (London, 1994), p. 321; Gladstone, ‘Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945’, p. 42;

<sup>13</sup> Forsythe, ‘Discrimination in Social Work – An Historical Note’, pp. 9-12; Gray, *Face to Face with Emotions in Health and Social Care*, p. 106.

in which it is embedded,<sup>14</sup> and although it is not alone in this characteristic,<sup>15</sup> its position on the frontline of services means that it is particularly useful in examining how changes and challenges were navigated on the ground. This is especially true for the post-war period, when social work had enough influence, but also enough freedom, to explore the possibilities of the gaps in which it operated.<sup>16</sup> These were years of relative confidence and experimentation for the profession;<sup>17</sup> the period after 1970 brought greater recognition, but also greater regulation.<sup>18</sup> Social work's ability, particularly strong during the post-war decades, to operate and interpret between multiple spheres means that it adds greatly to our understanding of a number of complex relationships and tensions within this period, such as those between professionalism and bureaucracy, between social change and stability, and between the social and psychological sciences.

In particular, the study allows us a much more subtle understanding of change and continuity, emphasising that new ideas, practices, and attitudes tended to supplement and complement rather than supplant those already in existence. We can see this in the symbiotic relationship between psychological and social scientific ways of understanding individuals and society, and in the way in which conceptions around race interacted with perceptions of gender and class difference. From social

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<sup>14</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 662; Todd, 'Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970', p. 364; Seed, *The Expansion of Social Work in Britain*, p. 51; Payne, *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Glen O'Hara and George Campbell Gosling, 'Healthcare as nation-building in the twentieth century: The case of the British National Health Service', in Paul Weindling (ed.), *Healthcare in Private and Public from the Early Modern Period to 2000* (Abingdon and New York, 2015), pp. 123-141, esp. pp. 123, 136; Gorsky, 'The British National Health Service 1948-2008: A Review of the Historiography', p. 438.

<sup>16</sup> Gladstone, 'Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945', p. 34; Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', p. 669.

<sup>17</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 275; Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Cree, *From Public Streets to Private Lives*, p. 62.

work's position on the frontline of society, we find mediated and negotiated evolution rather than unchecked revolution.

As well as the contribution of social work to the practice of welfare, its symbolic importance is another important piece of the post-war puzzle. As Daniel Walkowitz has noted, social workers 'often find themselves acting as lightning rods for the political storms that whirl around the welfare state',<sup>19</sup> and so we can use the study of social work to illuminate some of the negotiation which characterised the post-war decades. In the case of English social work, the shifting relationship between the individual and the state,<sup>20</sup> the respective 'rights' and 'duties' of the citizen,<sup>21</sup> and questions around the optimal source of welfare provision were all issues particularly associated with the profession and its practitioners.<sup>22</sup>

The study of social work is particularly promising in offering a way to chart the emotional aspects of post-war society and of the welfare state. These include considering the various forms of 'emotional labour' implicit within welfare work,<sup>23</sup> as well as the impact of welfare on individuals' perceptions of society and their place within it.<sup>24</sup> Beyond this, we can also examine the 'emotional settlements' which were emerging at this time, and with which social work, despite the fact that (or perhaps because) it dealt with a minority and operated at the front-line of welfare, was strongly associated.<sup>25</sup> In particular, the care provided by social workers for those

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<sup>19</sup> Walkowitz, *Working with Class: Social Workers and the Politics of Middle-Class Identity*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Pierson, *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 274; Sapsford, 'Understanding People: The Growth of an Expertise', p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Gladstone, 'Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945', p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example: Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951-57*, p. 28; Clarke *et al.*, 'Introduction', p. 3; Vernon, *Hunger*, *passim*.

<sup>25</sup> Joanna Warner, *The Emotional Politics of Social Work and Child Protection* (Bristol, 2015), pp. 4, 46; Gladstone, 'Renegotiating the Boundaries: Risk and Responsibility in Personal Welfare since 1945', p. 34. Within the thesis, see especially: Chapter 1, section IV; Chapter 2, sections III and IV.

who were casualties of inequality and rapid change was seen as an important contribution to the moral integrity of post-war society.<sup>26</sup> Even while traditional bonds were in decline, social work's presence helped to preserve the image of a cohesive society founded on a sentiment of solidarity.<sup>27</sup>

This also meant, however, that social work acted as a 'lightning rod' for negative feelings, such as anger over the failings of the welfare state and fear of welfare clients.<sup>28</sup> Social work's ambiguity may have helped it to become involved in a disparate range of spheres, but it was also reflected in society's uncertain stance towards the profession.<sup>29</sup> These tensions between care and control, intervention and permissiveness, and between theoretical prestige and practical skill have been a central issue within social work's history, and are still contested.<sup>30</sup> Precisely because social work operated in the gaps and on the margins, it held emotional significance at both the individual and the social level, although connecting these two scales is a methodological challenge.<sup>31</sup> This thesis has begun to show how we can historically

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<sup>26</sup> Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain Since 1945*, p. 274. For examples, see: A. F. C. Bourdillon, 'Introductory', in A. F. C. Bourdillon (ed.), *Voluntary Social Services: Their Place in the Modern State* (London, 1945), p. 4; Joan Eyden, 'Social Services in the Modern State', *Case Conference*, 1.10 (February 1955), p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Lorenz, *Perspectives on European Social Work*, p. 11; Clarke *et al.*, 'Introduction', p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Harris, 'State Social Work: Constructing the Present from Moments in the Past', pp. 662-663, 672.

<sup>29</sup> Lorenz, *Perspectives on European Social Work*, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Warner, *The Emotional Politics of Social Work and Child Protection*, pp. 51-52; Harris, 'State Social Work and Social Citizenship in Britain: From Clientelism to Consumerism', pp. 927, 930, 934; McGregor, 'History as a Resource for the Future: A response to 'Best of Times, Worst of Times: Social Work and Its Moment'', pp. 1633-1635. On the highly-political negotiation of some of these issues, see: Nikolas Rose, 'The death of the social? Re-figuring the territory of government', *Economy and Society*, 25.3 (1996), pp. 327-356, esp. pp. 328-331.

<sup>31</sup> For an account which attempts this with significant success, see: Rhodri Hayward, 'The Pursuit of Serenity: Psychological Knowledge and the Making of the British Welfare State', in Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor (eds), *History and Psyche: Culture, Psychoanalysis, and the Past* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 283-304. This chapter is concerned with anxiety and the advent of social insurance. See also: Mark Graham, 'Emotional Bureaucracies: Emotions, Civil Servants, and Immigrants in the Swedish Welfare State', *Ethos*, 30.3 (2002), pp. 199-226. This article discusses how norms regarding appropriate forms and amounts of emotional expression are both reflected in and reproduced by welfare structures, especially within bureaucratic practices. On a similar challenge in connecting structural change and personal emotion, but in decolonisation, see: Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire*, pp. 11-15.

consider the requirement for professionals to navigate emotions, whether they are their own or those of clients, colleagues, or society as a whole, as well as the emotional investment in and emotional impact of social work and the welfare state.

The need to consider the role of emotions is related to issues of everyday welfare practice, another area where this thesis has made a significant contribution. In addition to ‘emotional labour’, discretion and performance are also important concepts in analysing the role of welfare professionals and the ‘applied disciplines’ in post-war society. As Todd has correctly argued, we need a better understanding of the relationship between the discourse of experts and the approaches of workers on the ground,<sup>32</sup> but, as the case of social work suggests, theory did not need to be translated into practical terms to prove useful. It was not so much that the psychological and social sciences suggested new methods of social work practice, but that they justified those already established.<sup>33</sup> This allowed social workers to exercise discretion, and to construct and maintain a pragmatic and eclectic approach to individual and social problems. This was informed by ideas from the social and psychological sciences, the social worker’s own values, and techniques gleaned from experienced colleagues. We need to appreciate the diversity of influences on welfare practice aside from expert discourse, and the importance of professional discretion within the field.

Many of the techniques which were transmitted between generations of social workers concerned appropriate and effective conduct with clients and colleagues. There was a strong performative element to social work, with the presence of the social worker seen as potentially transformative in itself. Rhodri Hayward has

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<sup>32</sup> Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, p. 363.

<sup>33</sup> Vanstone, *Supervising Offenders in the Community*, pp. 104, 106, 119, 158; Todd, ‘Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War, c. 1948- c. 1970’, pp. 374-375.

described how a similar view of the doctor and the therapeutic power of their personality emerged within medicine,<sup>34</sup> and Jon Lawrence has analysed how the subjects of post-war social research learnt to perform their role within interviews.<sup>35</sup> This, along with the case of social work, suggests that closer attention to the performance of welfare might be productive. If, as Peel has described, encounters between social workers and their clients were highly-choreographed negotiations, then it remains to be seen how this worked with, for example, judges or bureaucrats.<sup>36</sup> If we are to understand the place of welfare in post-war England, and especially its impact, then we need to think beyond the words exchanged during the welfare encounter, and this may entail looking to the social sciences and performance studies for analytical tools.

Overall, this thesis has shown how closer attention to the gaps between welfare professionals and clients, between policy-makers and the public, and between those formulating theories and those selectively applying them in the field, can offer an insight of these relationships in post-war England. In understanding both how these gaps came into existence, or remained from previous structures, as well as the solutions which were suggested in theory and sometimes implemented in practice, we gain a richer picture of the tensions within the welfare state and post-war society. Incorporating social work, which professionalised from a position in the gaps and on the margins, into our analysis is particularly useful for identifying such areas. While it has become clear that the post-war settlements were contested,

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<sup>34</sup> Hayward, *The Transformation of the Psyche in British Primary Care, 1880-1970*, pp. 93-115.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence, 'Social-Science Encounters and the Negotiation of Difference in early 1960s England', pp. 224-226; Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Peel, *Miss Cutler & the Case of the Resurrected Horse*, p. 2. See also: Starkey, 'Retelling the stories of clients of voluntary social work agencies in Britain after 1945', p. 254; Jones and Novak, *Poverty, Welfare and the Disciplinary State*, pp. 73-78. Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940*, p. 7.



contradictory, and exclusionary, the study of social work shows how some of these issues were recognised, and negotiated through personalised welfare and by mediating between different interests. Likewise, social work allows for a finer picture of the role of professionals within the welfare state. In particular, it indicates that differences of values and methods could result in relationships with other professionals which were just as problematic as those with clients, although good teamwork practices could help to mitigate the ensuing practical and emotional issues, and could support the integration and cohesion of welfare services.

In considering how social workers operated in the gaps and on the margins of the welfare state, society, and the social sciences, we find a way to approach the difficult task of connecting discourse and practice, welfare provision and consumption, and the experiences of clients and professionals. The history of social work also occupies the middle-ground between the grand narrative of the welfare state to which Vernon has alluded,<sup>37</sup> and the myriad personal experiences of the post-war world. The traces of all three remain, in dusty books, archival folders, and in the crackly recording of Edgar Myers telling Alan Cohen that in the immediate post-war period, with the election of Attlee, the Curtis Report, and the NHS, he ‘did really feel then that this was the beginning of a new social order.’<sup>38</sup> It is in that connection, between the shifting structures of society and the hopes and fears of the individuals who inhabited it, that social work proves most significant, both for Myers looking forward to a post-war world, and seventy years later, for us looking back.

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<sup>37</sup> Vernon, ‘The Local, the Imperial and the Global: Repositioning Twentieth-century Britain and the Brief Life of its Social Democracy’, p. 416.

<sup>38</sup> MRC, Cohen Interviews, Edgar Myers, p. 22.

## **Appendix I: Biographical Notes**

These brief biographical notes are intended to give further background on some of the figures who appear most frequently throughout the thesis. Those who are included in the appendix are denoted by an asterisk upon their first appearance in the main body of the thesis. Only those for whom I could find useful biographical information are included, so some recurring names, such as Francesca Ward, are unfortunately absent. The details given below have been mainly collected from the transcripts of the Cohen Interviews, from mentions in *Case Conference* and *Social Work*, and from obituaries.

### **Robina Addis**

Qualified as a psychiatric social worker in 1933, and then worked (and conducted research) in child guidance, before serving with the National Association for Mental Health between 1954 and 1965. She was also part of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services.

### **Ursula Behr**

A German-Jewish refugee, she worked in child care, including time as a Children's Officer. Behr was one of the first cohort to take the child care course at the LSE in the immediate post-war years, and she was active in the Association of Child Care Officers throughout the period.

**Rose Mary Braithwaite**

Began work as a probation officer in 1939, and was promoted to a senior position in 1946. She joined the staff of the Applied Social Studies course at the LSE in 1954, and was Assistant Principal Probation Officer (with an emphasis on training) in London between 1960 and 1965.

**George Chesters**

Started probation work in Manchester in 1933, and was appointed probation officer for Hull in 1936, then moving to Stoke-on-Trent in 1944. He spent much of his later career in Leeds, where he became a senior probation officer, and then the Principal Probation Officer.

**David Donnison**

Became joint-editor of *Case Conference* in 1956, before which he had been in the Department of Social Administration at the University of Manchester. He was at the LSE from 1956 to 1969, where he was a Reader and then a Professor in Social Administration. After the period he became well-known through his role as chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission between 1975 and 1980.

**Joan Eyden**

A lecturer and a tutor in the Department of Social Science at the University of Nottingham, she also acted as the Vice-Chair of the ASW during the mid-1950s, and compiled and wrote for *The A.S.W. News* throughout the period.

**Cecil French**

Qualified as a relieving officer in 1936, and then moved to the Health Department when his old post was dissolved in 1948. In 1952, he trained as a psychiatric social worker in Edinburgh, and later became a Senior Mental Welfare Officer. From 1959 onwards he was heavily involved in discussions of mental health policy and legislation.

**E. Matilda Goldberg**

Born in Berlin, Goldberg came to England in 1933 and qualified as a psychiatric social worker in 1936. She worked for seven years in a child guidance clinic in Hertfordshire, and then as a regional aftercare officer in Newcastle from 1943 to 1949. She also acted as editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work* in the first half of the 1960s, and was Director of Research at the National Institute for Social Work between 1963 and 1977. She wrote under the names E. M. Goldberg and E. Matilda Goldberg, but was professionally known as Tilda.

**Elizabeth Howarth**

Senior psychiatric social worker at the Maudsley Hospital, she also led the training courses for psychiatric social work at the Institute of Psychiatry. She acted as chair of the FWA Problem Family Sub-Committee in the early 1950s, and was director of the Shoreditch Project (also known as the Canford Families Study) in the second half the 1950s.

### **Elizabeth Irvine**

Completed the Mental Health course at the LSE in 1932, and after working in child guidance positions in England and Israel, she joined the Tavistock Clinic as a psychiatric social worker in 1951. As Senior Tutor she helped to set up the Advanced Casework Course. She was an occasional editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*, and in 1966, she became a Reader in Social Work at the University of York.

### **Kay McDougall**

Began work as a psychiatric social worker in 1937, and in 1945, joined the teaching staff on the Mental Health course at the LSE, becoming head of the course in 1947. She founded *Case Conference* in 1954, and edited it until it was disbanded in 1970. In 1965 she became the chair of the Standing Conference of Organisations of Social Workers, and played a large role in the formation of the British Association of Social Workers. She was awarded an OBE in 1967.

### **Edgar Myers**

After a period as a mental health nurse, he qualified as a psychiatric social worker in 1949. He established a unit to study issues of alcoholism at the Maudsley at the beginning of the 1950s, and became involved in research, in the APSW, and acted as assistant editor of *The British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*. He later moved from his position at the Maudsley to teach on the Mental Health course at the LSE.

### **Jean Snelling**

Qualified as a hospital almoner in 1938, and became head almoner at Churchill Hospital, Oxford, in 1946. She also acted as a tutor on the emergency training courses run by the Institute of Almoners in 1947. She was appointed as Director of Studies for the Institute's Training School in 1958.

### **Olive Stevenson**

After completing the two-year Child Care course at the LSE, she worked as a child care officer in Devon from 1954 to 1958. She then completed the course in Advanced Social Casework at the Tavistock Clinic, after which she took up a research and teaching position at Bristol University until 1962. She left to assume a lectureship, and then a readership, in Applied Social Studies at Oxford, and acted for a year as Social Work Adviser to the Supplementary Benefits Commission at the end of the period. She is perhaps best known for her work on the Maria Colwell enquiry in 1974, as part of which she wrote an influential minority report on child protection.

### **Noel Timms**

After working for FSUs in Birmingham and Liverpool, he completed the Mental Health course at the LSE in the mid-1950s, and took on a position in a child guidance clinic in Surrey. He spent time as a lecturer in Birmingham, and also acted as assistant editor for *The British Journal of Psychiatric Social Work*. At the end of the period he became a Professor and the Head of the School of Applied Social Studies at the University of Bradford. He wrote prolifically on psychiatric social work, on general social work issues, and on the history of both.

### **Clare Winnicott**

Born Clare Britton, she completed the Mental Health course at the LSE in 1940, and then set up the first child care course in the UK, which she convened at the LSE between 1947 and 1958. In 1951, she married the eminent paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, with whom she founded the Association of Child Care Officers. In the early 1960s she lectured on the Applied Social Studies course at the LSE, and from 1964 to 1971 she was Director of Child Care Studies at the Home Office. She was awarded an OBE in 1971.

### **Reg Wright**

After military service, during which he worked with the Medical Corps, Wright studied for a degree in Social Administration at Manchester University in 1948, and then completed the LSE Mental Health course. He began practicing as a psychiatric social worker in 1951, and became assistant editor of *Case Conference* in the mid-1950s. By the end of the decade he was lecturing at the LSE, as well as acting as chair for the APSW. In 1963 he was appointed as Chief Professional Adviser to the Council for Training in Social Work.

### **Eileen Younghusband**

Although she never undertook any formal social work training, Younghusband was a major name within the profession. She started as a voluntary worker in 1924, and continued to work with various agencies, including the COS, after she began her studies at the LSE in 1926. There she completed a Certificate in Social Studies, and then a Diploma in Sociology, and lectured in social studies from 1929 to 1939, and then from 1944 to 1959, after which she resigned. She led the Working Party on

Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services from 1955 to 1959, and those investigations culminated in the 'Younghusband Report' in 1959. Over the 1960s she worked as an adviser in social work training for the National Institute of Social Work Training, and she was President of the International Association of Schools of Social Work from 1961 to 1968. She was appointed a Dame in 1964.



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