Everyday Welfare in Modern British History

Experience, Expertise and Activism

Edited by Caitríona Beaumont
Eve Colpus · Ruth Davidson

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This series, a collaboration between Palgrave Macmillan and the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Experience (HEX) at Tampere University, will publish works on the histories of experience across historical time and global space. History of experience means, for the series, individual, social, and collective experiences as historically conditioned phenomena. 'Experience' refers here to a theoretically and methodologically conceptualized study of human experiences in the past, not to any study of 'authentic' or 'essentialist' experiences. More precisely, the series will offer a forum for the historical study of human experiencing, i.e. of the varying preconditions, factors, and possibilities shaping past experiences. Furthermore, the series will study the human institutions, communities, and the systems of belief, knowledge, and meaning as based on accumulated (and often conflicting) experiences.

The aim of the series is to deepen the methodology and conceptualization of the history of lived experiences, going beyond essentialism. As the series editors see it, the history of experience can provide a bridge between structures, ideology, and individual agency, which has been a difficult gap to close for historians and sociologists. The approach opens doors to see, study, and explain historical experiences as a social fact, which again offers new insights on society. Subjective experiences are seen as objectified into knowledge regimes, social order and divisions, institutions, and other structures, which, in turn, shape the experiences. The principle idea is to present a new approach, the history of experiences, as a way to establish the necessary connection between big and small history.

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Caitríona dedicates the book to her late parents Margaret (1935–2019) and Piaras Beaumont (1933–2023) who always ensured she "fared well", and to her family Patrick, Dónal, Rosa and Martha for their constant love and support.

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Introduction

Caitríona Beaumont, Eve Colpus, and Ruth Davidson

In June 2020, while England was emerging from its COVID-19 lockdown, the Manchester United and England football player, Marcus Rashford took to Twitter (now X) to criticise the English government's refusal to offer free school meals to eligible children over the school holidays. In doing so, he explicitly mentioned his own personal experiences of growing up in poverty and his family's reliance on free school meals.[1]

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[1] Rashford, Marcus. "An Open Letter to all MPs in Parliament… #maketheUturn", 15 June 2020. https://twitter.com/MarcusRashford/status/1272302819819823105?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw. Accessed 28 July 2022.

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Writing in October 2020, he explained further: "I don't have the education of a politician, many on Twitter have made that clear today, but I have a social education having lived through this and having spent time with families and children most affected".[2] In response to the huge public reaction in support of Rashford's demands, the Conservative government acquiesced and in November 2020 made the commitment to provide funding for free school meals for Christmas, Easter and the summer holidays.

Rashford's successful intervention illuminates the central themes underpinning our edited collection: everyday welfare, experiential expertise and activism. His personal experiences gave him a foundation from which to offer an expertise grounded in his own social knowledge and lived experience. There are of course distinctive elements to this one example of the application of experiential expertise connected to Rashford's gender, race, economic, social and cultural experience and his global celebrity status. Nevertheless it was widely acknowledged that the moderate, informed and determined campaign by the young Black footballer achieved what more established lobby groups failed to do: bring about a government "U" turn on provision of welfare for impoverished school children.[3] Experiential expertise, in this instance, gained publicity and overwhelming public support, and as a consequence forced an immediate social policy change.

In *Everyday Welfare* we are interested in the forms of action and activism, used by individuals and groups, who undertake the work of experiential expertise in relation to welfare cultures. Each chapter in the collection considers different repertoires of activism, whether advocacy and educational work, campaigning, protest or more quotidian forms of self-management, community development or resistance. We conceive of "experiential experts" as individuals whose action and activism have been catalysed and underpinned by their personal experiences and knowledge, often related to specific phenomena. These individuals have then used

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[2] Rashford, Marcus. "Time We Worked Together", 22 October 2020. https://twitter.com/MarcusRashford/status/1318980281999761408?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1318980281999761408%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1&refurl=https://www.skysports.com%2Ffootball%2Fnews%2F11095%2F12110562%2Fmarcus-rashfords-free-school-meals-campaign-rejected-as-mps-vote-against-labour-proposal. Accessed 28 July 2022.

[3] See FareShare website: https://fareshare.org.uk/marcus-rashford/. Accessed 11 April 2023.

their knowledge and experiences to assert an expert witness status. They have sought out new forums and spaces to expand the scope, inclusivity and applicability of welfare services, positing new ways of how "to do" welfare that connects personal experiences to policy, politics and ideas of citizenship. As the Rashford example encapsulates, policy reform, activism and community care can be perceived differently when viewed through the lens of experiential expertise.

This foregrounding and analysis of the significance and impact of experiential expertise within welfare regimes makes a new and important contribution to histories of welfare in modern Britain. Welfare, in our book, encompasses a state of action and ways of inhabiting and being in society, as well as a set of feelings. Individuals' experiences of welfare moved between personal, familial and community practices and encompassed exchanges between individuals, organisations and institutionalised structures. Through the chapters, the collection uncovers and interrogates a range of case studies of welfare as experienced by ordinary people incorporating a long-term perspective over the period 1850s to 2000s. Here, experiential expertise informed responses to welfare provision, both in terms of demands for greater support or the need for different kinds of support, articulated by national and grassroots groups. Our case studies include varied local and regional examples of community groups in England and Wales, and national organisations working across Britain.

In seeking to extend current understandings of welfare within the realm of histories of experience, we have found the work of Robert Pinker to be instructive. It is now over fifty years ago that Pinker outlined his approach to what he referred to as pluralities of welfare. Pinker was part of the path-breaking "expert" generation who developed theories and practices of social theory that prioritised the state and unitary approaches to welfare.[4] However, Pinker also argued for a greater understanding of the breadth of welfare practices and how "people in their everyday lives thought about and practiced securing the welfare of themselves and others". Pinker made a sharp distinction between "what may be termed

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[4] See Pinker, Robert. 2017. The Ends and Means of Social Policy: A Personal and Generational Perspective. In *Social Policy and Welfare Pluralism: Selected Writings of Robert Pinker,* ed. John Offer and Robert Pinker, 35–46. Bristol: Policy Press for his reflections on the significant academic figures who influenced his work, including Richard Titmuss, Brian Abel-Smith, T. H. Marshall, and O. R. McGregor.

a 'welfare state' and 'a state of welfare'".[5] The former, with its focus on institutional, political and structural practice was, and remains, a subject that is much explored in the literatures of both social policy and history. The latter paid attention to "the subjective feelings of ordinary people about the nature of welfare and to the complete range of activities by which they seek to enhance their own well-being". Pinker's "a state of welfare" allows for a more holistic, and inclusive, understanding of "faring well" as a social phenomenon.[6]

Our book takes Pinker's idea of "a state of welfare" as the springboard to re-conceptualise the history of everyday welfare in twentieth-century Britain. Aligning this with the concept of experiential expertise enables us to identify and foreground the experiential expertise claimed by a diverse group of individuals and organisations, who until now have been often marginalised within orthodox accounts of the history of welfare and the welfare state in Britain. There is a well-established historiography that addresses the way welfare states and adjacent agencies such as national charities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector have provided support to those in times of need.[7] Shifting attention from welfare state to "a state of welfare" allows us to de-centre the privileging of histories of the welfare state and instead focus on the subjective and experiential dimensions of welfare. This enables the inclusion of sites that sit outside formal structures, as well as within them, and of individuals

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[5] Pinker, Robert. 2017. The Welfare State: A Comparative Perspective. In *Social Policy and Welfare Pluralism*, 70. This chapter is a reprint of the 1972 James Seth Memorial Lecture that Pinker Delivered in Edinburgh.

[6] Ibid. Pinker's interpretation was applied to Britain, Russia, and America.

[7] See, for example, Timmins, Nicolas. 2017. *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State*. London: HarperCollins; Lowe, Rodney. 2005. *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Glennerster, Howard. 2000. *British Social Policy since 1945*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd; Fraser, Derek. 2003. *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Finlayson, Geoffrey. 2002. *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830–1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Prochaska, Frank. 1980. *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England*. Oxford, Oxford University Press; Thane. Pat, ed. 1978. *The Origins of British Social Policy*. London: Routledge; Thane, Pat. 1996. *Foundations of the Welfare State*. London: Routledge; Gordon, Linda, ed. 1992. *Women, the State and Welfare*. Wisconsin, Wisconsin University Press, Lewis; Jane. 1991. *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Pedersen, Susan. 1993. *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

and groups who have chosen to support and campaign for their own social needs over the course of the twentieth century. Moreover, this original conceptual framework demands a similar re-evaluation of welfare regimes beyond Britain. Recent scholarship on Nordic welfare states has foregrounded the importance of the lived welfare state and lived welfare institutions.[8] *Everyday Welfare* builds on this work by re-introducing the idea of "a state of welfare". Doing so offers a new template for changing approaches to histories of welfare globally and how people "fare well" in diverse welfare cultures.

The varied ways people identified how to live a life where they "far[ed] well" are revealed in this collection. How individuals contested models of "faring well" that were applied to them through formal welfare provision and the way individuals protested perceived injustices around what it meant to "fare well" is a central theme.[9] The desire to "fare well", and the different and often overlooked ways that this was achieved, draws together the chapters in our collection. Moreover, by re-assessing the histories of welfare through the lens of "faring well" we place at the heart of our analysis the agency of individuals and groups beyond those officially designated as trained "experts" or "professionals" within the sphere of welfare. This approach allows for a fresh examination of established oppositions of, for example, formal (state/medical groups) and informal (lay/grassroots/local) knowledge and academic knowledge ("expertise") versus popular/quotidian knowledge ("experiential"). Each of these (like other oppositions) are themselves the products of particular historical moments, which are not static. The boundaries between professional expertise and experiential expertise in relation to welfare have not always been obvious and over time there can be tensions and alignment. What we seek to uncover and critically examine through our various case studies are these complex and at times messy interconnections and overlaps.

In *Everyday Welfare* we ask for the first time who gets to say they are okay (and what they need) or put another way, we centre the ways people articulate their feelings and requirements of welfare in their own lives.

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[8] See, for example, Annola, Johanna, Lindberg, Hanna and Markkola, Pirjo, eds. 2024. *Lived Institutions as History of Experience*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan and Haapala, Pertti, Harjula, Minna and Kokko, Heikki, eds. 2023. *Experiencing Society and the Lived Welfare State*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

[9] The term to "fare well" in this context means to be successful and to be in good health and spirits.

To achieve this, we think about the diversity of experiences of welfare, foreground subjugated knowledge and a range of welfare cultures, noting the historical contingency of these cultures. Our approach challenges commonplace binaries of welfare relationships ("giver"/"receiver"; "client"/"recipient"; "specialist"/"patient") and comprehends welfare as something that can be resisted and subverted as much as accepted and incorporated. Additionally, and perhaps most crucially, as historians interested in the social and political, we seek to trace how experiences of welfare can, for some, be leveraged as tools for activism and social justice. Here we interrogate the expertise derived from the experiential and trace the consequences of experiential expertise, to develop a new history of welfare activism in Britain. This novel methodological and interpretive approach is embedded in the personal. Nevertheless, adopting this conceptual framework demonstrates in significant ways how the links between these subjectivities and collective action created opportunities for powerful challenges to institutional and expert practice.

New Histories of Welfare

The history of welfare is a well-followed narrative thread in twentieth-century British history, political science and social policy. The expansion of welfare structures, policies and practices are key framing devices in these accounts, which examine welfare within the wider development of British social democratic practices and political norms in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. In general, two broad approaches are taken to understanding welfare and its link to historical change in the British context, charting a gradually increased involvement of the British state in the provision of welfare. One looks at political and policy developments, centring the histories of services, institutions, legislation and government intentions.[10] A second looks at the embedded ideas, rooted in approaches

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[10] See, for example, Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State;* Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain 1830–1990*; Thane. ed. *The Origins of British Social Policy*; Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State*; Page, Robert, M. 2015. *Clear Blue Water? The Conservative Party and the Welfare State since 1940*. Bristol: Policy Press; Powell, Martin. ed. 1999. *New Labour, New Welfare State? The 'third way' in British social policy* Bristol: Policy Press; Williams; Ben. 2015. *The Evolution of Conservative Party Social Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

to citizenship, democracy and ideas around what might be a "good society" as the key explanatory tool.[11] In the former approach the focus is on a careful outlining of specific policies and considers how these have been a political reaction to specific social and economic circumstances. This can be seen in the work of scholars such as Nicholas Timmins, Rodney Lowe and Howard Glennerster who have all concentrated on the post-1945 development of welfare policies.[12] There is also a strong body of work that has focused on state-level developments before 1945. This approach is notably evident in Pat Thane's *Foundations of the Welfare State* (1996),John Cooper's work on the importance of the policies of the Liberal governments, and Chris Renwick's study of the origins of the welfare state.[13]

Much of the literature uses chronologies that differentiate the period before and after the Labour government's (1945–1951) implementation of William Beveridge's report, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942), often referred to as the post-war welfare settlement. We have chosen not to emphasise such a differentiation. This is in part because there were many continuities from earlier welfare policies and these practices remained embedded in the post-war period. As Pat Thane has shown, the post-war Labour government chose to prioritise economic development and so the welfare state of the 1940s was the product of an age of austerity.[14] In response, Beveridge was "disappointed and critical of the outcome, including the continued salience of means-testing" which

[11] See, for example, Harris, Jose. ed. 2003. *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities and Institutions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Freeden, Michael. 2003. Civil Society and the Good Citizen: Competing Conceptions of Citizenship in Twentieth Century Britain. In *Civil Society in British History: Ideas, Identities and Institutions* ed. Jose Harris, 275–91. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Innes, Sue. 2004. Constructing Women's Citizenship in the Inter-war period: the Edinburgh Women Citizen Association. *Women's History Review*, 13, 4: 621–646.

[12] Timmins, *The Five Giants;* Lowe, *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945*; Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945.*

[13] Thane, *The Origins of British Social Policy*; Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State*; Thane, Pat. 2018. *Divided Kingdom: A History of Britain, 1900 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Cooper, John. 2017. *The British Welfare Revolution, 1906–14.* London: Bloomsbury; Renwick, Chris. 2017. *Bread for All: The Origins of the Welfare State*. London: Allen Lane.

[14] Thane, *Divided Kingdom,* 194.

limited the impact of these key social insurance reforms.[15] As such, the universalist ideal of the welfare state was not realised even at the point of inception, and the debates about improvements in state support for those in need, or the desire to further roll back provision, have been a key feature of political discourse ever since.[16]

Our focus on the role of welfare in people's everyday lives underscores the continuities of types, sources and impact of welfare. It reveals how formal welfare support can be absent, inadequate or punitive, or felt on the ground as misplaced.[17] By challenging narratives of welfare improvements, our perspective enables recognition of the patchiness of formal welfare assistance within the welfare state, as well as a wider constituency of historical actors who in fact shaped and felt welfare. As scholars have noted, for many individuals their experience was of the continuation of means-tested limited support rather than the promised cradle-to-grave universalism.[18]

Historians have moved beyond an approach to welfare that centres a broad sweep of national and state-institutional contexts. Instead, they

[15] Ibid. 199.

[16] The argument that the welfare state after 1945 did not substantially improve the pre-war circumstances of the poor and that the middle-classes disproportionally benefitted from the new welfare structures were made from the left by Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend in 1958. Abel-Smith, Brian. 1958. Whose Welfare State. In *Conviction*, ed. Norman Mackenzie, 55–73. London: MacGibbon and Key and Townsend, Peter. 1958. A Society for the People, in *Conviction*, 93–120. For a more recent exposition of these debates see Hills, John. 2015. *Good Times, Bad Times: The Welfare Myth of Them and Us*. Bristol: Policy Press. For Conservative debates on welfare and the welfare state see Page, *Clear Blue Water*.

[17] Richard Titmuss recognised the everyday impact of welfare and argued that those working in the welfare state ought to pay attention to clients' and patients' accounts of their experiences. He adjusted the training of social workers in his department at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) to encourage them to listen to their clients and advocated for these changes with successive governments from his role as the deputy-chair of the Supplementary Benefits Commission in the late 1960s. See Titmuss, Richard. 1976. *Essays on the Welfare State*. London: Allen and Unwin and Stewart, John. 2020. *Richard Titmuss. A Commitment to Welfare*. London: Policy Press.

[18] This patchiness was recognised by academics in the 1950s and 1960s such as Townsend, Peter. 1958. A Society for the People, in *Conviction*, 93–120; Wilson, Harriett. 1962. *Delinquency and child neglect*. London: George Allen; Marris, Peter. 1958. *Widows and their Families* (Reports of the Institute of Community Studies (ICS). no. 3. London: ICS. It was also recognised by many of the poverty campaigning groups formed in the mid-1960s such as the Child Poverty Action Group, The Disablement Income Group and Shelter.

recognise the ongoing importance on the one hand of older embedded traditions of mutual and familial support and on the other hand newer forms of welfare provision and activism within diverse communities.[19] For Geoffrey Finlayson the idea of the mixed economy of welfare reflects the way in which community, voluntary and familial sources have been variously alternative, or more often interlocking, features of support structures for families and individuals throughout the twentieth century.[20] As many historians have observed, there is a moving frontier between the statutory and voluntary sector. This highlights the role of the voluntary sector as a provider and facilitator of welfare systems, and as a site of activism, especially as a space for the achievement of social citizenship rights.[21]

Moreover, there is a particularly rich stream of scholarship exploring women's contributions in this regard. Our own work has contributed to this area of research within the field of British history, where we have actively thought about welfare regimes linked to different spheres of women's voluntary action. Davidson's work argues that the activism of working-class women contributed not only to the development of local welfare structures but was embedded in their own pursuance of active

[19] Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*; Lewis, *Women and Social Action*; Bradley, Katherine and Swift, Helen. eds. 2009. *Women in the Professions: Politics and Philanthropy, 1840–1940*. Victoria: Trafford Publishing; Andrews, Maggie. 2015. *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement*. London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.; Bradley, Kate. 2019. *Lawyers for the Poor: Legal Advice, Voluntary Action and Citizenship in England, 1890–1990*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Koven, Seth and Michel, Sonya. eds. 2016. *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*. London: Routledge; Beaumont, Caitríona. 2013. *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928–1964*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Millward, Gareth. 2015. Social Security Policy and the Early Disability Movement—Expertise, Disability, and the Government, 1965–77. *Twentieth Century British History* 26, 2: 274–297; Moores, Chris. 2009. The Progressive Professionals: The National Council for Civil Liberties and the Politics of Activism in the 1960s. *Twentieth Century British History* 20, 4: 538–560.

[20] Finlayson *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare,* 6.

[21] See, for example, Rochester, Colin and Harris, Margaret. 2000. eds. *Voluntary Organisations and Social Policy in Britain: Perspectives on Change and Choice*. London: Red Globe Press and Rochester, Colin, Campbell Gosling George and Penn, Alison. 2011. eds. *Understanding Roots of Voluntary Action: Historical Perspectives on Current Social Policy* Sussex: Sussex Academic Press.

citizenship.[22] Beaumont's study of non-party voluntary women's associations from the late 1920s to the early 1960s asserts their contribution to women's wider campaigns for equal citizenship and welfare reform.[23] Colpus's research conceives of middle- and upper-class women's philanthropic work during the interwar years as "a practice, commitment, an ethic and a way of understanding social obligation and opportunity".[24] Central to our individual research interests, and underpinning this new collection, is the desire to trace the linkage of experiential knowledge and expertise to "faring-well" and activism around welfare.

More recent historiography has begun to develop granular accounts of welfare in individual lives. This work seeks to enrich our understandings of welfare which allows for a closer examination of how policies and practices play out within communities and how a focus on welfare relationships and their meanings can reintegrate the agency of ordinary people in historical analysis. Eve Worth achieves this in her examination of the life course of women who were the first generation to experience and benefit from the welfare state.[25] Nadja Durbach similarly notes, with regard to state food welfare policies from the New Poor Law in the 1830s to the post-war welfare state, that beneficiaries were not passive, and readings of on-the-ground stories complicate how we think about how the state operates in practice.[26]

Underpinning this work, as Jennifer Crane and Jane Hand argue with regard to the history of the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain, there is a need to move beyond a focus on policy structures to understand the multiple meanings of welfare. This includes an examination of public attitudes, the relationship between welfare and everyday life and representations of welfare in consumerism and culture, where the local is

[22] Davidson, Ruth. 2016. Working-Class Women Activists: Citizenship at the Local Level. In *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Ackers and Alastair Reid, 93–121. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[23] Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*.

[24] Colpus, Eve. 2018. *Female Philanthropy in the Interwar World: Between Self and Other*. London: Bloomsbury, 1.

[25] Worth, Eve. 2022. *The Welfare State Generation: Women, Agency and Class in Britain Since 194*5. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 8.

[26] Durbach, Nadja. 2020. *Many Mouths: The Politics of Food in Britain from the Workhouse to the Welfare State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 4–13.

a crucial site for deeper historical understandings.[27] Scholarship exploring children's experiences of welfare in the UK has complemented these findings. This work brings attention to the need for historians to be sensitive to the ways in which peer concerns of young people might crosscut defined spaces of institutional welfare provision, and how varied levels of freedoms ascribed to children framed their interactions with welfare.[28]

Our innovative approach signifies a new departure within historical scholarship on everyday welfare in modern Britain. Inspired by Pinker's idea of "faring well", *Everyday Welfare* moves away from an emphasis solely upon the interactions individuals had within a welfare relationship. Instead, the collection foregrounds individuals' multiple connections with welfare cultures that were translated through experience. These experiential bonds are made up of mutual support and generosity, but they can also represent moments that expose people's vulnerability, marginality and lack of power. In broadening out the narratives of welfare to look at a range of actions and relationships, from the statutory sphere to the everyday individual exchanges of help and support, *Everyday Welfare* opens up debate on what welfare means not only in, but also to people's lives, including how it shapes individuals' attitudes to families, work, wider social and political structures.

Lived Experience, Experiential Expertise and History of Experience

Experiential knowledge leading to experiential expertise and activism is the core conceptual framework and empirical focus of *Everyday Welfare*. Our understanding of experiential expertise draws on the notion of lived experience, which can be defined as "a representation and understanding of human experiences, choices, and options and the way those factors

[27] Crane, Jennifer and Hand, Jane. 2022. *Posters, Protests and Prescriptions: Cultural Histories of the National Health Service in Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 8–9.

[28] Pooley, Siân and Taylor, Jonathan. 2021. Introduction. In *Children's experiences of welfare in modern Britain*, eds. Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor, 1–26. London: University of London Press.

influence perceptions of knowledge".[29] Explorations of the production of social knowledge through lived experience have opened up new avenues for understanding the link between individual experiences and wider collective understandings. The use of experience within Anglophone scholarship can be dated to 1920s and 1930s literary criticism and was developed in the work of New Left thinkers which culminated in the scholarship of Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson in the mid-1950s. Questions about the social distribution of power were central to this scholarship. As Stuart Middleton argues, in the writings of Thompson, experience was drawn as the foundation for political activism.[30] Writing in the early 1990s, Joan Scott argued that experience is "neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and therefore political".[31] Rather than reproducing historical accounts that took experience as self-evident, Scott cautioned that historians must be attuned to the production of that knowledge which "retains its explanatory power and its interest in change but does not stand on or reproduce naturalized categories".[32] In recent work historians have continued to explore these conceptions, often with a particular focus on class identity and formation.[33]

This linking of the experiential to social relationships is discussed by Katrina Navickas who emphasises the significance of social context. Here she suggests that class is a process shaped by lived experience and is therefore intersected by other forces and groupings, including race, gender,

[29] Boylorn, R.M. 2008. Lived Experience. In *The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods,* ed. L.M. Given, 490. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. There are linguistic differences around the understanding of the term lived experience. Specifically in Germanic cultures there is a clear distinction between *Erlebnisse* and *Erfahrungen*. *Erlebnis* refers to perceptions and pre-discursive experiences (often translated as lived experience) whereas *Erfahrung* refers to socially shared experiences. In the English language there is no such clear distinction. A helpful summary of the historiographical use of experience and these linguistic definitions can be found in Markkola, Pirjo. 2023. Education as Lived Welfare. A History of Experience Perspective on Children and the Welfare State. *Nordic Journal of Educational History* 10, 2: 5–20.

[30] Middleton, Stuart. 2016. The Concept of "Experience" and the Making of the English Working class, 1924–1962. *Modern Intellectual History* 13, 1: 197.

[31] Scott, Joan. 1991. The Evidence of Experience. *Critical Inquiry* 14: 779–780, 797.

[32] Ibid. 797.

[33] See, for example, Millard, Chris. 2020. Using Personal Experience in the Academic Medical Humanities: a Genealogy. *Social Theory and Health*, 18: 184–198; Todd, Selina. 2014. Class, Experience and Britain's Twentieth Century. *Social History* 39, 4: 489–508.

faith and nation.[34] In *Everyday Welfare* we expand on this work but turn our attention specifically to the acquisition of lived experience and the outcomes of that experience in terms of the development of experiential knowledge and expertise. This in turn creates new opportunities for collective action and activism around welfare across diverse communities and identities.

The concept of experiential expertise first emerged in the 1970s in the work of sociologist Thomasina Borkman.[35] In her analysis of self-help groups in the United States, Borkman identified experiential knowledge as knowledge acquired through personal experience of, and emotional responses to, a phenomenon. This was in contrast to professional knowledge and expertise gained through education, training and accreditation or working in a skilled occupation. Individuals who gain experiential knowledge have the potential to go on to develop this personal and subjective experience into a collective experience, usually by becoming a member of a wider group who share the same experiential knowledge. When these collective experiences are transferred between group members and used collectively to problem solve, experiential expertise is achieved.

Experiential expertise has been successfully utilised by historians, for example Jennifer Crane, to highlight the "interplay between the politics of experience, expertise and emotion" whereby experiential expertise enables individuals and groups to "become agents in, and subjects of, rather than objects of social policy and practice".[36] In her work on child protection in England from 1960 to 2000, Crane argues that "children, parents and survivors became 'expert' because of their ability to represent, channel, construct and argue for the validity of experiential and emotional expertise".[37] They were then able to challenge traditionally placed professional experts and become influential and visible in

[34] Navickas, Katrina. 2018. A return to materialism? Putting social history back into place. In *New Directions in Social and Cultural History*, eds. Sasha Handley, Rohan McWilliam and Lucy Noakes, 95. London: Bloomsbury. See also Eley, Geoff and Nield, Keith H. 2007. *The Future of Class in History: What's Left of the Social?* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Savage, Mike. 2010. *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[35] Borkman, Thomasina. 1976. Experiential Knowledge: A New Concept for the Analysis of Self-Help Groups. *Social Service Review* 50, 3: 445–456.

[36] Crane, Jennifer. 2018. *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2.

[37] Ibid.

shaping policies impacting on what we would describe as their desire to "fare well". In *Everyday Welfare* we build on Crane's work to further develop and expand understandings of experiential expertise from the early decades of twentieth-century Britain. Moreover through our case studies we demonstrate that experiential expertise was used to develop and underpin action by a diverse range of individuals and organisations in various locales and that this collective activism can be identified not only in small local groups but also in large national associations.

Our study of experiential expertise, activism and "faring well" in modern Britain is informed by current developments in the history of experience.[38] Adopting this historical approach allows us to move away from ideas around authentic and essentialist experiences and focus instead on how human experiencing can lead to shared experiential expertise and subsequent action and activism. Our understanding of experiential expertise is linked to the idea of "communities of experience" where "people who recognize similarities in their experiences, who share and negotiate these experiences and their meanings with each other, and who start to identify themselves as a group, bound together with a sense of shared experience".[39] In our work we extend the concept of "communities of experience" by seeking out pathways to activism and identifying the repertoires of activism adopted by the "communities of experience" featured in our collection. We then evaluate the impact of this action on welfare cultures in Britain.

History of experience is useful in foregrounding how people experience society and "understand their rights and responsibilities and how they feel society meets their needs and expectations". These experiences

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[38] We note the importance of the work of the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences (HEX) at the Faculty of Social Sciences (SOC), University of Tampere, Finland. See especially Eiranen, Reetta, Hatavara, Mari, Kivimäki, Ville, Mäkelä, Maria and Toivo, Raisa. 2022. Narrative and Experience: Interdisciplinary Methodologies between History and Narratology. *Scandinavian Journal of History* 47,1: 1–15; Kivimäki, Ville, Suodenjoki, Sami & Vahtikari, Tanja. eds. 2021. *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Boddice, Rob and Smith, Mark. 2020. *Emotion, Sense, Experience.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Olsen, Stephanie. 2020. Children and Childhoods. *Cultural History of Education Vol. 5*, ed. Heather Ellis. London: Bloomsbury.

[39] Kivimäki, Ville, Malinen, Antti and Vuolanto, Ville. 2023. Communities of Experience. *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience.* https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/communities-of-experience/. Accessed 20 January 2023.

are generational, with experiences of past generations shaping "structures that the next generation faces as institutions, traditions, prerequisites and possibilities in their lives".[40] This can be conceived as genealogies of experience. Hoegaerts and Olsen argue the history of experience "is concerned with the embodied engagement with social, cultural, political and material contexts, in order to understand lived experiences through these engagements".[41] For us, these ideas facilitate new insights into the experience of welfare, "faring well" and welfare activism. As Hoegaerts and Olsen suggest, the history of experience "offers new ways to include otherwise absent historical actors" considering "how being and feeling human is always contextual, depending on changing material, cultural and structural features of our world".[42] In particular we utilise history of experience to bring to the fore new perspectives on how different groups of people felt and responded to welfare in Britain. It is these shared experiences made up of the entanglement of "the physical, economic world and that of human senses and sensibilities" that allow us to shift attention away from orthodox histories of the welfare state as an institution, and the privileging of professional expertise within that tradition.[43]

Historiographies tracing expanding welfare cultures in Britain have prioritised the apportioning of expertise within the welfare state.[44] The power of the expert in public life and the dominance of medical, scientific, technical and theoretical expertise over key areas of public policy,

[40] Haapala, Pertti, Harjula Minna and Kokko, Heikki, *Experiencing Society and the Lived Welfare State*, 4.

[41] Hoegaerts, Josephine and Olsen, Stephanie. 2021. The History of Experience: Afterword. In *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* eds. Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari, 375. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[42] Ibid. 377.

[43] Ibid.

[44] See, for example, histories of expertise in the British context: Hilton, Matthew, McKay, James and Crowson, Nicholas and Mouhot, Jean-François. 2013. *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 54–79; Crowson, Nicholas, Hilton, Matthew and McKay, James. eds. 2009. *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Bradford, Simon. 2007. Practices, Policies and Professionals: Emerging Discourses of Expertise in English Youth Work, 1939–1951. *Youth and Policy* 97–98: 13–28; Gobet, Fernand. 2016. *Understanding Expertise: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

the welfare state and civil society has been the subject of much analysis and debate.[45] In explaining this phenomenon, Nicholas Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay have suggested that over the course of the twentieth-century expertise gained societal and cultural significance.[46] This story of reliance on professional experts is most often associated with the period of reconstruction in the aftermath of the Second World War, linked to what historian Harold Perkin referred to as the "rise of professional society".[47] The influence of the expert became further entrenched in the middle decades of the century. As Crowson, Hilton and McKay suggest, this was linked to long-term social trends such as the expansion of the state, the coming of the modern welfare state and the emergence of an educated and increasingly affluent citizenry.[48]

Furthermore, the influence of these experts is seen to have extended out into civil society through the establishment of independent NGOs and charities by groups of individuals seeking to engage in advocacy and activism.[49] As Marc Stears observed in 2021, "the relationship between

[45] The literature is wide-ranging. See, for example, MacLeod, Roy. ed. 1988. *Government and Expertise: Specialists, Administrators, and Professionals, 1860–1919*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Savage, Gail. 1996. *The Social Construction of Expertise: The English Civil Service and Its Influence, 1919–1939*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; Edgerton, David. 2006. *Warfare State: Britain 1920–1970* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Hilton et al. *The Politics of Expertise*.

[46] This development had an impact on party politics and government as well as leading individual citizens to increasingly "place their trust in bodies of experts better positioned than themselves to make cases based on their values, interests, and beliefs". Hilton et al. *The Politics of Expertise*, ix.

[47] Perkin, Harold. 1990. *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*. London: Routledge, cited in Hilton et al., 55; Bradford, Simon. 2007. The "Good Youth Leader": Constructions of Professionalism in English youth work, 1939–45. *Ethics and Social Welfare* 1, 3: 293–309; Clements, Charlotte. 2019. Lady Albemarle's youth workers: contested professional identities in English youth work 1958–1985. *History of Education* 48, 6: 819–836.

[48] Hilton et al., 3.

[49] Ibid. 2. For studies of charitable organisations and NGOs see, for example, Thane, Pat and Davidson, Ruth. 2016. *Child Poverty Action Group, 1965–2016*. London: Child Poverty Action Group; Moores, Chris. 2017. *Civil Liberties and Human Rights in Twentieth Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Mold, Alex. 2015. *Making the Patient-Consumer: Patient Organisations and Health Consumerism in Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Thane, Pat and Evans, Tanya. 2012. *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in Twentieth-Century England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Bradley, *Lawyers for the Poor*. In the context of humanitarianism see for

expertise and social change is a crucial but a complex one" with each generation having to "grapple with it in their own way".[50] In *Everyday Welfare* we highlight how definitions of expertise are limited not only generationally, but also spatially, and are therefore problematic. We argue that hierarchies of expertise can crowd out or silence other more diverse but equally important expressions and forms of expertise, in particular experiential expertise. In response, our contributors set out to recover these overlooked experiences by adopting the conceptual framework of experiential expertise.

Building upon the insights of these new histories, *Everyday Welfare* argues for the importance of articulations of experiences within processes of cultural and material change where individual actors are central drivers and agents. In exploring diverse expressions of experience, we are tracing the ways that individuals mobilise and seek to effect change through claims to embedded models of expertise. Contributors to this collection are attuned to historical subjects' interpretations of experiences at a personal level, in respect of strategies of understanding the self. However, we are also interested in how this influences dialogue with wider public narratives, and the ways this allows individuals to engage in, and actively challenge, political and public knowledge regimes. This process of producing knowledge, as Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari observe, is messy and "the study of experience is a study of a blurred mediating category, where cultural meanings, subjective identities, social relations, and societal structures shape individual perceptions into experiences proper".[51] Nevertheless, we argue taking

example: O'Sullivan, Kevin. 2021. *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Baughman, Emily. 2022. *Saving the Children: Humanitarianism, Internationalism, and Empire*. Oakland, University of California Press.

[50] Butler, Lisa, Stears, Marc and Robinson, Emily. 2021. Experience, Expertise and Emotion: Has Labour Had Enough of Experts? *Renewal* 29, 4: 32.

[51] Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari. *Lived Nation*, 12–13. For new histories of experience see, for example, Bodice and Smith. *Emotion, Sense, Experience*; Chaney, Sarah. 2020. Am I a researcher or a self-harmer? Mental health, objectivity and identity politics in history. *Social Theory & Health* 18: 152–168; Epstein, Steven. 1995. The construction of lay expertise: AIDS activism and the forging of credibility in the reform of clinical trials. *Science, Technology & Human Values* 20, 4: 408–437; Millard. Using personal experience in the academic medical humanities; Pattadath, Bindhulakshmi. 2016. Experience as "expert" knowledge: A critical understanding of survivor research in mental health. *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology* 23, 3: 203–205; Rose, Diana. 2017. Service user/

this approach is essential for understanding the iterative dynamic of the movement between quotidian life and social, cultural and political change. Indeed, recognising the scattered and diffuse sites of the experiential necessitates interrogating the lived realities within diverse histories. Adopting an experiential frame for expertise can be particularly effective for those who, because of their gender, class, faith, age, race, ethnicity or sexuality, have had less opportunity to interact with, or challenge, professional expertise around welfare. But equally it can be used for more conservative, or at times reactionary, causes. This approach not only questions what the experiential is, but what people go on do to with it; sometimes achieving positive outcomes but with the possibility of more limited or negative results. Moreover, experiential expertise does not only sit within smaller, grassroots groups or "niche spaces".[52] It can also be nested in larger more traditional groups and revealed through their evolving engagements. We must therefore avoid assumptions that experiential expertise is solely a feature of left-wing, anti-establishment groups. Experiential expertise can be mediated, co-opted and negotiated within conservative institutions, more established communities and less progressive discourses.[53]

Doing Histories of Experiential Expertise

Everyday Welfare has evolved from a panel on expertise and the voluntary sector presented by Beaumont, Colpus and Davidson at the *Modern British Studies* conference at the University of Birmingham, UK, in June 2017. Our panel spoke to critiques of the expert in the wake of the 2015 UK referendum on membership of the European Union then circulating

survivor-led research in mental health: epistemological possibilities. *Disability & Society* 32, 6: 773–789.

[52] Crane, Jennifer. 2022. Gifted Children, Youth Culture, and Popular Individualism in 1970s and 1980s Britain. *The Historical Journal* 65, 5: 1418–1441.

[53] For further discussion of mediated experiential expertise see Beaumont, Caitríona, Colpus, Eve, and Davidson, Ruth. 2024. Experiential Expertise: Complicating Categories of Lived Experience. *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience*. https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/cases-and-sources/experiential-expertise-complicating-categories-of-lived-experience/. Accessed 29 October 2024.

in public discourse.[54] It was apparent from this panel, and from other papers and discussions at the conference, that while expertise was to the fore at that moment, what lay embedded in the histories we were telling was a less explicit, but more intriguing, narrative of the experiential. In developing this kernel of an idea into the conception of experiential expertise used in this collection, we chose to work in a collective way, expanding to a larger group of scholars. A series of workshops enabled us to be grounded in reflective thought and to engage in collaborative writing. This process interrogated not only our historical subjects but also our individual practice, weaving our methodologies as historians and our subjectivities into and across the warp and weft of doing the history of experiences.

While we note debates amongst historians on the construction of selfhood, our intention is not to deliberate on these but take such subjectivities as presented to explore processes of cultural, material and social change.[55] As Chris Millard argues, "part of the conceptual architecture of lived experience is that it needs to be taken on its own terms—not undercut, undermined, or instrumentalised".[56] Across our contributions there is a clear sense of how experiences are framed in dialogue with shifting social forces. The chapters in *Everyday Welfare* draw on a diverse body of "experiential sources". These range from oral histories, diaries, auto/biographical material, paratextual material, published accounts and

[54] Butler, Stears and Robinson. Experience, Expertise and Emotion, 32. On contemporary debates in the United States see for example Nichols, Tom. 2018. *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge, and Why It Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press and Grundmann, Reiner. 2017. The Problem of Expertise in Knowledge Societies, *Minerva* 55: 25–48.

[55] See Scott. The Evidence of Experience; hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress*. London: Routledge; Steedman, Caroline. 2000. *Enforced Narratives: Stories of Another Self*. London: Routledge; Roper, Michael. 2005. Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History. *History Workshop Journal* 59: 57–72; Summerfield, Penny. 2000. *Dis/composing the Subject: Intersubjectivities in oral history*. London: Routledge; See also Abrams, Lynn. 2023. *Feminist Lives: Women, Feelings and the Self in Post-War Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Abrams, Lynn. 2014. Liberating the Female Self: Epiphanies, Conflict and Coherences in the Life Stories of Post-war British Women. *Social History* 39, 1:14–35; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Florence and Thomlinson, Natalie. 2022. Vernacular Discourses of Gender Equality in the Post-War British Working Class. *Past and Present* 254, 1: 277–313.

[56] See Chris Millard's chapter ('Justifying Experience, Changing Expertise: From Protest to Authenticity in Anglophone "Mad Voices" in the Mid-Twentieth Century') in this collection.

printed sources. In addition to first-person narratives, authors also read official documents, newspaper reports, committee minutes and specialist reports as "experiential sources". For many of the chapters, the use of such sources—social workers' case reports, social research reports, committee minutes, organisational scripts—are the central evidential documents. Many sources offer fragments to historians—an aspect or aspects of an experience or perception—which historians need to read with creativity and an awareness of relational analyses and "empathic inference".[57] Recent oral history scholarship which embraces "what could be perceived as inaccuracies such as omissions, dissonances and mis-remembering" and appreciates "the glorious messiness of oral interviews" has been an inspiration for the methodological approach taken in this volume as a whole.[58] Centering various sources and consciously considering the complexity of working with subjective experiences is fundamental.

Experiential expertise, as the chapters in this book show, can lead to diverse and sometimes discrete forms of social expression. Rooted in different personal contexts, shared situations and political perspectives, expertise gleaned through lived experience is not reducible to a unified mode of type of action. The contributions in *Everyday Welfare* illustrate this diversity. Taken as a whole, the chapters problematise any singular reading of experiential expertise around welfare cultures. In some cases, we see those undertaking the work of experiential expertise as a mode of formal political activism, aimed at achieving desired social and policy change. For others the act of claiming experiential expertise is a process of critical engagement with society where for some, the very existence of formal statutory structures of welfare are a target to push back against. The work of experiential expertise is, in other examples, rooted in community expression; here, it works first and foremost as the sharing of social knowledge and experience that binds a group together. For some individuals or groups, the process of transitioning into a different social

[57] Mona Gleason has called for historians to use "empathic inference". Gleason. Mona. 2016. Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth and Education. *Journal of the History of Education Society* 45, 4: 446–459. For examples of the application of such creative approaches see Laite, Julia. 2021. *The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey: A True Story of Sex, Crime and the Meaning of Justice*. London: Profile Books; Knott, Sarah. 2020. *Mother: An Unconventional History*. London: Penguin and Cohen, Deborah. 2014. *Family Secrets: The Things We Tried to Hide*. London: Penguin.

[58] Worth, *The Welfare State Generation,* 2–3.

space (e.g. starting work, going to university, or joining a group) has been the catalyst for acquiring a form of experiential expertise they might otherwise not have been able to claim. Experiential expertise, alternatively, might function as a form of internal dialogue that allows an individual or individuals to think through what they have learnt from personal experience. This process itself can be a springboard to diffuse forms of activism, which might work through a carefully curated process of representing lived experience or might be part of broader quotidian life and embedded within the wider behaviours and concerns of an individual or group.

Each of these expressions of experiential expertise can operate within different contexts, working together, alongside or in conflict. We don't assume that all such activism is for progressive or positive ends; one person's "faring-well" might be another person's "faring badly". Moreover, we acknowledge that there are limits to experiential expertise and it can fail in its objectives. It is this complexity of expression of experiential expertise with which our contributors wish to engage. The collection endeavours to present diverse experiences of welfare cultures and activism. Of course not all experiences can be captured here. For example, we are aware that more work is needed around experiential expertise and activism in relation to disability.[59] In addition there are many more stories of where experiential expertise is mobilised through positive activism in diverse communities, and more need to be told in future work.[60] Nevertheless, the experiences captured in *Everyday Welfare* offer a strong foundation and inspiration for new scholarship in this field.

Our collection is organised into four thematic sections. Each section centres groups who have been less well served by formal structures and have had to seek out ways of managing and supporting their own welfare and their ability to "fare well". We are particularly keen to highlight work that focuses on diverse identities and perspectives. In **Women** Siân Roberts, Ruth Davidson, Caitríona Beaumont and Angela Davis each look at ways women engaged with their own experiential expertise to make demands around care. These cases span the central

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[59] For discussions of activism around disability see chapters 'Communities of Care: Working-Class Women's Welfare Activism, 1920–1970s', 'The "Housewife as Expert": Re-thinking the Experiential Expertise and Welfare Activism of Housewives' Associations in England, 1960–1980' and Afterward' in this collection.

[60] See for example Connell, Kieran. 2019. *Black Handsworth: Race in 1980s Britain.* Oakland: University of California Press.

decades of the twentieth century and show how women sought welfare to ensure that they and those they cared for were able to "fare well". Roberts' chapter interrogates how women of faith negotiated their privileged class positions to use experiences of working within communities to bring welfare. Davidson reveals the way working-class women used their everyday knowledge to demand policy reform for their families and themselves. Beaumont re-conceptualises the experiential expertise of housewives and their associations, which enabled ongoing engagement in welfare activism during the 1960s and 1970s. Identifying new ways for women to engage in paid work Davis reveals the contested nature of the experience of motherhood through her study of childminders in the second half of the twentieth century.

In **Children** Michael Lambert, Jennifer Crane and Eve Colpus' chapters consider how claims to represent children's voices were contested in the construction and provision of welfare services for children. Organisations and organisational cultures are important here as facilitators and meditators of children's experiences, good and bad. Lambert's chapter examines the lived experience of the diswelfare of children in the mid-to-late twentieth-century British state. Crane reflects on debates in the late twentieth century around gifted children and their representation as experiential experts, and adult policing of this status. Colpus explores in her chapter the children's telephone helpline in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a site for the curation of children's experiential expertise.

In **Identity** Chris Millard, Charlotte Clements and Jessica White underscore how categories of identity are expressed as experiential expertise. Here there are tensions between personal and professional expertise and within different communities and groups. These tensions were at times embedded in health, class and race and were interiorised as individuals recognised and asserted their experiential expertise. As these chapters reveal this can have both positive and negative outcomes. Millard uses paratextual material to give fresh insights into the lived experience and agency of asylum inmates from the late nineteenth century, and how these lived experiences have been mediated over time by practitioners. Clements' chapter shows the centrality of class experience as part of the qualification for and expertise of youth workers, and the tensions therein. White documents how two communities living cheek-by-jowl can result in racialised divisions around experiences of welfare.

In **Communities** Sarah Crook, Kate Bradley, Aaron Andrews and Hannah Elizabeth each reflect on how communities of experience are created, curated and contested. Space and materiality are important here, with chapters showing how the university, the telephone, the street and the bedroom were places where new experiences were generated and enacted. Crook explores how being at university formed communities of student experiential expertise. Bradley carefully delineates how technology, specifically the telephone and telephone helplines, created communities for those in need and those offering support. Andrews demonstrates how embedded communal experiences of social injustice and racism enabled activism in the wake of the 1981 New Cross fire. For Elizabeth communities of activism formed as debates and campaigns around safe sex practices for women who have sex with women developed in the wake of the AIDS epidemic. In her **Afterword** Pat Thane draws together the multiple and diverse ways individuals and groups sought to "fare well" and assesses the impact of their experiences on histories of welfare in modern Britain.

Everyday Welfare offers a fresh approach and new framing for histories of welfare. Moreover, our return to and application of Pinker's idea of "a state of welfare", combined with the concept "faring well", which leads to activism, reinvigorates and reconceptualises welfare in daily life. It opens a more inclusive, diverse and representative account of what the experience of welfare meant to people, how they felt about it and what they did with it. As we suggest these original perspectives are not limited to the British case. Our approach has the potential to transform global histories of welfare. Closer to home, our collective has been about feeling its way on how we engage with the history of experiences. Our contribution is not a rigid template for future work, but instead offers a series of new questions, ideas and approaches to modern histories of welfare.

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Women

Quaker Women in Humanitarian and Social Action: Faith, Learning and the Authority of Experience

Siân Roberts

INTRODUCTION

Advocating for "Christian people" to support the work of the Copec House Improvement Society in Birmingham in 1932, the Quaker housing reformer, adult educator and humanitarian relief worker Florence Barrow (1876–1964) related her own experience of participating in the cause. Once alerted to the individual and social ills that emanated from life in "an overcrowded, unwholesome house" she argued, it became "impossible not to desire to take some share in schemes for betterment". Moreover, she concluded, the "value of all such schemes lies not only in the conditions actually improved, but also in the enlightenment and quickening of responsibility in those engaged upon them".[1] Florence was one of a group of women Friends in Birmingham who felt this responsibility to

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[1] Florence M. Barrow. 1932. *House and Home: Even to the Poorest, Mean More Than Can Easily Be Put into Words*. Birmingham: Copec House Improvement Society, Ltd., Barrow Family Papers (hereafter BFP). At the time of writing the BFP were held by the family but will soon be deposited at the Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London (hereafter LSF).

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engage in social, educational and humanitarian voluntary action locally, nationally and transnationally in the first half of the twentieth century.[2] Hailing from a kinship network of interrelated affluent Quaker families that formed part of the local civic political elite, their activism extended across a range of issues that they understood as part of their faith-inspired witness for peace and social justice. For them, to witness was to experience and live their faith through action that would contribute to enabling different groups and social classes to "fare well" in a more peaceful and equitable society, both at home in Birmingham and in international theatres of war and famine. In so doing they built careers in voluntary social action that were founded on claims to knowledge and expertise that were underpinned both by their own personal experiences of social and humanitarian service, and their understanding of the experiences of the women and children with whom they intervened. Florence's words quoted above succinctly capture her recognition that enabling others to "fare well" though social intervention also contributed to the "faring well" of the activist by providing the opportunity live out their witness through service and the exercise of personal responsibility and authority.

Despite the fact that Quaker women have often been identified as disproportionally active in political and social action, research on their social activism and its relationship to faith in the twentieth century remains relatively limited.[3] Most of the scholarly attention is devoted to female Friends in earlier periods, and Quaker participation in campaigns for female suffrage.[4] Recent work has begun to broaden this focus, partly

[2] Quakers are members of the Religious Society of Friends founded in the seventeenth century and are therefore also known as Friends. Both terms are used interchangeably in this chapter.

[3] For example Midgley, Clare. 2010. Women, Religion and Reform. In *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800–1940*, eds. Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries, 138–158. London: Routledge.

[4] For example Mack, Phyllis. 1992. *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century Women*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; Plant, Helen. 2003. "Subjective Testimonies": Women Quaker Ministers and Spiritual Authority in England: 1750–1825. *Gender and History* 15, 2: 296–318; van Drenth, Annemieke and de Haan, Francisca. 1999. *The Rise of Caring Power: Elizabeth Fry and Josephine Butler in Britain and the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; Holton, Sandra S. 2005. Kinship and Friendship: Quaker women's networks and the women's movement. *Women's History Review* 14, 3 & 4: 365–384.

as a result of what Morgan and de Vries have described as the "religious turn" in historical scholarship.[5] This has coincided with a growing scholarly emphasis on "lived religion", understood as "how religion and spirituality are practiced, experienced, and expressed by ordinary people … in the context of their everyday lives".[6] Formulating approaches to historically analyse the experience of lived religion has been a significant element in the theoretical conceptualisation developed by Research Council of Finland's Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences (HEX).[7] Building on this work, I will argue that this group of Quaker women constructed and reconstructed claims to expertise based on their comprehension of the ways in which personal experience constituted social knowledge, an epistemological understanding that was closely related to their understanding of their faith itself as a lived experiential practice.

This chapter draws on their published writings and unpublished archival materials including correspondence, diaries, memoirs and autobiographical texts. I adopt a prosopographical approach to explore their understanding of the interplay between their experiential faith and claims to knowledge and expertise. In this I conceive of experience as "infused with culture and convention", and as a social and relational process in which these women were socialised into a particular religious and classed culture. This had a profound impact on their identities as Quaker women,

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[5] Morgan, Sue and Jacqueline de Vries, eds. 2010. *Women Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800–1940*. London: Routledge, 2. See Allen, Margaret. 1998. Matilda Sturge: 'Renaissance Woman'. *Women's History Review* 7, 2: 209–226; Holton, Sandra S. 2007. *Quaker Women: Personal Life, Memory and Radicalism in the Lives of Women Friends, 1780–1930*. Abingdon: Routledge; Storr, Katherine. 2010. *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief, 1914–1929*. Bern: Peter Lang.

[6] McGuire, Meredith B. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 12, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/978019517 2621.001.0001. Accessed 12 July 2023.

[7] For example Katajala-Peltomaa, Sari and Raisa Maria Toivo. 2022. Three Levels of Experience. In HEX Digital Handbook of the History of Experience, Tampere University, https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/three-levels-of-experience/. Accessed 5 January 2023. Katajala-Peltomaa, Sari and Toivo, Raisa Maria. 2021. Lived Religion and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Abingdon: Routledge; Katajala-Peltomaa, Sari and Toivo, Raisa Maria eds. 2022. Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

and consequently on how they made meaning of their experiences, individually and collectively.[8] In addition, I will analyse how they drew on Quaker literary traditions and cultural scripts to construct, articulate and perform experiential narratives of expertise in a range of autobiographical narratives and spaces.[9] I will then argue that experiential knowledge was utilised as part of a pedagogy of social action that drew on a genealogy of Quaker women's experience to develop their own learning and that of others in a range of educative spaces. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on their awareness of the limitations of experiential knowledge, and the extent to which it was constrained by privileged class positions and the relationships of power that were inherent in the voluntary work in which they engaged.

Experiential Faith and the Foundation of Agency

Historians of women's social action have recently argued for a reconsideration of the significance of religious faith as a motivating force for women's activism, and of the complex role of religion as both a patriarchal constraining force and a means of enabling and legitimising public action.[10] The women who provide the focus of this chapter were primarily motivated by their Quaker faith, a belief system traditionally founded on the individual's unmediated personal religious experience, often referred to as the "inner light".[11] Although the emphasis on personal experience had been diminished by the growth of evangelical beliefs amongst Friends in the nineteenth century, the 1890s saw a shift towards the Liberal Quakerism that would become the dominant element in British Quaker

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[8] Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo. *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion*, 9.

[9] For a further discussion of Quaker cultural scripts in the articulation of experience, see Kaarninen, Mervi. The Trials of Sarah Wheeler (1807–1867): Experiencing Submission. In Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo. *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion*, 195–217.

[10] See van Drenth and de Haan. *The Rise of Caring Power*; Summers, Anne. 2000. *Female Lives, Moral States: Women, Religion and Public Life in Britain, 1800–1930.* Newbury: Threshold Press Ltd.; Morgan and de Vries. *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures*; Colpus, Eve. 2018. *Female Philanthropy in the Interwar World: Between Self and Other.* London: Bloomsbury.

[11] See Plant. "Subjective Testimonies" on this concept and the authority of earlier Quaker women.

theology.[12] Significantly for the purposes of this chapter, this "Quaker Renaissance" saw a reaffirmation of the primacy of direct personal religious experience as part of a broader interest in Quaker history and the experiences of Friends in the past, together with a re-emphasis on the peace testimony and intervention in social issues.[13] For the women of my group an acceptance of individual personal experience as a recognisable and valid way of knowing was therefore a natural extension of the most profound influence in their lives. Despite its significance, however, the evidence for analysing the extent of this relationship between their experiential faith and experiential claims to expertise and authority is both subtle and fragmentary. As Jacqueline de Vries has argued, traces of the effect of religious experiences in the historical record are often elusive, with the result that historians need to be prepared to work with uncertainty, accepting the uniqueness of each woman's historical experience whilst recognising that "religious faith, belief and practice do not lend themselves to easy historical exploration".[14] As the women in my study were not in the habit of writing introspectively about their faith, my interpretation is necessarily based on empathetically reading the inferences in and between fragmentary references in their own life writings and the testimonies of those to whom they were closely related.[15]

For most of these women engaging in social or humanitarian action was a direct manifestation of their spiritual experience with the divine in which they were led to act in response to a particular "concern". This is reflected in the letters written by Florence Barrow to her companion Gertrude Humpidge (1865–1947) whilst undertaking lengthy periods of relief work with the Friends' Emergency and War Victims' Relief Committee (FEWVRC) in Russia and Poland between 1916 and 1924. Florence was one of a significant number of women who worked as part of

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[12] Kennedy, Thomas C. 2001. *British Quakerism 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[13] Ibid.; see also Frost, J. William. 2013. Modernist and Liberal Quakers, 1887–2010. In *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, eds. Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion, 78–92. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[14] de Vries, Jacqueline. 2010. More than paradoxes to offer: Feminism, history and religious cultures. In Morgan and de Vries. *Women Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain*, 188–210, 189.

[15] For "empathetic inference" and analysing experience, see the introductory chapter to this collection.

the FEWVRC to deliver medical and food relief and organise occupational and educational interventions with non-combatants and displaced women and children in various theatres of war and famine (including France, Belgium, Holland, Russia, Austria, Germany and Poland) between 1914 and 1924.[16] Gertrude shared Florence's faith, her home in Frederick Road, Birmingham, and her interest in social issues, having met in 1910 when they were both volunteers at the Birmingham Women's Settlement.[17] Although direct references to the precise nature of her faith are few, Florence's letters provide glimpses into her belief in divine leading and guidance. In a letter to Gertrude from Russia in January 1917, for example, reflecting on her return home from Russia she determined that "one will be guided when the time comes".[18] Similarly, in a letter written during a particularly challenging period in the work of the Quaker relief team in Poland in 1922, she concluded that "it is difficult to be willing to be led & also to believe that one can trust to be led. You know how I mean. It is difficult to put it into words".[19] A similar sense of divine leading is found in the reflections of Paul Cadbury as he attempted to explain the central role of faith in the motivation of his mother, the educator and penal reformer Geraldine Southall Cadbury (1865–1941). Writing that "her religion was rooted in spiritual experience [that] found expression in her life", he concluded that "her every act was the result of listening for divine guidance".[20] His words echo the Swarthmore lecture delivered by leading Liberal Quaker Joshua Rowntree in 1913 on social service in the Society of Friends in which he argued that for the early Friends of the seventeenth century "social service followed automatically

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[16] See Fry, A. Ruth. 1926. *A Quaker Adventure: The Story of Nine Years Relief and Reconstruction*. New York: Frank-Maurice Inc.; Greenwood, John Ormerod. 1975. *Quaker Encounters Volume 1: Friends and Relief*. York: William Sessions Ltd.; Storr. *Excluded from the Record*.

[17] Testimonial leaflet to the life of Gertrude Phoebe Humpidge, 1947, Temp MSS 590/5, LSF.

[18] Letter, Florence Barrow to Gertrude Humpidge, 13 January 1917, BFP.

[19] Letter, Florence Barrow to Gertrude Humpidge, 6 August 1922, BFP.

[20] Paul Strangman Cadbury, *Geraldine S. Cadbury 1865–1941*, reprinted from *The Friends Quarterly Examiner*, April 1941, Birmingham History D/25/525355, Birmingham Archives & Collections (hereafter BA&C), 16, 3.

on spiritual awakening, as warmth follows from fire".[21] For Geraldine and Florence, therefore, the authority of spiritual experience underpinned their agency and provided a valid basis for knowledge, as it had done for earlier generations of Quaker women.[22]

Performing Experiential Expertise

Quaker women had a long tradition of utilising autobiographical practices to narrativise their spiritual experiences originating in the seventeenth century when autobiography became the site of performing both religious prophecy and divinely sanctioned authority to minister.[23] Indeed, the spiritual autobiography became a characteristic Quaker form "in which women's self-narration was a common practice", and which not only provided authority to its author but also instructed and inspired its readers.[24] This form of autobiography was therefore a literary tradition with which my subjects would be familiar through reading at home in the family and in Quaker meetings, and which they understood to perform certain legitimising and educative functions. This legacy provided a model of narrative and performative practices on which they drew in a range of published and unpublished texts to articulate their experiential claims to expertise.

Constructing witness to their experiential authority was often a lengthy process, in which they made meaning of layers of experiences accumulated over time. Florence Barrow communicated her experience in narratives of expertise and authority in a range of written forms, that were often reworked and reinterpreted from earlier drafts or documents many years later, and through a broad range of texts. These texts included Quaker publications, promotional and polemical pamphlets, memoirs, lectures

[21] Rowntree, Joshua. 1913. *Social Service: Its Place in the Society of Friends.* London: Headley Brothers, 15–16.

[22] Plant."Subjective Testimonies", 298.

[23] Ibid.; see also Tarter, Michele Lise and Catie Gill, eds. 2018. *New Critical Studies on Early Quaker Women, 1650–1800.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, particularly Tarter, Michele Lise. 2018. Written from the Body of Sisterhood: Quaker Women's Prophesying and the Creation of a New Word, 69–88.

[24] Henderson, Desirée. 2018. "The Impudent Fellow Came in Swareing": Constructing and Defending Quaker Community in Elizabeth Drinker's Diary. In Tarter and Gill. *New Critical Studies*, 146–164, here 148.

and talks and occasionally interviews for feature profiles in newspapers or journals. In 1930 a local newspaper published a biographical portrait to mark her presidency of the Midland Adult School Union. Whilst the author struggled initially to grasp the breadth and nature of her experiences, reflecting that "[o]ne does not find it easy, at first, to realise all that Miss Barrow has experienced and accomplished", they find it easier to document her accumulated expertise by listing examples of practical involvement in a wide variety of voluntary service contexts, suggesting that expertise based on experience alone was a slippery concept to comprehend.[25] For Florence, her experiences in these various different local and global contexts accumulated over many years cross-fertilised and informed each other as a form of personal experiential learning. From her late teens she had worked voluntarily in a range of educational, social and humanitarian contexts locally, nationally and transnationally in various theatres of war and famine. In Birmingham her primary interest was in housing reform, initially as a voluntary worker with the Birmingham Women's Settlement from 1898. This interest found its most significant expression however in her work as a founding member and Honorary Secretary of the Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society Ltd. from 1925 and the Birmingham Council of Community Organisations from the 1930s to the 1950s.[26] Copec aimed to find practical solutions to the problem of slum housing through renovating and renting out dilapidated properties at a fair rent. In a promotional awareness and fundraising pamphlet written by Florence in the early 1930s she explained how experience of relief work in Poland in 1920–1924 had informed her understanding of the need to address poor housing in Birmingham:

> It was this experience which helped to open one's eyes to what a home means in human life, and later to housing conditions in our own country which, in spite of all that had been done here, were in some cases so bad

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[25] Anon. 1930. Women Who Matter in the Midlands. Miss Florence Barrow. *Birmingham Gazette*, 8 December, 8.

[26] Copec was founded in 1925 as a legacy of the Christian Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship held in Birmingham in 1924, see Fenter, F. Margaret. 1960. *Copec Adventure: The Story of Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society*. Birmingham: The Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society Ltd.

that, had one to make a choice, life in a dug-out in Poland would have seemed preferable to life in a Birmingham slum.[27]

In the same way much of her relief practice in Poland, and earlier in Russia in 1916–1918, had been based on her experiences and practices in Birmingham, both as a Women's Adult School teacher from 1894, and a Settlement visitor. Interestingly, as she herself grew older we see how Gertrude and Florence's own experiences of ageing also contributed to the evolution of her experiential expertise over time. Gertrude's stay in a nursing home convinced them of the need for a different approach to caring for the elderly and this in turn informed Copec's activities as Florence led the organisation in developing initiatives in this area, most notably the establishment of Bryony House in 1955, the home in which Florence herself spent her final weeks.[28]

As several scholars have argued autobiographical texts should be read and understood within the terms of the discursive and historical contexts in which they were produced.[29] Like earlier generations of Quaker women, the subjects of my study had to negotiate the gendered discourses and cultural scripts of Quaker conceptions of femininity.[30] Joyce Goodman and Camilla Leech have argued that a specifically maternalist discourse as "Mothers in Israel" legitimised the public roles of an earlier generation of women Friends.[31] More recently Eve Colpus has drawn attention to how Interwar female philanthropists utilised their experience of everyday domestic and family life, combined with a duty to Christian service, to legitimise their claims to expertise.[32] Very similar

[27] Barrow. *House and Home*.

[28] Florence Barrow, typescript reminiscences of Gertrude Humpidge, 1955, Bryony House file, BFP.

[29] Plant. "Subjective Testimonies", 297; for example Stanley, Liz. 1987. Biography as Microscope or Kaleidoscope? The case of 'Power' in Hannah Cullwick's Relationship with Arthur Munby. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 10, 1: 19–32; Weiler, Kathleen and Middleton, Sue eds. 1999. *Telling Women's Lives: Narrative Inquiries in the History of Women's Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

[30] Plant. "Subjective Testimonies".

[31] Goodman, Joyce and Camilla Leach. 2002. At the centre of a circle whose circumference spans all nations: Quaker Women and the Ladies Committee of the British and Foreign School Society, 1813–1837. In *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain, 1750–1900*, ed. Sue Morgan, 53–69. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[32] Colpus. *Female Philanthropy in the Interwar World*, 68, 71.

discourses are evident in the texts that articulate the experiential expertise of the married women in my study. Geraldine Cadbury invoked the value of her gendered experiential knowledge as a mother and grandmother in her book *Young Offenders Yesterday and To-day*. In this she combined a history of the treatment of young offenders with autobiographical vignettes of her own experiential journey, from voluntary probation worker in Birmingham's Children's Court in 1905 to recognised expert on penal reform appointed to a succession of Home Office Committees.[33] This is echoed in a testimony written shortly after her death by her son Paul who argued that "personal experience was an essential part of her approach to all social problems", and that it was this experiential maternal understanding that lay at the heart of her expertise in juvenile justice, her founding of open air schools for sickly children and her extensive work for local women's hospitals.[34]

The other married woman in my group, Theodora Lloyd Wilson (1865–1947), developed a career in voluntary maternity child welfare as a local Labour councillor based on a similar narrative. A peace campaigner, and one of the British delegation to the second congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in 1919, she was active in a number of welfare and educational initiatives in the city. In 1923 Theodora was elected to represent Selly Oak on Birmingham City Council, and like early women councillors elsewhere she argued that every ward in the city should be represented by a woman councillor who possessed the gendered life experience that would enable her to reflect a female perspective.[35] Her electoral campaign focused on educational and social welfare issues including housing, unemployment and free secondary education, and her claims to knowledge of these issues were rooted in her personal experience of daily life and the local voluntary sector. In her election leaflet she articulated the experience she had accumulated over

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[33] Cadbury, Geraldine Southall. 1938. *Young Offenders Yesterday and To-day*. London: George Allen & Unwin. These included Home Office Advisory Committee on Probation, 1922; Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Young Offenders, 1925; Home Office Committee on juvenile courts in the Metropolitan Police District, 1930–1941; Home Office Juvenile Court Rules Committee, 1932; Probation Officers Training Board, 1937; Home Office Committee on Observation Centres, 1938.

[34] Cadbury. *Geraldine S. Cadbury*, 10; see also Whitney, Janet. 1948. *Geraldine S. Cadbury 1965–1941. A Biography*. London: George G Harrap & Co. Ltd.

[35] Davidson, Ruth. 2014. "Dreams of Utopia": The Infant Welfare Movement In Interwar Croydon. *Women's History Review* 23, 2: 239–255.

the previous 29 years as the driving force behind the establishment of one of the city's first voluntary Maternity Provident Societies, and later infant welfare centre, in Selly Oak from 1905 and as a co-opted member of the City Council's Maternity and Child Welfare subcommittee from 1915.[36] Following her election this expertise was recognised when she was appointed chair of the subcommittee and led the development of the city's extensive network of infant welfare centres.

It is in the writings of the teacher and humanitarian aid worker Francesca Wilson (1888–1981) that we see the most overt performance of autobiographical experience to underpin claims to expertise. A prolific author, she published polemical reportage, autobiographical accounts of relief work and instruction manuals for aid workers in which she constructed and reconstructed her experiences for different audiences and purposes, creatively adjusting chronology and other details to suit her authorial purpose. Although born into a Quaker family in Newcastle upon Tyne, she spent the 1920s and 1930s in Birmingham as a history mistress in a girls' high school. Francesca had undertaken relief work with refugees delivering food and medical aid and establishing occupational initiatives during and immediately after the First World War in France, Serbia, North Africa, Austria and Russia. In the late 1930s she abandoned her teaching career to deliver Quaker relief in Spain during the Civil War before later working with the survivors of Dachau in Germany in 1945. Although Francesca had a more complex relationship with faith than the other women referred to here, as a birthright Friend who grew up in Quaker family and organisational culture and moved in Quaker circles throughout her life, she was clearly drawing on Quaker narrative and autobiographical traditions.

In the 1940s Francesca published experiential narratives which aimed to intervene in the development of humanitarian practice, the training of aid workers and the discourse surrounding government policy on the displaced.[37] In 1944 she published *In the Margins of Chaos: Recollections*

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[36] Election leaflet, "Mrs Henry Lloyd Wilson The Labour Candidate", municipal elections 1 November 1923, LFF35.2, BA&C; Annual report, Selly Oak Maternity Provident Society, September 1905—September 1906, private collection.

[37] For example Wilson, Francesca M. 1944. *In the Margins of Chaos: Recollections of Relief Work in and between Three Wars*. London: John Murray; Wilson, Francesca M. 1945. *Advice to Relief Workers Based on Personal Experiences in the Field*. London: John

of Relief Work in and between Three Wars, an account of her human-
itarian activities and practice in the First World War, the Spanish Civil
War and the Second World War. Following a detailed autobiographical
account in which she presented herself as an innovative and risk-taking
relief worker, she provided an appendix to the book written both as a
guide to practice and a manifesto advancing her theories on humani-
tarian relief principles and practice rooted in her own experiences. This
appendix was re-published in 1945 as a pamphlet by John Murray and the
Friends Relief Service entitled *Advice to Relief Workers Based on Personal
Experiences in the Field*, thereby conferring authority on her experien-
tial model. In 1947 she published another autobiographical narrative
Aftermath: France, Austria, Germany, Yugoslavia 1945 and 1946. Her
experiential expertise was utilised by the publisher who promoted the
book as "the first inside account" of the work of the United Nations Relief
and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), and the promotional text
on the cover made much of the authenticity and authority lent to the text
by Francesca's "unique experience of relief work".[38] This is accentuated
by her biographical profile on the back cover in which image and text
combine to present a woman of experience, determination and vision.
A detailed summary of her relief career is surmounted by a strikingly
constructed photograph by the portrait photographer Lettice Ramsey in
which Francesca is shown in side profile, emphasising her aquiline nose
and firm chin, and looking resolutely upwards as if to the future. Like the
autobiographical accounts written by the other women featured in this
study these experiential publications had a clear pedagogic agenda that
was not limited to the written word but was also advanced through sites
of communal learning.

Murray & Friends Relief Service; Wilson, Francesca M. 1947. *Aftermath: France, Austria,
Germany, Yugoslavia 1945 and 1946*. West Drayton and New York: Penguin Books.

[38] Wilson. *Aftermath*, cover.

Experiential Pedagogy
and Communities of Learning

Experiential knowledge was also performed as part of a gendered pedagogy of social action in particular spaces in which Quaker women developed their own learning and that of others. Quaker Women's meetings, part of the historic administrative structure of the Society of Friends, have been identified by Holton and Allen as a key site for Quaker feminine identity formation and for promoting moral and religious reform, but they were also sites of female communal learning through the sharing of experiential knowledge.[39] By the early twentieth century the Warwickshire Friends' Women's Meetings were organised as three conferences each year in which Quaker women considered issues that were of particular "interest to women".[40] Women Friends, and occasional external non-Quaker speakers, presented papers followed by a discussion and both elements were recorded in detail in the minutes. Subjects ranged widely, from theological questions and women's ministry to the significant social and political issues of the day, and the conferences attracted audiences of 50 to 150 women depending on the theme. The meetings functioned as a site of informal education in the gendered knowledge perceived to be of relevance to middle-class Quaker wives and mothers, and a space in which the women shared and validated their own experiences. In April 1901, for example, Geraldine Cadbury was one of two speakers to read a paper sharing personal experiences of socialising children into religion in the home. The presentations were followed by a discussion in which several members of the audience shared their own insights into bringing up children in the Quaker faith.[41] Conference topics also frequently focused on issues beyond their own domestic interests, and the minutes illustrate how these meetings worked as a community of experience in which the participants shared, affirmed and learnt from their collective experiences of activism and participation in a broad range of philanthropic, educational

[39] Holton, Sandra S. and Margaret Allen. 1997. Offices and Services: Women's Pursuit of Sexual Equality within the Society of Friends, 1873–1907. *Quaker Studies* 2, 1: 1–29.

[40] Minute book of the Conferences of the Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting of Women Friends, 9 March 1897, SF/2/1/1/3/1/8, BA&C.

[41] Ibid. 16 April 1901.

and political issues.[42] In April 1903, for example, Margaret Littleboy and Marian Priestman presented papers outlining lessons they had learnt on the most effective way of organising Mother's Meetings for working-class women, and again members of the audience contributed their own experiences of how to attract young women and the most popular forms of activity.[43]

As a community of experience it also engaged in "remembering practices" that formed the basis of an intergenerational shared identification with the experiential legacies of their mothers, grandmothers and aunts.[44] Many of the women came from families with a significant history of female involvement in voluntary activism, and they drew on this past knowledge and experience of humanitarian and political concerns in the past, particularly the anti-slavery cause, as both a pedagogic tool and an exemplar to encourage, inspire and legitimate activism in the present. Both Sandra Holton and Helen Smith have demonstrated how Quaker women utilised biographical practices to preserve and transmit family memory and values across generations, and this practice was extended into the Women's Meetings.[45] In November 1905, for example, Rachel Anna Albright King, presented a paper in which she recalled the childhood experience of shopping with her abolitionist mother for cotton and sugar that had not been produced by the enslaved, and of the many American abolitionists who visited the family home.[46] Rachel Anna's recollections were complemented by Sara Wilson Sturge's account of her mother Mary Lloyd's role in the founding of the Birmingham Ladies

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[42] Kovomäki, Ville, Antti Malinen, and Ville Vuolanto. 2023. Communities of Experience. In HEX Digital Handbook of the History of Experience, Tampere University, https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/communities-of-experience/. Accessed 5 January 2023.

[43] Minute book of the Conferences of the Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting of Women Friends, 7 April 1903, SF/2/1/1/3/1/8, BA&C.

[44] McGuire, Meredith B. 2016. Individual Sensory Experiences, Socialized Senses, and Everyday Lived Religion in Practice. *Social Compass* 63, 2: 152–162.

[45] Holton. *Quaker Women*; Smith, Helen. 2011. Quaker Women, Family Archives and the Construction of Identity: Analysing the Memoirs and Personal Papers of Elizabeth Taylor Cadbury (1858–1951). *Quaker Studies* 16, 1: 124–134.

[46] Minute book of the Conferences of the Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting of Women Friends, 14 November 1905, SF/2/1/1/3/1/8, BA&C.

Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves, the first and most influential of the British women's anti-slavery societies.[47]

Epistolary and written autobiographical practices also contributed to communal experiential learning. Quaker literary tradition recognised journals and correspondence as a form that occupied a space between private and public texts, and there was a long tradition of circulating such documents amongst Friends alongside testimonies and spiritual autobiographies.[48] As both Desirée Henderson and Naomi Pullin have argued, for Quaker women diaries and letters functioned as a means of sustaining relationships and of affirming and sharing personal experience. Indeed they were a significant feature of what Michele Lise Tarter described as the "distinctive epistolary and communal autobiographical practices" of earlier Quaker women.[49] The correspondence of Quaker relief workers, like that of women missionaries, was intentionally written for an audience beyond the immediate recipient and, unless marked private, letters and journal extracts would be copied, circulated, read at meetings and even mined for publicity and fundraising purposes.[50] The presence of copy letters and letters annotated with instructions for circulation in Florence's archive testify that her letters and journals were shared in this way. Whilst she was undertaking relief work in Poland she also shared her experiences with the young women of her Adult School class through pedagogic epistolary practices. In addition to her business correspondence and letters home to family and friends, she sent home letters and extracts from her journal written for the Adult School. In some of these texts she creatively formed a bond with her readers by referring to shared experiences of worship or study. In one letter written specifically for the class, for example, she reflected on the topic of that particular Sunday morning's lesson from the Adult School handbook that she had read in

[47] Midgley, Clare. 1992. *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870.* London: Routledge.

[48] Henderson. The Impudent Fellow Came in Swareing, 147.

[49] Ibid. 148; Pullin, Naomi. 2018. *Female Friends and the Making of Transatlantic Quakerism, 1650–1750.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Tarter. Written from the Body of Sisterhood, 71.

[50] Miller, Ruth A. 2006. The Missionary Narrative as Coercive Interrogation: Seduction, Confession and Self-Presentation in Women's "Letters Home". *Women's History Review,* 15, 5: 751–771; Goodman and Leach. At the centre of a circle; Kaarninen. The trials of Sarah Wheeler, 202.

Poland at the same time that the class studied the lesson in Birmingham, before turning to share the experiences of the women for whom she was providing relief. Explaining how the women had finally returned to their home villages from their displacement as refugees in Russia to find only devastation, she expressed the hope that her letter would help her readers empathise and "picture to yourself something of what these people have gone through".[51] Like Francesca Wilson she displayed a lively awareness of the pedagogic potential of autobiographical accounts to create what the humanitarian scholars Fehrenbach and Rodogno characterise as "communities of emotion and action", in which the audience would be moved to act as well as empathise.[52] However, in using this strategy they were very aware of the limitations of relying solely on their own experiences and it is to this aspect that the discussion will now turn.

THE LIMITATIONS OF EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

From the early twentieth century, Florence Barrow was one of a number of Friends who became increasingly aware that their experiential knowledge was limited due to the privileged class positions that they occupied. In 1912 she joined the committee of the Friends Social Union (FSU), established in 1903 under the leadership of Seebhom Rowntree to enable Quakers to apply their faith directly to social issues, and this both reflected and informed her understanding of the limitations of a privileged personal experience.[53] As a committee member she participated in the FSU's shift in approach and attitude towards a more radical interpretation of social questions and the social order that characterised the years immediately prior to the First World War under the influence of socialist Quakers. In a minute produced in September 1912 the FSU reflected that "As the Society of Friends is very largely, though not exclusively, a middle-class body it is a matter of very great difficulty for our members to realize the extent to which the pressure of adverse circumstances does and must

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[51] Letter, Florence Barrow to her Adult School Class, 7 March 1920, BFP.

[52] Fehrenbach, Heide and David Rodogno, eds. 2015. *Humanitarian Photography: A History.* New York: Cambridge University Press, x.

[53] Annual Report, Friends Social Union, 1912–1913, and Report of the Friends Social Union, June 1903, 4, both in Pers/F7/Soc, LSF. See also Kennedy. *British Quakerism*, 280–2.

hamper the spiritual life".[54] To counter this Friends were encouraged to "make a point of giving thought to all serious proposals which are put forward for the fundamental improvement of the structure of society".[55] A second minute in March 1913 went further and urged all Friends to undertake "a searching re-examination of their way of life, the sources of their income, and the manner of acquiring and using their possessions".[56] This concern was exacerbated by conditions of war and the Society of Friends' confrontation with the state over issues of conscientious objection that politicised some Friends and led to an examination of their consciences on issues of class and gender.[57] The FSU annual report of 1914–1915 referred directly to the relationship between an unequal society, industrial and class conflict and international war and called on Yearly Meeting to consider the question of how to achieve a new social order.[58] Although Florence left no direct commentary on these developments, it is clear that the war resulted in a shift to the left in her political views and she joined the Birmingham branch of the Independent Labour Party in March 1919.[59]

One way in which both Florence Barrow and Francesca Wilson responded to the limitations of their own experiential knowledge was to produce multi-voiced accounts which also incorporated the experiences of the displaced women with whom they worked. For both women experience provided a form of humanitarian knowledge, and they frequently narrate the experiences of named individuals as a means of countering what they considered to be a lack of accurate and available public knowledge of humanitarian issues. They therefore engaged in the production of knowledge similar to that identified by Yeo in the context of knowledge in the social sciences, a fact that is unsurprising given that these women often came to relief work with a background in domestic social

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[54] FSU Annual Report, 1912–1913, Pers/F7/Soc, LSF, 6.

[55] Ibid. 7. See Kennedy. *British Quakerism,* for a full discussion of this shift.

[56] FSU Annual Report, 1912–1913, Pers/F7/Soc, LSF, 8.

[57] Kennedy. *British Quakerism*, 360.

[58] FSU Annual Report, 1914–1915, Pers/F7/Soc, LSF, 5–8. The result was the establishment of the War and the Social Order Committee which would later produce the radical "Foundations of a True Social Order" agreed at Yearly Meeting in May 1918, see Kennedy. *British Quakerism*.

[59] Minutes, Birmingham branch Independent Labour Party, 20 March 1919, BA&C.

action.[60] Despite the fact that they draw on emotive tropes familiar to us from texts produced by women engaged in philanthropic and missionary activity, there is also a strong sense of responsibility to provide witness to the experiences of displaced women.[61] Florence, for example, writing of the "terrible flight" of refugees from White Russia and the Ukraine in the autumn of 1915, reflected on the need to counter the silence surrounding the circumstances, noting that

> Five millions of people were involved but not one amongst them has attempted to make their suffering known in newspaper or in book. They have gone through so much that they cannot even tell it to a sympathetic visitor. Some of us however have friends amongst these people and must tell their story for them.[62]

Telling the story on behalf of the recipients involved entangling the relief worker's own eye-witness testimony together with the displaced women's experiences. These vignettes appeared in fundraising pamphlets, autobiographical accounts and memoirs and extracts sent to national and local press.[63] As in philanthropic texts, photographs were also used alongside the personal stories as a strategy to enhance the emotional impact and contribute to "proving" the truthfulness of the experiences and the relief workers' witness.[64] Although the assumption that one can straightforwardly speak for a less privileged or silenced "other" in representing their experiences is problematic, both women were sincere in their wish

[60] Yeo, Eileen Janes. 1996. *The Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*. London: Rivers Oram Press.

[61] For example see Haggis, Jane and Margaret Allen. 2008. Imperial Emotions: affective Communities of Mission in British Protestant Women's Missionary Publications c1880–1920. *Journal of Social History,* 41, 3: 691–716. For this aspect of Francesca Wilson's writing see Roberts, Siân. 2011. "I Promised them that I Would Tell England About them": A Woman Teacher Activist's Life in Popular Humanitarian Education. *Paedagogica Historica*, 47, 1 & 2: 171–90.

[62] Barrow, Florence M. "Refugees in Poland", c. 1922, BFP.

[63] See for example Friends' Emergency and War Victims Relief Committee. 1917. *Relief Work in Russia: The Progress of the Enterprise*, 17; Anon. 1921. Three Months on Trek: Plight of Polish Refugees. *Birmingham Gazette*, 2 June, BFP.

[64] See Roberts, Siân. 2021. Seeing, Feeling, Educating: British and American Quakers and the Visual Record of Humanitarian Relief Work in Russia and Poland, 1916–1924. In *Appearances Matter: The Visual in Educational History*, eds. Tim Allender, Ines Dussel, Ian Grosvenor and Karin Priem, 129–154. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter.

to enable the women's stories and experiences to be heard, and for the context of their displacement to be appreciated and critiqued. As a result some of the accounts exhibit a representational tension between shaping the women's experiences to fit particular discursive conventions of victimhood, helplessness and passivity identified by Liisa Malkki as a feature of refugee narratives, whilst also providing witness to the agency of hardworking, resilient and skilful women.[65] Francesca Wilson went further by arguing that the experiences of the recipients of relief should be formally recognised by relief organisations through their active inclusion in democratic decision-making practices.[66] She maintained that by the 1940s the fundamental tenets of Quaker belief meant that the Friends Relief Services were more democratic in nature than other humanitarian organisations and were more likely to value the experiential knowledge of recipients, a position that has been supported to some extent by historians of humanitarian aid.[67]

Despite the fact that their claim to expertise was reliant on experience, this group of Quaker women also recognised that formal training or professional qualifications could enhance experiential knowledge. During her early settlement career in 1908 Florence Barrow felt the need to undertake a period of training at a settlement in London. Consequently she spent several months living and working at St. Hilda's Settlement in Bethnal Green and whilst there attended a course on social theory at the London School of Sociology and Social Economics which she passed with distinction.[68] Similarly Geraldine Cadbury attended weekly lectures on child psychology in London for several months to broaden her understanding, whilst Theodora Wilson saw the need to appoint a "trained and experienced lady superintendent" to support and direct the work of the volunteers at the Selly Oak Maternity Provident Society and infant

[65] Malkki, Liisa H. 1996. Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization. *Cultural Anthropology* 11, 3: 377–404.

[66] Wilson. *Advice to Relief Workers*, 7–8; Wilson. *In the Margins of Chaos*.

[67] See for example Gatrell, Peter. 2015. *The Making of the Modern Refugee*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Reid, Fiona and Sharif Gemie, 2013. The Friends Relief Service and Displaced People in Europe after the Second World War, 1945–48. *Quaker Studies* 17, 2: 223–243.

[68] London School of Sociology and Social Economics certificate awarded to Florence Barrow, 1907–08, BFP.

welfare centre.[69] Experiential expertise was therefore supplemented with the professionalised knowledge that came to dominate the agencies of the welfare state and post Second World War humanitarian aid industry.

Conclusion

The group of Quaker women that provide the focus of this chapter were primarily motivated by a shared experiential faith that provided an important context for the construction, performance and maintenance of female authoritative identities and claims to expertise based on experience. As Quakers, personal experience was for them a valid form of knowledge from which they derived spiritual authority to act to secure their own welfare and that of others. They drew on the literary legacy of earlier generations of Quaker women and utilised the cultural scripts and traditions of spiritual autobiography to narrate and perform their experiential claims to knowledge and expertise. As part of their recognition of the limitations of their own privileged lived experience, they disseminated the experiences of the women and children with whom they worked as part of their strategies to educate the public and raise funds to sustain the work. In addition to sharing and performing their own expertise through written forms, they also drew on a genealogy of earlier Quaker female experience to evolve an experiential pedagogy of social action that informed their practical activism in support of a more equitable and peaceful world.

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[69] Cadbury. *Geraldine S. Cadbury*, 13; Theodora Wilson, manuscript lecture c. 1927, private collection.

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Communities of Care: Working-Class Women's Welfare Activism, 1920–1970s

Ruth Davidson

Introduction

British welfare systems have privileged work, and predominantly male work, with the assumption that most family care would be undertaken by women. The policy impact of these assumptions has meant that those unable to earn through disablement, caring responsibilities, age or unemployment have been disadvantaged within welfare structures. Many working-class women without a male breadwinner, or with a low family income, have struggled to balance the need to work and care with inadequate social supports.[1] In the period before statutory welfare legislation,

[1] Women's class has traditionally been defined by the "head of the household model", something that has been critiqued. All the women in this chapter were, or had been, part of a "working-class" C2DE household at some point in their lives. But women's class can shift over time and women's agency, attribution of class and experiences are important, aspects that are beyond the space allowed in this chapter. For this chapter each of the women noted has also claimed experience of the inequality of power resultant from poverty which has informed their class status. For a discussion of this see: Worth, Eve. 2022. *The Welfare State Generation: Women, Agency and Class in Britain since 1945.* London: Bloomsbury. 5–7.

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the sole refuge of the woman without a male breadwinner (or a wider family support network) was the workhouse. Even after the gradual introduction of welfare legislation, women had more limited recourse than men, to protections for sickness, unemployment and old age. These inequities were not fully relieved by the way the Labour administration implemented the 1942 Beveridge Report after the Second World War. Prioritising economic growth, the new social insurance legislation "assumed regular and full male employment *and* stable families in which women would be provided for largely via their husbands' earnings and social contributions".[2] Women undoubtedly benefited from the reforms of the 1940s, particularly through improved health care. Moreover, single mothers could claim National Assistance benefits and there were grants available, all of which was better than the pre-war period. Yet for many poor women within families without an adequate male wage, paid work was the only option to stave off poverty.[3]

Arguments for improved welfare support for women, made by the Labour Party, the non-party women's movement, and by feminists are well represented in the historiography. But often these voices can elide or mediate the views of working-class women. During the interwar years women within the labour movement were at the forefront of welfare campaigns, achieving some measure of success in changing party policy at a local and national level.[4] Caitríona Beaumont notes that non-party women's organisations, the leadership of whom were mostly conservative

[2] Lewis, Jane. 2001. The Decline of the Male Breadwinner Model: Implications for Work and Care. *Social Politics*, 8: 153. The complexity of these arguments should also be noted. Beveridge argued that women were partners not dependents of their husbands and there were concerns that women given benefits from taxation might have been denigrated as dependents upon taxpayers.

[3] Griffin, Emma. 2020. *Breadwinner: An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy*. London: Yale; McCarthy, Helen. 2020. *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood*. London: Bloomsbury.

[4] Thane, Pat. 1993. Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of State Welfare, 1906–39. In *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, eds. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, 343–377. London: Routledge; Graves, Pamela. 1994. *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918–1939*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Thane, Pat. 1991. Visions of Gender in the Making of the British Welfare State: The Case of Women in the British Labour Party and Social Policy, 1906–1945. In *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of European Welfare states*, *1880s–1950s*, eds. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, 93–118. London: Routledge.

and middle-class, were involved in demanding welfare rights for women. These groups recognised the limitations to women's social citizenship that the lack of such rights represented.[5] During these years there were feminist challenges to male-waged privilege and male authority. As Maria DiCenzo and Alexis Motuz discuss, the demands of welfare feminists such as Eleanor Rathbone could be argued to be far riskier than those of equality feminists as they "impinged on the interests of so many different groups—the state, trade unions, male breadwinners, eugenics, liberals and conservatives".[6] Although, as Pat Thane argues, it is not helpful to over-state the dichotomy between "equality" and "welfare feminism", there was a "difference in salience" on specific issues but often views could be held simultaneously and were complementary.[7]

In the 1940s a number of "feminists expressed dismay at the ways in which the nascent welfare state entrenched women's dependency".[8] Elizabeth Abbott and Katherine Bompass of the Open Door Council, along with the National Council of Women, were critical of the way women were treated as a special class with no independent entitlement to draw benefits.[9] Labour women, whilst supportive, pressed for expanded services for working-class housewives.[10] During the 1950s and 1960s, as Helen McCarthy has noted, women's work was becoming increasingly normalised.[11] Moreover, as Eve Worth reminds us, many women were also drawn to the new careers created within the new welfare state.[12]

[5] Beaumont, Caitríona. 2013. *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928–64.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. 101–134. See also chapter 'The "Housewife as Expert": Re-thinking the Experiential Expertise and Welfare Activism of Housewives' Associations in England, 1960–1980' in this collection.

[6] DiCenzo, Maria and Motuz, Alexis. 2016. Politicizing the Home: Welfare Feminism and the Feminist Press in Interwar Britain. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27: 385.

[7] Thane, Pat. 2010. Women and Political Participation in England 1918–1970. In *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century: What Difference Did the Vote Make?* eds. Esther Breitenbach and Pat Thane, 21. London: Continuum Press.

[8] McCarthy. *Double Lives*. 221–222.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 231.

[12] Worth, *Welfare State Generation*.

The upsurge in activism in the late 1960s around the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) has been critiqued as being a predominantly white and middle-class movement with a different political agenda to older forms of women's activism. But working-class women's activism did continue as Margaretta Jolly notes: "Working-class women's protests catalysed WLM activists … even as black and working-class women were defining women's liberation in their own terms."[13]

So across the decades explored in this chapter, 1920s–1970s, there is a complex relationship between working-class women, feminism, political parties, work and welfare activism. However, as this chapter will explore, the distinctive contribution of working-class women to the critiquing and challenging of welfare policy has not been adequately traced in the literature. This chapter seeks to distil these voices out from political parties and the more middle-class focus of both non-party and feminist groups. In doing so it will demonstrate where working-class women were able to gain support for their wider activism, but also where they came into conflict with men and middle-class women. The chapter emphasises that working-class women had a unique perspective grounded in their experiences of precarity and poverty and in doing so demonstrates the degree to which they were able to use these experiences to achieve change.

Theorising Women's Welfare Activism: Communities of Experience and Experiential Expertise

Ruth Lister observes how difficult it has been to organise around issues of poverty. "Proud to be poor" she suggests "is not a banner under which many are likely to march".[14] However, a core argument of this chapter is that it is possible to access the voices and campaigns of the poor as part of their attempts to achieve social justice for themselves. Welfare policy is a field suffused with expert advice and Peter Beresford asserts that poverty policy has been a "top-down" model "based on the idea of experts gathering evidence as a basis for change" offering "a tradition

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[13] Jolly, Margaretta. 2019. *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-present.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 25.

[14] Lister, Ruth. 2004. *Poverty.* Bristol: Polity Press. 152.

of social administration solutions to social problems".[15] Nevertheless, as Lister argues there are examples of how women living in poverty have been able to assert their own rights and those of their communities.[16] In this chapter I will focus on three campaigns that represent case studies of working-class women's activism across the century. The three are: activism during the interwar years in local communities for the social rights of poor mothers, a local campaign for the rights of spinsters that exploded into a national movement, and a small pressure group campaigning for the rights of single mothers.

One way that the individuals and organisations featured in this chapter have been able to leverage support has been through their use of shared experiences. This insight speaks to the theoretical conception of "communities of experience" as elaborated by Ville Kivimäki, Antti Malinen and Ville Vuolanto. As they articulate it, a "community of experience begins to take shape at the moment when people recognize similarities in their experiences, start to negotiate the meaning of this supposed sameness, and, in the process, construct social ties and identify with each other".[17] A similar point is made by Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari in reference to their concept of the lived nation. Here they suggest that "instead of locating experiences within individual minds, we see them as a strongly cultural, social, and societal phenomenon, bound to power relations, institutions, and systems of meaning".[18]

The practical struggles of everyday care, domestic and familial, have historically operated in private, unremarked in the public world of politics, the media and national campaigning groups. Yet, for the women bound up in this world the daily grind, hardship and sense of injustice offer a collective knowledge through which the material and emotional resonances of everyday care produce a shared social memory. These

[15] Beresford, Peter, Green, David, Lister, Ruth and Woodard, Kirsty. 1999. *Poverty First Hand: Poor People Speak for Themselves*. London: Child Action Poverty Group (CPAG). 8.

[16] Lister, *Poverty*, 152.

[17] Kivimäki, Ville, Malinen, Antti and Vuolanto, Ville. 2023. Digital Handbook of the History of Experience. https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/communities-of-experience. Accessed 16 January 2023;

[18] Kivimäki, Ville, Suodenjoki, Sami, and Vahtikari, Tanja. 2021. *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 12.

shared memories carry widely understood discursive meanings. How this community of care might translate into wider activism across different cohorts of women carers is not fixed but adapts according to context. This contingency is a key consideration of this chapter as I will be looking at a range of campaigns that occur in different geographic spaces and at different historical moments.

Overall, it is argued that the shared social experience of care underpinned the different ways that enabled women in specific historical settings to elevate their everyday experiences of poor welfare provision. This could range from what might be argued to be of local impact to something that was of wider significance to a broader community and national policymakers. The case studies will demonstrate how mobilising these subjectivities offered the activist women a means to claim their experiences as a form of expertise from which to argue for policy change. This offers historic examples of the way in which the power of "experts" has been contested by knowledge derived from what Jennifer Crane describes as being expertise derived from experience.[19]

The sources for this chapter range from organisational minutes, local press reports of speeches and meetings and auto/biographical accounts. These can be used, as has been argued in the collection's Introduction, to draw out the personal stories and motivations behind the activism of these women.[20] Methodologically this chapter compares three small case studies rather than exploring the concepts of "communities of experience" and experiential expertise through one historic example. Whilst necessarily this means there is a brevity to each of the case studies it is central to the argument that the concept of a community of care is applicable to a wider range of historic contexts. Moreover, the range of examples featured here allows for an appreciation of the continuities and changes in working-class women's welfare demands over these decades. This approach will deepen conceptions of communities of experience and experiential expertise in the context of welfare offering new social solidarities, vernaculars, methods and strategies. Finally, it will problematise these concepts as mobilising strategies against formal expertise, highlighting how the social knowledge of ordinary women could be challenged. By

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[19] Crane, Jennifer. 2020. *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000 Expertise, Experience and Emotion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 6–7.

[20] See the Introduction to this collection.

choosing a broader range of cases, this chapter demonstrates the "messiness" of these concepts, their shifting character, the intersections between class and gender, the expert and the everyday, in twentieth-century British welfare.

Welfare Support for the Working-Class Mother: Local Government and Welfare Activism, 1920–1930s

Local government had been, since the late nineteenth century, the space where much welfare policy was enacted, either through local statutory institutions such as the Poor Law, or in partnership with voluntary agencies. As many historians have explored, these spaces offered opportunities for women, of all classes, to help shape welfare services in their local areas, as elected or co-opted members of Boards of Guardians, as local councillors or as members of voluntary organisations.[21] It has also been argued that women's presence in local government had a marked impact on welfare services in local areas.[22] Whilst many of the early women in local councils or on Boards of Guardians were middle-class there were a significant number of working-class women who served as elected or co-opted members.[23] Attaining these positions was hard, especially for working-class women, but it was their experiences of the struggles of ordinary working-class domestic life that was often a prime motivator for their political lives. Their lived experience afforded them the trust and support

[21] Boards of Guardians were elected officials who ran the local Poor Law facilities. See: Hollis, Patricia. 1987. *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865–1914.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 195–246; Davidson, Ruth. 2016. Working-Class Women Activists: Citizenship at the Local Level. In *Alternatives to State-Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Ackers and Alastair Reid, 93–120. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[22] Savage, Michael. 1987. *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics: The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880–1940.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[23] For discussions of working-class women and local government see: Stenberg, Kim Yoonok. 1998. Working-Class Women in London Local Politics, 1894–1914. *Twentieth Century British History*, 9: 323–349; Hunt, Karen. 2005. Making Politics in Local Communities: Labour Women in Interwar Manchester. In *Labour's Grass Roots: Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918–45,* ed. Matthew Worley, 79–101. London: Ashgate; Hannam, June. 2010. "Making areas strong for Socialism and Peace": Labour Women and Radical Politics in Bristol, 1906–1939. In *Radical Cultures and Local Identities*, eds. Krista Cowman and Ian Packer, 71–91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

of their electorate and some measure of authority within the council. But there were different types of expertise and experience at play within local councils in this period. Consequently, the framing of communities of care and experiential expertise helps uncover how power, politics, gender and welfare reform operated at the local level before 1945.

For a wide range of women activists their personal experiences of ordinary everyday life were motivating factors in seeking public office. It was this experience they acknowledged as a primary reason for seeking social change. Furthermore, it was their explicit assertion of their shared social experience that underlined their embeddedness in their communities. In these communities they spoke the language of the working-class woman, and this bolstered their political activism. The campaigns for public office undertaken by these working-class women often focused on these deep connections to, and understanding of, their local community. Alice Arnold's convincing win in Coventry in 1919 was due to her local reputation as during "the War she had become a familiar and popular figure in the ward … she was a regular visitor, representing the interests of women workers".[24] In Croydon Mrs Dann noted it was her time on the Unemployment Committee that encouraged her to stand as a Poor Law Guardian as she had "seen especially the hard time women and girls out of work were experiencing".[25]

There was also a performative aspect to their lived experience, as they underscored their shared roots with their constituents. In Reading, Phoebe Cusden had "made her mark by leading a protest march through the streets of Reading".[26] She addressed the marchers, and it was reported that she spoke of "the women of her class who have to leave their household duties to stand in queues for hours, only to be turned away, unable to buy the necessary food for their families. She protest [ed] against such indignities being inflicted on her sex and class".[27] Alice Arnold's "refusal to wear civic robes emphasised the fact that she believed she was in the Council Chamber to act as a servant to the people of the city and that

[24] Hunt, Cathy. 2007. *A Woman of the People: Alice Arnold of Coventry, 1881–1955.* Coventry: The Coventry branch of the Historical Association. 59.

[25] Anon. 1923. Guardians' Election. *Croydon Advertiser*, 24 March. 4. Copies of the *Croydon Advertiser* were accessed in the Croydon Archives, Croydon.

[26] Stout, Adam. 1997. *A Bigness of Heart: Phoebe Cusden of Reading.* Reading: Reading-Dusseldorf Association. 21.

[27] Ibid. At this point she was unmarried, and her maiden name was Blackall.

she would not place barriers between herself and her constituents".[28] These women accentuated the socially shareable meanings of the everyday domestic hardships as touchstones to reinforce their social knowledge of the gendered and class injustices faced by the local ordinary woman and to reinforce their demands for social change.

Welfare and the living standards of the working-class family were at the heart of many of these women's demands. Addressing these issues, as argued in the Introduction to this collection, was a means to ensure that their communities "fared well". In arguing for better service provision, they often referred back to their own lives but with an emphasis on how these experiences offered them a form of expertise. In the publication of the Manchester Women Citizens' Association, *The Woman Citizen*, in April 1930, Councillor Edith Chorlton "laughingly remarked that she doubted if any member of the [council's baths and wash-houses] committee had served a better apprenticeship to the wash-tub than she".[29] Similarly Alice Arnold knew first-hand the public health issues faced by residents of Coventry's slum areas. As Chair of the Public Health Committee she was centrally involved in the city's slum clearance programme. This included the Chauntry Area where she had spent her childhood.[30]

But there were limitations to experiential expertise as a platform for local welfare development. Even for the most well-supported working-class woman activist achieving a position on the council could be difficult, particularly when local political parties put them forward for the most unpropitious wards. In Croydon, Mrs Alefounder, a voluntary welfare worker, Labour activist and JP, tried on five occasions to achieve electoral success to no avail, another twelve Labour women were equally unsuccessful.[31] Neither were Labour men always supportive of working-class women's demands. In Croydon in 1931, male Labour councillors opposed the arguments of Mrs Rudd for nursery school funding as they asserted that "there was a danger of forcing children to be educated too early in life and there was the additional danger of exposure to infection

[28] Hunt. *A Woman of the People*. 62.

[29] Hunt. Making Politics. 94.

[30] Hunt. *A Woman of the People*. 63–64.

[31] Davidson, Ruth. 2010. Citizens at Last: Women's Political Culture and Civil Society, Croydon and East Surrey, 1914–39. Unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London. 174.

and to weather conditions" and that "children up to five years of age should be brought up in their homes with their parents".[32] Neither were middle-class women always supportive. In 1926 the Poor Law Guardian and working-class woman Mrs Afford condemned the operating theatre of the local infirmary, run by the council and argued that an open fire was unhygienic.[33] The improvements lobbied for were not instituted as middle-class women Guardians argued against the changes on the grounds of economy.[34]

Surviving records of the negotiations within councils for welfare reform are patchy but using the autobiographical testimony of Hannah Mitchell, a suffragette, Independent Labour Party member and councillor onManchester City Council allows for some insight into how experience and expertise worked in local councils in the interwar years. It is important to note that within councils different forms of experience and expertise operated. Local government remained a predominantly middle-class space with businessmen bringing their experience of finance and/or of running voluntary organisations. As Mitchell notes "reforms were still needed, much prejudice had still to be overcome, so I found myself often in opposition to a section of the Council. These were men who thought too much money was being spent on relief".[35] Formal "professional" expertise was vested in the relieving officers who offered advice to the Council, and she considered that the modern relieving officer was "an educated man of wide experience who has many contacts who can advise on such matters as insurance, pensions and compensation".[36]

Even in this environment the voice of a working-class woman could offer a different lived experience to mitigate policy choices. As Mitchell recalled, "I could hold my own on a relief committee. I knew just how much food could be bought out of the allowance, knew the cost of children's clothes and footwear, could tell at a glance if the applicant was in ill

[32] Anon. 1931. Nursery Schools: Croydon Councillors in Debate. *Croydon Advertiser*, 14 March. 12.

[33] Anon. 1926. Croydon Guardians. *Croydon Advertiser*. 3 April. 5.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Mitchell, Geoffrey. ed. 1984. *The Hard Way Up: The Autobiography of Hannah Mitchell, Suffragette and Rebel* London: Virago. 213.

[36] Ibid. 216.

health".[37] These were debates that she could win using her detailed social knowledge of the realities of working-class women's lives, but not always. As she noted sometimes "a woman who normally earned her living as a charwoman, yet who was at the time unfit, would be pronounced 'fit for light work'. I could never get my male colleagues to see that no one would employ a woman to dust china".[38] There were limitations to what these women were able to achieve but it was as part of communities of care that women successfully achieved public office. Once in office, experiential expertise allowed them to make some difference on the council and to women's everyday lives.

Inequalities in Care: Florence White and the Campaign for Spinster's Pensions, 1930s and 1940s

The second case study looks at an example of working-class women's mass protests in the 1930s. The 1925 Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Contributory Pensions Act, which was extended in 1929, gave pensions to all widows of insured men from the age of 55. That put these widows at a distinct advantage over other groups of women. Women covered by National Insurance pensions were paid at 65 but few women were covered by National Insurance. Wives of insured men who were older than their husbands had to wait until he was 65. All other women were eligible for a means-tested pension at age 70. Occupational pensions for women developed throughout the century, but these varied by sector and were mostly for white-collar working women.[39]

For some groups of women their lack of pension before 70 caused significant poverty. Issues of care were also important for spinsters as many single working women did not have full insurance benefits because they had to take breaks from employment in order to care for elderly parents. Moreover, their hard manual jobs, and consequent ill-health, often meant they were unable to work for so long. These issues, therefore, became the

[37] Ibid. 215.

[38] Ibid.

[39] For the development of occupational pensions for women see: Groves, Dulcie Monica. 1986. Women and Occupational Pensions 1870–1983: An exploratory study. Unpublished PhD thesis King's College, London.

central planks of the campaigning of Florence White. White, drawing on a powerful community of care, that of spinsters, developed an impressive campaign that drew considerable support and propelled her to the heart of national parliamentary policymaking. Once there she deployed her very evident experiential expertise. It is this trajectory that underpins the insights that histories of experience can bring to considerations of welfare activism, revealing both the power and limitations of lived experience in influencing national policymaking.

Florence White grew up in poverty, worked in the Tankards Mill in Bradford from the age of 12 to 18 and, as her biographer notes, during this period got to know mill workers and their problems. She never married, her fiancé dying during the First World War.[40] She also had personal experience of the financial precarity and the hard labour required of the single woman as she and her unmarried sister supported themselves first as dressmakers and then running a small confectioners shop.[41] She had tried to pursue the issue of spinsters pensions through political activism in the local Liberal Association, but their failure to take up this initiative led her to set up her own organisation, the National Spinsters' Pension Association (NSPA), whose slogan was "Equity with the Widow".[42]

A significant feature of the NSPA was the speed with which it took hold. White hoped 150 people would come to her first meeting, but more than 600 came and they were mostly single working-class women.[43] From its roots as a small local group, within four months the association had 8,000 members which increased to 90,000 by June 1937, representing 81 branches.[44] Further, and unsurprisingly given White's background and the particular employment patterns of the region, the largest branches were from the mill towns of the North. The momentum generated was underpinned not only by White's ability to inspire but also the fact that her members had a shared understanding of the injustices they faced in

[40] Prickett, D.J. *Florence White: A Biography* (Unpublished). Chapter 2.7. 78D86/6/2. Florence White family papers and National Spinsters' Association records, 1878–1986. West Yorkshire Archives (herein WYA), Bradford.

[41] Ibid. Chapter 2 and 3.

[42] Ibid. Chapter 4. 3.

[43] Ibid. Chapter 3. 9.

[44] Ibid. Chapter 4. 4–5.

comparison not only with working-class men and middle-class women, but also specifically widows. Katherine Holden notes that the NSPA represented themselves as war spinsters who argued that it was an accident of war that they weren't married and therefore they should be seen as equal to widows who from 1931 had been able to claim pensions from the age of 55.[45]

The shared solidarities and grievances these women felt were reinforced through the culture and activism of the movement. Local branches operated not only as hubs for activism but forged social bonds. Writing to the Bradford Spinsters' Social Club Miss Ethel Curtis noted "I find real pleasure, and comfort, in our Spinsters' club. It is not only the concerts … or in the little rambles; it is deeper than that. It is in meeting ladies of age and circumstances that are like my own".[46] The NSPA published a newsletter, *The Spinster*, allowing members to share concerns and experiences reinforcing a collective identity beyond the local. Similarly to the suffrage movement, they had a highly visible material culture. In July 1937 the group collected a petition with over a million signatories which they took to London in a decorated wagon from Bradford. For Christmas 1937 over 10,000 spinsters sent cards to Sir Kingsley Wood the Minster of Health with the greeting "Hoping you will be thinking of the spinsters as the spinsters are thinking of you".[47] This activism not only made visible their claims but bound the members together in a shared political community. It was this focus on the creation of a community of experience through which women could find solidarity that forged such unprecedented activism amongst a previously unremarked group of women.

National social policy debate, as noted in the Introduction to this collection was, and often remains, the preserve of elite experts. What is unusual in this case study is the way Florence White was able to develop her own experiential expert approach to challenge such elite experts. She was invited to give evidence to the Le Quesne Committee in 1938, which had been set up to investigate the issue of women's pensions. She drew on responses that she had received from her members and wrote to 100

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[45] Holden, Katherine. 2007. *The Shadow of Marriage: Singleness in England, 1914–60.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. 34.

[46] Prickett, *Florence White*. Chapter 5. 28.

[47] Ibid. Chapter 4. 8.

local Public Assistance Committees to ascertain how many spinsters were receiving public assistance. This revealed an array of previously unknown insights from which she could construct an economic case to sit alongside her experiential knowledge.

As her biographer noted she "had all the facts at her fingertips; the mass of evidence she had collected … her statistical evidence, her experience in James Tankards mill, her three friends who died before they could claim their pensions and her conversations with working-class spinsters … were the memories to put heart into it".[48] Her physical presence was also notable, as this former mill worker was described as a fine speaker.[49] It was as this forensic, determined expert that she presented evidence as the principal witness to this parliamentary committee. This performance gained her the admiration of the committee chair and the support of many MP's. As the *Halifax Courier* reported when Miss White finished her evidence, which in all had lasted six hours, the chairman, Mr Le Quesne K.C. said: "you have done very good service to your cause".[50] The Le Quesne committee agreed there was a problem of unmarried women and pensions. This related to the fact that more of them were in poverty through the demands of caring and their inability to work until 65. Yet the committee decided the case was not established for a lowering of the age of eligibility. Despite this in January 1940 Sir John Simon announced that pensions were to be paid to insured spinsters at 60 and wives of insured men. However, other women had to wait for the lowering of their pension

[48] Ibid. Chapter 5. 5.

[49] Anon. 1938. Holloway Press. Champion of Britain's Spinsters Get's Rousing Welcome. 29 January. Image © Successor rightsholder unknown. Please contact us via support@britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk if you wish to claim rights to this title. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD. Champion Of Britain's Spinsters Gets Rousing Welcome | Holloway Press | Saturday 29 January 1938 | British Newspaper Archive. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0004603/19380129/018/0002 Accessed 28 September 2023.

[50] Anon. 1938. *Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian.* The Spinsters Champion. 17 June. 7. Image © National World Publishing Ltd. Image created courtesy of THE BRITISH LIBRARY BOARD. The Spinsters' Champion. Chairman's Tribute To Miss Florence White. Six Hours' Evidence Before Committee. | Halifax Evening Courier | Friday 17 June 1938 | British Newspaper Archive. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0003295/19380617/111/0007. Accessed 28 September 2023.

age to 60 until 1946.[51] It was not the full victory that Florence White had hoped for, but it was a measure of improvement for many spinsters.

The failure of White's evidence to carry the committee fully in 1938 came from the opposition she faced, in part from organised women who were able to claim a professional knowledge and expertise. This reflected the limitations of experiential expertise in the face of class and gender challenges. White's demands cut across longstanding feminist campaigns, such as equal pay and maintaining women's work-based protections. Women's organisations feared an earlier pension age would encourage discrimination against women. Miss Godwin, speaking on behalf of the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries to the committee noted fears it would discourage employers promoting an older woman who could retire earlier than a man.[52] The Open Door Council, a feminist group pressing for equal economic opportunities for women, argued that this would create the impression that the working life of women ended at 55 and that employers could dismiss older women as they had a pension.[53] As Holden notes, the reason The National Association of Civil Servants opposed White was because they feared the policy would undermine the equal pay campaign, restrict opportunities, reduce wages and force women out of employment.[54] These women were in a very different position from the single older spinster, often working in manual industries or domestic service as White, with her personal and campaigning experience, knew only too well. As she concluded, "anyone can get married … but it takes a good valiant woman to remain unmarried".[55]

It was Florence White's grounded experience in the world of the ordinary working woman that fired up her activism and gave her insights that the professional middle-class woman did not have. This encompassed gender, class, age and marital status and enabled her to argue, with some measure of success, for different policy solutions. But experiential expertise had its limitations when it came up against well-organised expert

[51] Thane, Pat. 2000. *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. 285.

[52] Prickett, *Florence White*. Chapter 5. 9.

[53] Ibid. Chapter 5. 11.

[54] Holden, *The Shadow of Marriage*. 34–35. For a more detailed account of the concerns of women in occupational pension schemes towards the lowering of the pensionable age see: Groves. Women and Occupational Pensions. 87–89.

[55] Prickett, Florence White. Chapter 4. 22.

groups or other experiential perspectives. Consequently this led to the failure to address in policy the issue of caring as a central burden in many working single women's lives.

Caring Alone: Mothers in Action and Campaigns for Single Mothers Rights in the 1960s and 1970s

The final case study in this chapter centres a group of working-class single mothers. From the 1960s there was increased recognition of issues of poverty linked to gaps in the welfare state, issues that heralded a new wave of poverty pressure groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), the Disablement Income Group (DIG) and Shelter.[56] One group which fell between the cracks caused by gaps in social welfare was that of the single mother, and in 1967 a new pressure group, Mothers in Action (MIA) was formed by single mothers themselves. This feminist, working-class women's pressure group was markedly different from many, although not all, of the expert groups formed in this period.[57] Firstly, they developed an experiential model of pressure group activism grounded in deep personal experience, self-taught academic research and adept use of the media. They also offered different policy ideas as they sought to find ways of achieving independence from the state for the single mother. This latter point reflects a declining trust in the British Welfare State, particularly amongst some groups such as single mothers who had suffered stigma. However, their demands and methods challenged other forms of expertise and, as with the cases above, this delimited their success.

MIA was a group who proudly asserted their experiential credentials. Shirley Frost, Honorary Secretary of the association noted that the group was "set up in 1967 by five single mothers who were dissatisfied with the conditions under which they were forced to live".[58] Television, radio and newspaper publicity soon led to large numbers of women joining

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[56] Thane, Pat and Davidson, Ruth. 2016. *The Child Poverty Action Group*. London: CPAG.

[57] For instance the DIG which was founded in 1965 was also an experiential pressure group being founded by a disabled woman suffering from multiple sclerosis.

[58] Brief History of Mothers in Action, n.d. 5MIA/05/01. Records of Mothers in Action, Women's Library Archives [herein WL], London School of Economics [herein LSE], London.

the group.[59] They immediately made an impact. One of their first public appearances was on the "World in Action" TV programme.[60] By 1969 their membership had grown to over 1,000. In November 1971 they provided oral evidence to the Finer Committee. In 1969 the Secretary of State for Social Services, Richard Crossman, set up the Committee on One-Parent Families which was chaired by the Hon. Morris Finer. This committee drew on a range of experts and outside groups to consider the circumstances and needs of single mothers.[61]

MIA spoke to the subjectivities of many single mothers in a way that sparked popular activism. Whilst smaller than the NSPA their similar use of the media and communication methods, such as a newsletter, allowed them to forge care-based affinities across communities of the poorer single mother. This unique constituency was reinforced discursively. They were clear about their class origins noting in a briefing paper attached to a job specification that "Mothers in Action is not a middle-class organisation. All its members are of working-class origin ... Therefore our objectives are aimed at eradicating the problems of the worst -off".[62] These were origins, as they highlighted, that made them different to other organisations as "before Mothers in Action – there were only organisations which gave out patronising advice".[63] Tony Lynes, social policy adviser and the first secretary of CPAG argued in *The Guardian* in 1968 the MIA represented a new form of pressure group in the UK, one where the poor represented their own cause.[64] This experiential basis was central to their campaigning, as one newsletter noted "we are not perfect and we cannot achieve miracles, but we are unsupported mothers, and we know what we are talking about when trying to put across our 'Aims' to others".[65] Their publications and campaigns were wide ranging, encompassing both

[59] Ibid.

[60] 1967. Action Group Formed. *The Guardian*, 4 December. 17. https://theguardian.newspapers.com/image/259855998/?terms=mothers%20in%20action&match=1. Accessed 28 September 2023.

[61] Brief History of Mothers in Action. 5MIA/05/01. WL, LSE.

[62] Job specification. 5MIA/07/04. WL, LSE.

[63] June 1970. 5MIA/10/01. WL. LSE. 1.

[64] By our own reporter. 1968. Poor urged to unite for a better deal. *The Guardian*, 6 April. 4. https://theguardian.newspapers.com/image/259772356/?terms=mothers%20in%20action&match=1. Accessed 28 September 2023.

[65] September 1968. 5MIA/10/01. WL, LSE. 1.

practical policies such as housing, childcare, workplace rights and health care alongside challenging the stigma and discrimination experienced by the single mother.

MIA sought to build a community of unsupported mothers through their newsletter and local branches. One part of their founding aim, as their publicity secretary Valerie Howarth wrote in *The Observer*, was to bring single mothers together to overcome the social isolation they might feel.[66] The columns of their newsletter were full of advertisements for accommodation, with offers of vacant rooms in houses, babysitting services and where to find local support groups. There was even a personal column for those women seeking relationships. Alongside this content were debates on core campaigning issues and how perspectives might vary by personal experiences or dependent on local and regional circumstances. In 1970 the newsletter editor reflected on different attitudes towards putting children into nurseries to accommodate work or for additional support to allow mothers to care in their home for younger children.[67] She commented that "I realise that one cannot be too dogmatic, particularly where emotions are involved".[68] Her words here are suggestive of concerns to represent and learn from the membership as a process to develop both a community and a distinctive policy brief.

In looking at the work of MIA there was an autodidactic process of them developing their ideas through research, education and activism. Shirley Frost was given a readers pass to the London School of Economics (LSE) library through Tony Lynes for her research, and the group shared reading lists, attended conferences and wrote histories of the single mother, claiming them a place in established narratives.[69] They were political and sought change, "we are not a social or welfare organisation. The problems have to be eradicated rather than alleviated".[70] Yet this did not automatically mean looking to the state, as was the practice of many pressure groups in this period. A *Guardian* article on the group explicitly

[66] Valerie Howarth. 1968. Letters. *The Observer*. 18 August. 19. https://thegua rdian.newspapers.com/image/258331066/?terms=mothers%20action&match=1. Accessed 28 September 2023.

[67] See also chapter 'Childminders and the Limits of Mothering as Experiential Expertise, England c. 1948–2000' in this collection.

[68] Members Newsletter. 1971. December/January. 5/MIA/10/01. WL.LSE. 2.

[69] Minutes. 1972. 7 April. 5MIA/02/02. WL, LSE. 2.

[70] Press Release. n.d. 5MIA/05/01. WL, LSE.

rejected the notion that all they wanted were benefits, arguing that what was more important was the range of services, such as good housing and nursery places, to enable them to be economically self-sufficient.[71]

Indeed, there was a strong anti-state thread in their work rooted in their personal experience. This was expressed in 1974 when the newsletter noted that "[we] have been harassed and treated like dirt, in local offices and in our own homes … [in] one of the most vicious systems that masquerades as part of the Welfare State and have been made aware of what the State is capable of doing to those of whom it disapproves".[72] A particular facet of this intrusive treatment was the Cohabitation Rule, which allowed officials to investigate the homes of unmarried mothers on benefits who they suspected of cohabiting and so having a larger household income than they admitted. MIA collected testimony from single mothers to reveal the level of investigation that the Supplementary Benefit officers were prepared undergo and collected examples of visits by investigating officers, some late at night.[73] As noted in the Introduction to this collection the British Welfare State could be experienced by working-class women as a form of diswelfare through its coercive practice.[74]

Challenges to the experiential expertise of the MIA group came both from other women and vested "expertise". Whilst maintaining links with the wider women's movement the approach of MIA did not always align with socialist feminist priorities. In 1972 they launched the Working Mothers Charter which included a range of demands from protection against dismissal during pregnancy, education and training to get back to work after childbirth, childcare and proposals and no discrimination against mothers at work.[75] A response to this charter from the Union of Women for Liberation noted that they supported MIA's demands but argued that "you do not in your Charter identify the cause of women's

[71] Mary Stott Column. 1968. Mothers in Action. *The Guardian*, 9 January. 4. https://theguardian.newspapers.com/image/259718915/?terms=mothers%20action&match=1 . Accessed 28 September 2023.

[72] *Target*. 1974. July. 5MIA/10/2. WL, LSE. 1.

[73] Woman's Guardian. 1970. Piggies in the Middle. *The Guardian*, 29 May. 9. https://theguardian.newspapers.com/image/259825175/?terms=mothers%20action&match=1 . Accessed 28 September 2023.

[74] See also chapter '"Daddy Knows Best": Professionalism, Paternalism and the State in Mid-Twentieth-Century British Child Diswelfare Experiences' in this collection.

[75] The Working Mother Charter. 1972. 5MIA/10/7. WL, LSE.

oppression. What is it that is preventing women from obtaining all the social facilities to take over housework and the care of children … without identifying this cause any activities that you might plan …. Would be more shots in the dark".[76]

By 1977 MIA were no more. A *Guardian* article in 1979, recapping the history of the Joseph Rowntree Trust (JRT), argued that the end of MIA can be attributed to them having achieved their objectives.[77] Nevertheless, from the fragments that exist that doesn't seem to be the whole story as they were far from finished with campaigning. The 1974–1975 annual report noted their full agenda for the year ahead but a concern that the lack of funding would impact this.[78] Their final correspondence in 1977 noted, "do you think we're being given the cold shoulder … Too radical... I suppose".[79]

Conclusion

Working-class women's welfare needs have sat at the heart of this chapter and despite the different contexts there are some clear continuities in the demands of the women who campaigned for change. They have all questioned the inequalities around the issue of who cares for the family. Whereas the middle-class woman during these decades might have had the capacity to pay for care, in the working-class family these burdens often fell on the woman. The redress these women campaigned for—washhouses and maternity clinics, pensions legislation, work-based protections and childcare—were part of claims for social justice and equality for the ordinary working woman. These needs and inequalities sit at the heart of the concept of communities of care and such experiences formed socially shareable meanings that underpinned the collective responses to these injustices. Discrimination in the burden of family care fuelled their activism and amplified it. Whether through marches, petitions, the use of the media, newsletters and local branch initiatives, these

[76] The Union of Women for Liberation, A Reply to Mothers in Action. 1972. 19 December. 5MIA/08. WL, LSE. 1.

[77] Robin Thornber. 1979. Grassroots. *The Guardian*, 19 September. https://theguardian.newspapers.com/image/260554787/?terms=mothers%20action&match=1. Accessed 23 September 2023.

[78] Annual Report 1974–19755. 5MIA/03. WL, LSE.

[79] 1977. 15 August. 5MIA/07/04. WL, LSE.

women consciously shared and negotiated the subjectivities and vernaculars of inequalities of care. As a result they engaged in forms of activism that made an impact in the public sphere.

Working-class women claimed experiential expertise by emphasising their embeddedness in their communities. Moreover, they found ways through research, self-education and practice to demonstrate a granular knowledge that allowed them to rebut other forms of expertise. All three case studies featured in this chapter demonstrate a measure of success. The insertion of non-canonical voices did advance different policies which modified, if not always changed, the expert-led solutions. Nevertheless, as argued throughout, we need to also consider the limitations, fissures and challenges that experiential expertise reveals. None of the examples given fully achieved their objectives when set against formal expertise, path-dependent policy options and political imperatives. Moreover, as noted in this chapter, the working-class woman faced challenges rooted in class and gender and these challenges were most acute where they transcribed public–private boundaries.

These groups were more successful at a local level, when their demands supported working-class women in their domestic role. Arguably, they were less effective when they overlapped with privileging of the male wage, the prioritising of men within social insurance systems and challenged middle-class women's professional women's work-based equalities. As argued in the Introduction to this collection, communities of experience and experiential expertise are messy, fluid, contextual concepts. By contrasting three similar but distinct cases this chapter underscores these complications. Nevertheless, by utilising these concepts this chapter has also revealed the patterns, connections and longevity in women's welfare activism that might be overlooked otherwise. These are insights that reinforce the importance of considering histories of welfare through the prism of histories of experience.

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The "Housewife as Expert": Re-thinking the Experiential Expertise and Welfare Activism of Housewives' Associations in England, 1960–1980

Caitríona Beaumont

Introduction

By the mid-1970s status gained from being a housewife had diminished in many advanced industrialised nations, including Britain. Influential feminist texts, for example *The Second Sex* (1949), *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) *The Female Eunuch* (1970) and *Housewife* (1974), portrayed housewives as women denied self-actualisation due to their unpaid labour within their own homes.[1] Consequently, they were condemned to a life of drudgery and servitude. As Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd argue "ambivalence, if not antagonism, towards the figure of the housewife can

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[1] De Beauvoir, Simone. 2015. *The Second Sex*. London: Vintage Classics; Friedan, Betty. 1963. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton; Greer, Germaine. 1970. *The Female Eunuch*. London: MacGibbon and Kee and Oakley, Ann. 1974. *Housewife*. London: Allen Lane.

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be seen to have a crucial role in the history of second wave feminism".[2] The view fostered by activists within the newly emergent Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was that women were "forced into full-time housewifery and enslaved by narrow domestic roles under patriarchy".[3]

This negative representation of the housewife is in marked contrast to the dynamic "citizen housewife", promoted by the British government during the Second World War and its immediate aftermath.[4] The "citizen housewife" was regarded as an expert in keeping her own house on a tight budget. As a result her skills and experience were requisitioned to instruct the nation during wartime and the years of economic austerity that followed. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska has argued that during the 1940s "housewifery was no longer regarded as a private concern but rather a central component of the war effort and postwar reconstruction".[5] In wartime housewives were repeatedly called upon to share their expertise on food production and household management. Their insights were valued at the highest level of government with housewives invited to give evidence to official enquires based on their "first-hand experience" of housework and managing the family home.[6]

However by the 1960s this recognition of the experiential expertise of housewives had apparently waned. Rachel Richie argues that in this decade "the sense of belonging and recognition of the housewife as expert

[2] Johnson, Lesley and Lloyd, Justine. 2004. *Sentenced to Everyday Life Feminism and the Housewife*. Oxford: Berg.

[3] Zweiniger-Bargelowska, Ina. 2001. Housewifery. In *Women in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. Ina Zweiniger-Bargelowska, 151. Harlow: Pearson Education.

[4] Ibid. 154–156.

[5] Ibid. 154.

[6] Richie, Rachel. 2010. The Housewife and the Modern: The Home and Appearance in Women's Magazines, 1954–1969. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Manchester, 67. See also Scott, Gillian. 2007. "Workshops Fit for Homeworkers": The Women's Co-operative Guild and Housing Reform in Mid-twentieth Century Britain. In *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870–1950*, eds. Elizabeth Darling and Leslie Whitworth. London: Routledge, 179; Beaumont, Caitríona. 2013. *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928–1964*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 171–175, and Stott, Mary. 1978. *Organisation Woman: The Story of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds*. London: Heinemann, 70–75; Jenkins, Lyndsey. 2023. "The Voice of the True British Housewife": The Politics of Housewifery at Labour's Women's Conferences, 1945–1959. *Women's History Review*. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09612025.2023.2267251. Accessed 23 February 2024.

subsided" and "failed to retain national recognition and official acceptance".[7] It would appear therefore that the idea of the "housewife as expert" in the national consciousness was replaced by an altogether more unfavourable construct where housewives were trapped by domesticity, miserable and powerless in their own homes.

This chapter changes the narrative regarding the demise of the "housewife as expert" concept during the 1960s and 1970s. In doing so it challenges assumptions that the experience of being a housewife was inherently negative and that housewives made little or no contribution to the women's movement at this time.[8] Drawing on organisational archives of the two largest housewives' associations in England, the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) and the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds (TG), it is argued that the experiential expertise of housewives continued to be effective in lobbying for welfare reforms to support women. I argue that far from fading away by the 1970s these two national organisations became even more concerned about what Robert Pinker referred to as "the subjective feelings of ordinary people about the nature of welfare and to the complete range of activities by which they seek to enhance their own well-being".[9]

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first contextualises the "housewife as expert" construct and considers why it is assumed within the historiography that this form of experiential expertise was less influential by the 1960s and 1970s. The second utilises the history of experience, and the concept of "communities of experience", to argue that housewives' associations continued to be led by the experiential expertise of their members. The experiential expertise evident here was not only that of being a housewife, significant as that was, but also included the knowledge and expertise women gained from being members of a housewives' association. Drawing on this multilayered experiential expertise helped

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[7] Richie, The Housewife and the Modern, 67.

[8] See for example Pugh, Martin. 2015. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[9] Pinker, Robert. 2017. The Welfare State: a Comparative Perspective. In *Social Policy and Welfare Pluralism: Selected Writings of Robert Pinker,* ed. John Offer and Robert Pinker, 70. Bristol: Policy Press. See also Introduction to this collection. Chapter 'Communities of Care: Working-Class Women's Welfare Activism, 1920–1970s' in this collection discusses the welfare activism of working-class women's groups at this time.

ensure both the NFWI and TG maintained a foothold in policy debates on welfare well into the 1970s.

The third section outlines in more detail how the NFWI and TG used their multifaceted experiential expertise to campaign for welfare reforms. This closer examination of welfare activism by housewives' associations identifies gaps in the British Welfare State when it came to the needs of wives and mothers. The efforts of the NFWI and TG to fill these gaps not only set out to enhance the everyday lives of women but sought to highlight the gendered experience of welfare for women. In this way housewives' associations participated in on-going demands by the women's movement for welfare reforms which would benefit women throughout their lifetimes.[10]

In concluding, the chapter considers the limitations of the experiential expertise used by the NFWI and TG to underpin their welfare activism. Here the question is raised about whose experiences were foregrounded by both groups, and how representative the action taken on a national level was of the wider membership, and of women more generally. Yet despite such limitations, it is argued that welfare activism undertaken by housewives' associations during the 1960s and 1970s was significant and impactful. Tapping into the experiential expertise of housewives, as wives and mothers, but also as members of housewives' associations, sustained the construct of the "housewife as expert" beyond the 1950s. Consequently, the NFWI and TG contributed more to the British Welfare State than has previously been acknowledged. Moreover, their commitment to women "faring well" justifies inclusion in histories of the women's movement during the second half of the twentieth century.

The "Housewife as Expert" Construct and Its Deceptive Demise

Laying claim to the experiences of wives and mothers to enable welfare activism has a long history. From the late nineteenth century the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) demanded better housing, maternity care

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[10] See Beaumont, Caitríona. 2009. Housewives, Workers and Citizens: Voluntary Women's Organisations and the Campaign for Women's Rights in England and Wales during the Postwar Period. In *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, eds. Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James McKay. 59–76. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

and social welfare provision, informed by the lived experiences of poorer working-class women.[11] During the First World War the Women's Labour League shared the experiences of working-class women with the Tudor Walters Committee on Housing Standards, thereby enhancing the quality of postwar local authority housing.[12] While the WCG prioritised the needs of its working-class members and aligned itself to the Labour Party, the steadfastly non-party political NFWI (1915) and TG (1928) set out to recruit both working-class and middle-class women working within the home. This was achieved by offering a diverse range of activities targeted to be of interest to housewives working unpaid in their own homes.[13] Taking this approach proved very successful and by the mid-twentieth century they together represented over half a million women.[14]

Both organisations drew on the experiences of a specific community of housewives. The NFWI catered for the needs of rural women and sought to provide educational opportunities in home economics and agricultural skills as well as opportunities for friendship and leisure.[15] Inspired by the successful model of the NFWI, the TG (which emerged out of the post-women's suffrage National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship) catered for the needs of housewives living in urban areas. The aim of the

[11] For example the WCG was successful in campaigning for the provision of local authority funded welfare clinics, enhanced maternity services and local authority housing reforms. In 1918 the Guild affiliated to the Labour Party and continued to campaign for welfare reforms to improve working-class women's lives. It recorded a membership of 62,000 women in 1963 and closed in 2016. See Llewelyn Davies, Margaret. 1978. *Maternity: Letters from Working Class Wives*, London: Virago Reprint Library. Scott, Gillian. 1998. *Feminism, Femininity and the Politics of Working Women: The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War*. London: University of London Press. See also Dwork, Deborah. 1986. *War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898–1918*, London: Tavistock Routledge and Gorden, Peter and Doughan, David. 2001. *Dictionary of British Women's Organisations 1825–1960*. London: Woburn Press, 159–160.

[12] Rowan, Caroline. 1982. Women in the Labour Party, 1906–20. *Feminist Review* 12, 74–91.

[13] Across the two organisations education, craft skills, cooking, music and drama featured among the most popular activities. Beaumont. *Housewives and Citizens*, 8–39. See also Andrews, Maggie. 2015. *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women's Institute as a Social Movement*. London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd.

[14] In 1954 the NFWI recorded 467,000 members and the TG c. 131,000. Beaumont. *Housewives and Citizens*, 190.

[15] Ibid. 8–39.

new organisation was to "provide a common meeting ground for women irrespective of creed and party, for their wider education including social intercourse".[16]

Unlike the WCG the leadership of the NFWI and TG, at both local and national level, was dominated by well-educated, middle-class women. This fact undoubtedly accounts for the middle-class sensibility associated with each organisation. It also helps explain the desire of both groups to frame the unpaid work performed by women in the home as a highly skilled, valued and professional occupation. The professionalisation of housework extended to middle-class and working-class wives with historians Joanna Bourke and Elizabeth Roberts documenting the association of house-wifery with professional skills among working-class women from the late nineteenth century.[17] By the 1920s the identification of housewifery as a skilled profession had become well established with Judy Giles observing "the idea of the housewife was offered as a highly valued and 'modern' role for women, albeit a conservative one, focusing as it did on women's traditional functions within the family".[18]

Operating within this gendered framework, housewives' associations were able to exploit the societal value placed on women's domestic work to legitimate claims making around welfare throughout the interwar years. This strategy was bolstered by the partial extension of the parliamentary franchise to women over 30 in 1918 and on equal terms with men in 1928.[19] As a consequence the NFWI and TG effectively combined the

[16] The National Union of Townswomen's Guilds. 1938. *Handbook*. London, 1. The British Library.

[17] Bourke, Joanna. 1994. Housewifery in Working-Class England, 1860–1914. *Past and Present* 143: 167–197. Roberts, Elizabeth. 1984. *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890–1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[18] Giles, Judy. 1993. A Home of One's Own: Women and Domesticity in England, 1918–1950. *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, 3: 239. Giles argues that this formation of the housewife role in industrialised nations was underpinned by economic and social transformations brought about by new scientific and technological knowledge alongside improvements in housing, healthcare and standards of living. See also Giles, Judy. 2005. Good Housekeeping: Professionalising the Housewife, 1920 to 1950. In *Women and Work Culture: Britain c. 1850 to 1950*, eds. Krista Cowman and Louise A. Jackson, 70–88; Abingdon: Routledge and Giles, Judy. 2004. *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity*. London: Berg.

[19] As a non-party political organisation the NFWI declined to publicly support the women's suffrage campaign. Following the extension of the parliamentary vote to women the NFWI and later the TG, encouraged members to use their vote wisely and provided

experiential expertise of members with newly won democratic rights to intervene in debates on welfare policies. The outcome was that, along with a diverse mix of other groups including the WCG, the Labour Party Women's Sections, the National Council of Women of Great Britain (NCWGB), the Mothers' Union and post-suffrage feminist societies, these groups were effective in demanding reforms needed to ensure women "fared well".[20]

It was in this historical context that the construct of the "citizen housewife" and "housewife as expert" emerged during the Second World War. At a time of national crisis the government once again found itself dependent on the support of housewives for the success of emergency policies. This included rationing, domestic food production and the evacuation of children, as well as the maintenance, as far as was possible, of "normal" domestic life. As a result government propaganda propelled housewives to a new level of importance.[21] The image of the responsible "citizen housewife", an expert in frugal housekeeping, was used repeatedly to inspire good habits among the wider populace.[22]

Housewives' associations were invited to share their expertise by giving evidence to a number of wartime enquires including the Design of

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advice and support on how to do this in their magazines. Beaumont, Caitríona. 2018. Housewives and Citizens: Encouraging Active Citizenship in the Print Media of Housewives' Associations During the Interwar Years. In *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1918–1939: The Interwar Period*, eds. Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzo, Barbara Green and Fiona Hackney. 408–420. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,

[20] Campaigns included demands for better housing standards, maternity services and women's healthcare. See Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, 101–134 and Thane, Pat. 1991. Visions of Gender in the Making of the British Welfare State: The Case of Women in the British Labour Party and Social Policy, 1906–1945. In *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of European Welfare States, 1880s to 1950s*, eds. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane. London: Routledge.

[21] Zweiniger-Bargielowska. Housewifery, 154–156. See also Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina. 2000. *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls and Consumption, 1939–1955*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[22] See Giles. Good Housekeeping, 72–75 for further discussion of the professionalisation of housework during wartime. It is worth noting that while all major housewives' associations continued to support rationing and austerity measures during and immediately after the war, the much smaller British Housewives' League, set up in 1945, campaigned to end rationing during the late 1940s. Their campaign was unsuccessful and not supported by the NFWI and TG. Hinton, James. 1994. Militant Housewives: The British Housewives' League and the Attlee Government. *History Workshop Journal*, 38: 132.

Dwellings Committee (1942), the Royal Commission on Population (1944) and the Royal Commission on Equal Pay (1944). New initiatives were introduced to better capture the expertise of housewives' associations and other women's groups. What became known as the Women's Group on Public Welfare (WGPW) was established in 1939 "to bring the experience of its constituent organisations to bear on questions of public welfare, more especially those affecting women and children".[23] Its membership was made up of all the major women's organisations including the NFWI and TG.[24] Furthermore the recognition given to the housewife in the Beveridge Report, published in 1942, re-affirmed the "citizen housewife" ideal. Here William Beveridge opined that, "in the next thirty years housewives, as mothers, have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race and of British ideals in the world".[25]

Thirty years later in the early 1970s housewives were no longer held in such high regard. By this time the "citizen housewife" and "housewife as expert" construct, and with it public appreciation of the experiential expertise shared by housewives, was assumed to be a thing of the past. Maggie Andrews in her history of the NFWI suggests that

> The expansion of the welfare state and Government in the post-war period brought with it a mushrooming of both local and central Government experts. Official experts took over a variety of welfare issues which had previously been the sphere of expertise of women in the Women's Institute and similar organisations.[26]

Rachel Richie shares this view in her work on the NFWI and the WCG when she notes "the passing of the housewife's moment" with both organisations failing to retain their "housewife as expert" status.[27]

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[23] Gorden and Doughan. *Dictionary of British Women's Organisations*, 168. In 1975 The WGPW was renamed The Women's Forum.

[24] Throughout the war the WGPW provided guidance to government on a range of welfare issues including evacuation of children and women's welfare services.

[25] HM Government. 1942. *Social Insurance and Allied Services*. Cmd. 6404. London: HMSO, 53. The British Library.

[26] Andrews. *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*, 149.

[27] Richie, The Housewife and the Modern, 67.

New professionally trained experts appeared to usurp the previously valued experiential expertise of wives and mothers. As Judy Giles notes "in the name of efficiency 'experts' and professionals were called upon to extend scientific and rational principles …to housework, childcare, sexual relations, and nutrition".[28] This shift to professional expertise wasn't exclusive to the domestic sphere with Frank Prochaska observing that professional services provided by the welfare state displaced the role of Christian social service in postwar Britain.[29] Moreover, the emergence of new independent non-governmental organisations (NGOs), keen to engage with professional experts, is likewise regarded as a challenge to experiential expertise.[30]

Here the impact of what Harold Perkin terms the "rise of professional society" appears particularly relevant.[31] Of course in reality the relationship between different types of expertise in the context of postwar welfare cultures is messy and complex. It is overly simplistic to assume that the voices and contributions of experiential experts and voluntary organisations were always "displaced" or silenced within this new, more professional landscape. As Matthew Hilton and James McKay suggest historians need to focus on the voluntary sector's ability "to adapt and do new things".[32]

A second factor associated with the end of the "housewife as expert" construct is its replacement by the myth of the "happy housewife". This idealised image of the glamorous housewife, devoted to home and family, became ubiquitous in mass circulation women's magazines, advertisements and popular culture throughout the 1950s and 1960s.[33] In sharp

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[28] Giles. Good Housekeeping, 73.

[29] Crowson, Hilton, and McKay, eds. *NGOs in Contemporary Britain*, 4.

[30] See Crowson, Nick, Hilton, Matthew and McKay, James, eds. 2013. *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also chapter one Introduction in this collection.

[31] Perkin, Harold. 1990. *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880.* London: Routledge. See also chapter one Introduction in this collection.

[32] Hilton, Matthew and McKay, James eds. 2011. *The Ages of Voluntarism: How we got to the Big Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 3–4.

[33] Beaumont, Caitríona. 2015. "What is a Wife"? Reconstructing Domesticity in Postwar Britain before *The Feminine Mystique. History of Women in the Americas.* 3: 61–76.

contrast to the community-driven "citizen housewife", the "happy housewife" embraced affluence and prioritised the comfort and care of her own private world, her home and family. This modern "happy housewife" retained her domestic expertise but it was now used to "keep her husband happy" and "to set jam to jell, children to rights and her hair for Saturday night out".[34]

The "happy housewife" myth belies the diversity of experience for housewives during the 1950s and 1960s. Increasing numbers of married women were taking up work outside their homes, the majority of which was part-time to enable wives and mothers to juggle domestic duties with paid employment.[35] Women were able to find fulfilment in both paid work and unpaid domestic work during these years.[36] Nevertheless poorer working-class wives and mothers could only aspire to becoming a "happy housewife". The lived experience for these women was more likely to be one of sub-standard housing conditions and a daily battle to make ends meet.[37] Immigrant women were excluded altogether from this imagined domestic ideal. As Wendy Webster and Angela Davis have noted these

[34] Anon. 1963. The Housewife's Treasury. *Woman,* April 27: 41. See Ferguson, Majorie. 1983. *Forever Feminine: Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity.* London: Heinemann.

[35] By 1960 one in six of the labour force was a married woman and in 1961 over half of all women in paid employment were married, the majority of whom worked part-time in low-skilled and low-paid occupations. Jephcott, Pearl. 1962. *Married Women Working.* London: George Allen and Unwin. 1–20. For an in-depth account of the experiences of working wives and mothers see McCarthy, Helen. 2020. *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing. See also Wilson, Dolly. 2006. A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Postwar Britain. *Twentieth Century British History,* 17: 206–229.

[36] See Golding, Lucy. 2022. Educated Expectations: Graduate mothers and their work in the long 1950s. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, for an insight into the feelings and experiences of graduate mothers based on 900 questionnaires submitted to Dr Viola Klein's 1963 social survey into educated women's experiences of home and work. See also Worth, Eve. 2021. *The Welfare State Generation: Women, Agency and Class in Britain since 1945.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

[37] In 1971 one-eighth of dwellings still lacked at least one of the basic amenities such as a kitchen sink and an indoor WC. Zweiniger-Bargielowska. Housewifery, 159. See also Langhamer, Clare. 2005. The Meanings of Home in Postwar Britain. *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 2: 341–362.

women were set apart due to the assumption that their identity as migrant workers nullified their right to a comfortable home life.[38]

Seeking to subvert the trope of the "happy housewife", housewives' associations themselves cautioned members in the early 1960s that a housewife was more than a "frilly little woman" whose top priority in life was to create the "house beautiful".[39] Instead the NFWI and TG continued to encourage members to engage fully in life beyond their homes through leisure and educational activities and by engaging in local and national campaigns relevant to women's lives.[40] Despite this it is the impression of the "perfect" 1950s housewife that continues to resonate so strongly with contemporary understandings of postwar domesticity.[41] And this was the image that Betty Friedan used so effectively to evoke the disempowering narrative of housewifery, what she called "the problem that has no name".[42]

"Communities of Experience" and Experiential Expertise in Housewives' Associations, 1960–1980

The dominance of the WLM in histories of the women's movement has obscured activism around welfare within housewives' associations during the1960s and 1970s. By shifting the focus away from the WLM

[38] See Webster, Wendy. 1998. *Imagining Home: Gender, Race and National Identity, 1945–1964.* London: Routledge and Davis, Angela. 2012. *Modern Motherhood: Women and the Family in England, c. 1945–2000.* Manchester: Manchester University Press. See also chapters 'Childminders and the Limits of Mothering as Experiential Expertise, England c. 1948–2000' and '"Let Me Tell You How I See It…": White Women, Race, and Welfare on Two Birmingham Council Estates in the 1980s' in this collection.

[39] Beaumont. "What is a Wife", 69.

[40] This included lobbying for child-care, equal pay, improved housing standards, rural electrification and consumer standards. See Beaumont, Caitríona. 2016. What Do Women Want? Housewives' Associations, Activism and Changing Representations of Women in the 1950s. *Women's History Review,* 26, 1: 147–162.

[41] For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic numerous newspaper headlines claimed that for women lockdown represented a return to life as "a 1950s housewife". Ferguson, Donna. 2020. I Feel like a 1950s Housewife. *The Observer*, May 3. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/i-feel-like-a-1950s-housewife-how-lockdown-has-exposed-the-gender-divide. Accessed 25 September 2023.

[42] This "problem" was the boredom and frustration that White, educated, middle-class American women experienced when their lives were dominated by unpaid housework and caring responsibilities. Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 5.

it becomes clear this activism did not disappear and continued to be acknowledged on a national level. A 1975 government report *Women in Britain* recorded "several hundred national women's organisations in Britain, drawn from every section of the community". Of these a large number were

> concerned with service to the community- for instance the welfare of families, the care of children and the elderly, improving conditions in areas of towns and the countryside… and generally stimulating the interest of ordinary women in her role in society.[43]

Significantly the experiential expertise of "ordinary" housewives is acknowledged here, as evidenced in the observation that branches of the NFWI and TG met regularly

> to hear lectures and to hold discussions of topics of general interest, and resolutions are frequently passed by the branches and at national meetings about matters where members' particular knowledge and experience have indicated that reform is both necessary and possible.[44]

This "particular" experience held by housewives' associations continued to legitimate their intervention in welfare policy debates, however this aspect of their work in the 1960s and 1970s has not yet been fully interrogated. For example Maggie Andrews in her landmark history of the NFWI ends in 1960 with the rather pessimistic conclusion that the movement had become less interested in activism by this time.[45]

The new history of experiences encourages historians to refine their approaches and to re-think "historical experiences, historical explanations and historical knowledge, and their place in the current world".[46] In the case of housewives' associations a history of experience approach demands a re-think about the experiences of women who were members throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During these two decades much of

[43] Central Office of Information. 1975. *Women in Britain.* London: HMSO, 45. The British Library.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*, 220.

[46] Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences (HEX). 2023. https://research.tuni.fi/hex/. Accessed 9 September 2023.

the focus of historical and sociological research has been on the experiences of wives and mothers engaging in paid work, the experiences of younger women adapting to motherhood and domestic responsibilities and the activism of women within the WLM.[47] There are of course notable exceptions, for example, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Thomlinson's oral history of working-class women's lived experience in coalfield communities.[48]

By taking a closer look at the activities of the NFWI and TG during the 1960s and 1970s it becomes clear that, individually and collectively, both groups remained vibrant "communities of experience". Ville Kivimäki, Antti Malinen and Ville Vuolanto argue that "communities of experience" are made up of people who recognise similarities in their experiences and who "share and negotiate these experiences and their meanings with each other...bound together with a sense of shared experience".[49] Engaging with the idea of "communities of experience" shines a light on negotiations taking place within housewives' associations when the lived experience of wives and mothers was evolving at a rapid pace. The welfare state transformed many women's lives for the better with its access to free health care, improved housing provision and expansion of educational and employment opportunities.[50] Paid work became an everyday experience for increasing numbers of married women, making it difficult to attend

[47] See for example McCarthy, *Double Lives*, Abrams, Lynn. 2019. The Self and Self-Help: Women Pursuing Autonomy in Postwar Britain. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 29: 201–222 and Jolly, Margaretta. 2019. *Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the UK Women's Liberation Movement, 1968-Present.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[48] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Florence and Thomlinson, Natalie. 2022. Vernacular Discourses of Gender Equality in the Postwar British Working-Class. *Past and Present*, 254, 1: 277–313. See also chapter 'Communities of Care: Working-Class Women's Welfare Activism, 1920–1970s' in this collection.

[49] Kivimäki, Ville, Malinen, Antti and Vuolanto, Ville. 2023. Communities of Experience. *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience*. https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/communities-of-experience/. Accessed 9 September 2023, 2.

[50] Thane, Pat. 2018. *Divided Kingdom: A History of Britain, 1900 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 262–290.

monthly meetings of housewives' associations.[51] Moreover new organisations, targeting younger wives and mothers, threatened the popularity of older more traditional groups.[52] Yet despite these challenges the NFWI and TG remained two of the largest women's organisation in Britain.[53]

Within the "communities of experience" sustained by the NFWI and TG the "housewife as expert" construct remained robust. Here the "ways of knowing rooted in experience", and acknowledgement that the "specialness of those ways of knowing" endowed members with experiential expertise, underpinned activism on welfare.[54] In May 1971 the editor of the TG magazine, *The Townswoman*, wrote, "it is the collective voice which distinguishes the Townswoman in her *major* role" from her identity as a housewife, which for too long has been regarded as the "*minor* role of a subordinate sex".[55] As the editor went on to observe the TG member joins a national women's organisation "for her own good, the good of her family and for the community at large" and seeks to "inform herself – an educational process – on whatever may affect their way of life, or threaten it." Threats at this time included "bad housing, discrimination, the welfare of disadvantaged sections of the community and all things affecting individual and national wellbeing". In expressing her informed and expert opinion as a housewife, "the TG member…acting in concert with her sister members, play a *major* part in the community's betterment".[56]

As the sentiment expressed above suggests the "communities of experience" created by housewives' associations were based not only on the experience of being a housewife but also on the experience of being a

[51] Helen McCarthy writes that in 1976 about a quarter of women with preschool aged children were working, more than double the figure in 1961. McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 324. In response to the increase in married women's work the Mothers' Union, NFWI and TG encouraged local branches to hold morning, afternoon and evening meetings to cater for all members.

[52] These included the National Childbirth Trust, the National Housewives' Register and the Pre-School Playgroups Association. See Abrams. The Self and Self-Help.

[53] In 1971 the membership of the NFWI had declined to 442,086 while the TG experienced an overall increase to 275,700 members in 1969. Beaumont. *Housewives and Citizens*: 216.

[54] hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress*. London: Taylor and Francis, 90.

[55] Leslie, Michael. 1971. Transposing from Minor to a Major Key. *The Townswomen*, May: 159. The British Library.

[56] Ibid.

member of a housewives' association. Membership of the NFWI or TG gave women a unique sense of belonging that enabled them to "share their experiences and to relate them to other people's experiences".[57] In addition to building an influential collective identity, membership of a housewives' association gave women the skills and confidence required to be effective organisers, public speakers, leaders and activists. Endless rounds of meetings, resolutions, elections, debates and campaigning, from the local branch to the national executive, instilled at a granular level knowledge about effective democratic processes. This knowledge, coupled with instruction in the machinery of government, helped ensure members of the NFWI and TG had the training required to hold "expertise of experience" in activism.[58]

The "Housewife as Expert": Welfare Activism for "Faring Well"

"Politics Replaces Jam" ran the headline in the 1 June 1971 edition of *The Telegraph* newspaper. Reporting on the NFWI Annual General Meeting (AGM) held at the Royal Albert Hall, Gerda Paul wrote that members had "voted to kill its old image of jam-making and allow its 500,000 members to voice their opinions on world affairs and domestic topics".[59] This change to a 50-year-old rule, hotly debated since 1967, reflected the growing desire for the NFWI to become even more vocal on public questions.[60] The previous year an article in *The Times* newspaper reported that the NFWI now accepted "its jam-making image was here to stay, but

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[57] Kivimäki, Malinen and Vuolanto, *Communities of Experience*: 1.

[58] Jennifer Crane uses this phrase in her work for example in Crane, Jennifer. 2020. *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience. and Emotion*. London: Palgrave and in chapter Fire, Fairs, and Dragonflies: The Writings of Gifted Children and Age-Bound Expertise in this collection. For an account of the organisational processes of housewives' associations see Beaumont. *Housewives and Citizens.*

[59] The reference to jam making dates back to the First World War, when the movement played a key role in national food preservation schemes. Paul. Gerda. 1971. Politics Replaces Jam. *The Telegraph*. June 1. NFWI 1965–1976. 2/IAW/2/B/39. International Alliance of Women Archive, The Women's Library, LSE.

[60] One motivating factor for the rule change was to attract younger members and was in response to a fall in membership of nearly 20,000 in 1969.

also want to be seen as forward-thinking, humanising interpreters of the welfare state, having hard thoughts under the hats".[61]

Acting as "humanising interpreters of the welfare state" was important to the NFWI. Throughout the 1960s the movement effectively used its high profile, mass membership and national resolutions, passed at its AGM, to highlight gaps identified in welfare provision, particularly when this impacted on the welfare of women. In 1950 the WI Devon Federation had passed a resolution calling on government to raise the earnings limit on retirement pensions, pensions for widows and allowances for widowed mothers. This issue was prompted by concerns about the hardship experienced by widows and their dependent children. Following sustained lobbying by the NFWI, working alongside the TG and a number of other women's groups, the earnings rule for widows and widowed mothers was abolished in 1964.[62]

The experiences of housewives and their right to "fare well" continued to underpin NFWI campaigns on welfare during the 1960s and 1970s.[63] In May 1968 a resolution moved by Newnham WI (Gloucestershire) called on government "to provide a sufficient allowance for a housewife, disabled by chronic illness, injury or a congenital handicap, to remain in her own home; and to enable her family to continue to live as a unit".[64] Letters were sent to the Minister for Social Security, the Disablement Income Group (DIG) and to various women's organisations. Reporting on the follow-up work linked to this resolution it was noted that in January 1975 a letter "was written to the Secretary of State for Social Services asking that a disability pension for the disabled housewife should be included in the Social Security Bill".[65] The 1975 Social Security Act

[61] Hunter Symon, Penny. 1970. Not all Jam and Jerusalem. *The Times*. June 1. NFWI 1965–1976. 2/IAW/2/B/39. International Alliance of Women Archive, The Women's Library, LSE.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the press frequently wrote about the NFWI in a patronising tone with much attention given to the hat wearing of members at the AGM.

[62] Beaumont. *Housewives and Citizens*, 204–206.

[63] The "rediscovery of poverty" which highlighted the risk of poverty among groups such as disabled people and children, informed much of the campaigning around welfare by the NFWI during the 1960s and 1970s. On the "rediscovery of poverty" see Thane, *Divided Kingdom*, 268–269.

[64] National Federation of Women's Institutes. 1981. *Keeping Ourselves Informed: Our Concern, Our Resolutions, Our Action*. London: WI Books Ltd, 153. The British Library.

[65] Ibid.

did make provision for a non-contributory invalidity pension for house-wives who were not eligible for other contributory invalidity benefits, and if they were unable to work or carry out normal household duties. In November 1977 this new benefit became payable to disabled housewives.

These examples illustrate the growing significance given to diverse experiences of housewives in relation to welfare, and how this awareness translated into activism on the part of the NFWI. In 1973 the national executive made the decision to set up a new Public Affairs Committee because of the great "increase in interest and activity among members on PQ [public questions] side of our work, and because Government Departments and official committees now ask for our views and comments more frequently".[66] The remit of the new Public Affairs Committee was to discuss and investigate subjects linked to "all aspects of Health, Welfare and Social Security Benefits and pensions, taxes, consumer protection, law and order etc".[67]

This aspect of NFWI work was acknowledged at the highest level of government. With official approval from the Home Secretary representatives from government departments, for example, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Employment, were appointed to the Public Affairs Committee. This decision is illustrative of the fact that during the 1970s the NFWI continued to be regarded by government as an influential body representing the interests and experiential expertise of housewives. Sir Keith Joseph, Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, further supports this argument when in April 1973 he described the movement as "a very responsible body" during a speech to the House of Commons.[68] However, recognition by government didn't equate to the NFWI acting as an agent of the state or compromise the organisation's willingness to campaign for women's welfare rights.

[66] *NFWI Sub Committee Bulletin.* No. 5 April 1973, 6. Public Affairs Sub-Committee Bulletins (1972–1975), 5FWI/D/1/1/3. NFWI Archive. The Women's Library, LSE. For example, in 1973 a NFWI representative was invited to sit on Royal Commission on Civil Liability and Compensation for Personal Injury.

[67] NFWI Pamphlet. 1972. National Federation of Women's Institutes 1967–1979. 2/IAW/2/B/38, International Alliance of Women Archive, The Women's Library, LSE.

[68] Public Affairs Sub-Committee Minutes, 12 April 1973, 3. Public Affairs Sub-Committee Minutes (1973–1979), 5/FWI/D/1/1/1. NFWI Archive. The Women's Library, LSE.

By the 1970s the National Health Service (NHS) had transformed many women's lives, in particular for working-class wives and mothers, through the provision of universal free access to hospitals and general practitioners (GPs).[69] Nevertheless gaps in health services for women persisted. In June 1972 the WI Anglesey Federation executive committee tabled a resolution at the AGM urging the government to "make it mandatory rather than permissive, as at present, for all Local Authorities to provide a full free Family Planning Service".[70] Believing women had the right to plan their families in the way "they feel is best for its health, welfare and quality of life" the movement welcomed the clause in the National Health Service Reorganisation Act of 1973 (which came into effect in April 1974) whereby family planning became a normal NHS service provided by GPs, hospitals and clinics.[71]

A second gap in women's healthcare provision identified by the NFWI was the absence of a nationwide and comprehensive service for cervical cancer screening. In 1964 the Whitchurch on Thames WI (Berkshire) had moved a resolution urging the government to "treat as a matter of urgency, the provision of comprehensive facilities for routine smear tests for cervical cancer".[72] This issue was regarded as extremely important by housewives' associations as it was believed that older women, and women with three or more children were more likely to be affected. Reflecting this the TG passed its own resolution the same year calling for comprehensive facilities for routine smear tests and "especially training of technicians to interpret the tests and the service to be made more widely known".[73]

Eight years later the NFWI remained just as concerned about cervical cancer prevention and the need for an effective national screening service. In 1972 it was reported that the movement was represented on the

[69] Thane, *Divided Kingdom*, 197.

[70] National Federation of Women's Institutes. *Keeping Ourselves Informed,* 66.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid. 70.

[73] Merz, Caroline. 1988. *After the Vote: The Story of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds in the Year of its Diamond Jubilee 1929–1989.* Norwich: National Union of Townswomen's Guilds, 47.

Women's National Cancer Control Campaign, set up to lobby government on this issue.[74] As part of efforts to promote screening among members, local WI branches were sent information about cervical cancer prevention and about the British United Provident Association (BUPA) Medical Centre transportable unit for cervical smear testing. The national Public Affairs Sub-Committee, meeting in December 1973, reported that local WI members were directly supporting screening work in their local areas. For example in Westmoreland a mobile caravan, staffed by a doctor, nurse and a clerical assistant, tested 2000 women in 14 days with the support of local institute members who had done "all the publicity, and did all the arranging, before and during the visits".[75]

Activism around welfare, particularly with regard to women's everyday financial security, health and wellbeing, was a key undertaking by the NFWI throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The importance of this task was explained to members in the November 1980 edition of the NFWI magazine *Home and Country*. Here the chairman, Patricia Batty Shaw, acknowledged that the movement's activism was political, but stressed that it was not party political. She explained "the fact we interest ourselves in Public Affairs, pass resolutions which call for government action and seek to contribute to the welfare of the community means that we are acting 'politically'". She went on to defend this position by adding "if we hesitate to take action for fear of being 'political' do we not run the risk of becoming ineffectual".[76]

Like the NFWI, the ability to listen to the experiences of women and advocate for the everyday welfare of wives and mothers remained a key objective for the TG throughout the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to providing a common meeting ground so members could put forward their opinion on "matters of importance to women everywhere" the Guild set out to "take a positive view on major issues of the day, making

[74] The Women's National Cancer Control Campaign was established in March 1965 emerging out of a local Stoke Newington Cervical Cancer Prevention Campaign (1963) and as a result of a 1963 resolution calling for cervical cancer screening submitted by the Medical Women's Federation to the WGPW. https://www.medicalwomensfederation.org.uk/about/about-us. Accessed 24 September 2024.

[75] Public Affairs Sub-Committee Minutes, 6 December 1973, 1. Public Affairs Sub-Committee Minutes (1973–1979), 5/FWI/D/1/1/1. NFWI Archive. The Women's Library, LSE.

[76] Batty Shaw, Patricia. 1980. A Message from the National Chairman. *Home and Country*. November: 554. The British Library.

its voice heard in government, the media and the community".[77] In 1976 the TG, with a total number of 2,692 guilds, summed up its overall purpose as providing "opportunities to meet women from all walks of life, to share mutual interests, and to increase the influence of women through a progressive, nationwide organisation concerned with the fundamental issues of community life".[78]

The national Public Questions and Current Affairs Sub-Committee, set up in 1956, oversaw this aspect of the TG's work. It was reported in *The Townswoman* that the committee was "kept very busy all year round answering questions from government departments and other interested bodies about our views on this and that".[79] One issue the committee reported on regularly was the TG's support for legalised abortion. In 1965 the Guild had passed by overwhelming majority a resolution calling on the government to introduce legal abortion for women "where it is necessary to preserve her physical or mental health; where there is a serious risk of a defective child being born; where the pregnancy results from a sexual offence".[80] Refusing to shy away from what was a controversial issue the Guild welcomed the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act. Subsequent to this the TG protested any attempt to restrict grounds for legal abortion as set out under the terms of the Abortion Act.[81]

Throughout the 1970s the TG continued to draw on the experiences of women to frame its welfare activism. Domestic violence (referred to at this time as battered wives) became a pressing concern, and one shared with the NFWI.[82] In 1975 a resolution proposed by guild member

[77] The National Union of Townswomen's Guilds. Publicity Flyer. c. 1975. NUTG 1974–1980. 2/IAW/2/B/44. International Alliance of Women Archive, The Women's Library, LSE.

[78] The National Union of Townswomen's Guilds. What Are Townswomen's Guilds. 1976. NUTG 1974–1980. 2/IAW/2/B/44. International Alliance of Women Archive, The Women's Library, LSE.

[79] Anon. 1975. Abortion (Amendment Bill). *The Townswoman*. September: 262. The British Library.

[80] Merz, *After the Vote,* 47.

[81] Anon. 1975. Abortion (Amendment Bill). *The Townswoman*. September: 262.

[82] In June 1975 the NFWI called on local authorities to provide alternative accommodation for battered women and their children in every county. In 1980 the movement noted with approval an annual government grant to the National Women's Aid Federation, alongside financial assistance by local authorities to expand refuge provision. National Federation of Women's Institutes. *Keeping Ourselves Informed,* 119. See also Robertson

Norma Proctor (Sheffield Bradway) stated that the TG was "greatly concerned about the desperate situation of wives who seek refuge and help on leaving the matrimonial home after physical assaults by their husbands". The government was urged to "take steps to help them by the provision of local authority and grant-aided charitable 'Refuge Hostels' in which they and their *children* may obtain emergency accommodation".[83] An editorial in the May 1975 edition of *The Townswoman* noted that having the two largest housewives' associations calling for hostel provision for battered wives was a "hefty straw to show the Government which way the wind is blowing in the country".[84]

Conclusion

bell hooks cautioned that hierarches of experience and "authority of experience" can be used to "silence and exclude".[85] The privilege given to negative experiences of housewives, the "captive" wife, propagated by the WLM has resulted in a monolithic understanding of housewifery in the late twentieth century. Of course not all women shared this experience. Satisfaction and fulfilment could be found in unpaid domestic work, and in membership of housewives' associations. Moreover, and as hooks has shown, the experiences of women of colour and working-class women are missing in key feminist texts such as *The Feminine Mystique*.[86]

By shifting attention onto two housewives' associations, the NFWI and TG, and by focusing on the welfare activism of both groups, alternative narratives appear that challenge understandings of the history of the welfare state and the women's movement. For example during the 1960s and 1970s the membership profile of the NFWI and TG was ageing, providing an interesting counterpoint to the welfare demands

James, Charlotte. 2024. "Working in Between": Women's Aid and networks of anti-domestic abuse activism in the UK, 1971–1996. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Glasgow.

[83] Anon.1975. Public Questions Motions. *The Townswoman*. April: 119. The British Library.

[84] Anon.1975. Battered Wives and a Hungry World. *The Townswoman*. May: 149. The British Library.

[85] hooks. *Teaching to Transgress*, 90.

[86] hooks, bell. 2014. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. London: Routledge.

of the WLM, most often associated with the interests of younger women. Nonetheless an "authority of experience" was also evident within housewives' associations. Most members of the NFWI and TG were White, middle-aged or older, and leadership roles, locally and nationally, continued to attract the well-educated middle-class members.[87]

In 1976 former national chairman of the TG, Marjorie E. Rice, observed "women do not, on the whole, join a guild in the hope of putting the world to rights…I suspect a majority join for friendship and companionship". Yet she believed that the opportunities membership created for women prepared to work on controversial issues were invaluable and that this "prevents us from being an exclusively introverted, navel-regarding organisation and establishes us as a caring, concerned group of people in the community".[88] Limitations in the representativeness of the NFWI and TG are significant. But this should not be used to minimise agency or subject the activism of both organisations to what E.P. Thompson referred to as the "enormous condescension of posterity".[89]

On the contrary, both groups operated within "communities of experience" and drew on the experiential expertise of housewives to translate these experiences "into action, identities, intentions and new thoughts".[90] As this chapter has shown many of these actions were informed by the burning desire to ensure women "fared well". Experiences relating to pension entitlements, reproductive rights, cancer prevention, disability and domestic violence were seen to threaten this goal and so transformed into activism. As a consequence the NFWI and TG not only identified gaps in the British Welfare State, but also advised government on how to make good such disparities. The "housewife as expert" construct facilitated this on-going activism, and the new history of experience makes known its significance.

[87] For an account of working-class women's activism see chapter 'Communities of Care: Working-Class Women's Welfare Activism, 1920–1970s' in this collection.

[88] Rice, Marjorie, E. 1976. Why shouldn't we be a pressure group? *The Townswoman.* January: 29. The British Library.

[89] Thompson, E.P. 1968. *The Making of the English Working Class.* London, Penguin: 13.

[90] Kivimäki, Malinen and Vuolanto, *Communities of Experience*, 1.

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Childminders and the Limits of Mothering as Experiential Expertise, England c. 1948–2000

Angela Davis

INTRODUCTION

Childminders have rarely been written about within historical literature.[1] Existing scholarship on early year's care has tended to focus on institutional care,[2] or considered childminders alongside other forms of individual care, rather than in their own right.[3] This chapter aims to help

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[1] Owen, Sue. 1988. The "Unobjectionable" Service: A Legislative History of Childminding. *Children & Society*, 2: 368.

[2] Whitbread, Nancy. 1972. *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Steedman, Carolyn. 1990. *Childhood, Culture and Class in Britain: Margaret McMillan, 1860–1931*. London: Virago; Palmer, Amy. 2011. Nursery Schools for the Few or the Many? Childhood, Education and the State in Mid-Twentieth-Century England. *Paedagogica Historica*, 47: 139–154.

[3] Gathorne-Hardy, Jonathan. 1972. *The Rise and Fall of the British Nanny*. London: Hodder and Stoughton; Holden, Katherine. 2013. *Nanny Knows Best*. Stroud: History Press Limited; Delap, Lucy. 2011. "For Ever and Ever": Child-Raising, Domestic Workers and Emotional Labour in Twentieth Century Britain. *Studies in the Maternal*. https://mamsie.bbk.ac.uk. Accessed 7 July 2019.

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rectify this gap in the scholarship and historical understanding of child-minding by examining the role played by childminders in early years care in England in the second half of the twentieth century. The question of how to care for young children was particularly charged at this time. On the one hand, there was a strong focus on domesticity. On the other hand, married women were being urged to return to paid work.[4] This growing number of working married women (in 1951 less than a quarter of married women were in the workforce, by 1991 this had increased to half)[5] encouraged debate over how their employment and domestic responsibilities should best be combined.[6] Drawing on Robert Pinker's concept of "faring well", the chapter will show how working mothers and wider society tried to identify new ways for women to engage in paid work while also ensuring their children and families "fared well".[7] For many, childminders were the obvious solution.

This embrace of childminding occurred for ideological reasons—child-minders were seen as coming closest to providing the care a mother would, and practical reasons—there was often no other provision available. In post-war England a widespread, if often uncritically examined, belief assumed the place of young children was at home with their mothers, and this affected public policy.[8] For many working mothers there was no alternative to a childminder. They were the only affordable option that provided full day care throughout the year. Yet childmin-ders had appeal. Usually a mother herself, she provided care within her

[4] Dyhouse, Carol. 1978. Towards a "Feminine" Curriculum for English Schoolgirls: The Demands of an Ideology. *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 1: 291–311.

[5] Gallie, Duncan. 2000. The Labour Force. In *Twentieth-Century British Social Trends*, ed. A.H. Halsey with Josephine Webb, 291–292. Houndmills: Macmillan.

[6] Wilson, Dolly Smith. A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-war Britain. 2006. *Twentieth Century British History* 17: 206–229; McCarthy, Helen. 2017. Women, Marriage and Paid Work in Post-war Britain. *Women's History Review,* 26: 46–61; Paterson, Laura. 2019. 'I Didn't Feel Like My Own Person': Paid Work in Women's Narratives of Self and Working Motherhood, 1950–1980. *Contemporary British History,* 33: 405–426.

[7] Pinker, Robert. 2017. The Welfare State: A Comparative Perspective. In *Social Policy and Welfare Pluralism: Selected Writings of Robert Pinker,* ed. John Offer and Robert Pinker, 70. Bristol: Policy Press. https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447323556.003.0006. See also the Introduction to this collection.

[8] Davis, Angela. 2015. *Pre-school Childcare in England, 1939–2010.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 57–62; Tizard, Jack, Moss, Peter and Perry, Jane. 1976. *All Our Children.* London: Maurice Temple Smith, 142–143.

own home not an institution and did not challenge assumptions about gender roles. Her own experience of mothering was seen as providing the expertise to look after other children. Such assumptions were based on essentialist views that saw all women as mothers or potential mothers and by extension able to care for children. However, the value assigned to childminders' experiential expertise also acknowledged the "specialness of those ways of knowing rooted in experience", identified by bell hooks.[9] The knowledge gained through their experience of mothering equipped childminders to become mother substitutes. A term originally used in child psychoanalysis, "substitute mother" became the benchmark of how a good caregiver should behave.[10]

In a 2003 essay "What it means to be a Childminder: Work or Love?", Anne Mooney, from the Thomas Coram Research Unit, discussed the reasons why childminders had chosen the job (based on the findings of a study of 497 London-based childminders conducted between January 1999 and November 2000). Childminding was mainly undertaken by women (only 2 of the 497 childminders interviewed were men) as a means of enabling them to combine paid work and care for their own children, and concluded that:

> Mothering and childminding are therefore closely linked; not only at this practical level, but also at a conceptual level because the work is often understood in terms of substitute mothering and providing a home-like environment … Many see their experience of being a mother as the most important requirement. The low status of the work, poor pay and close links to mothering make it difficult to see childminding as a career. In fact, there is some ambivalence among some childminders as to whether it is a "real job".[11]

Mooney identified an interesting tension in attitudes towards childminding and experiential expertise. Her interviewees thought their experience of mothering equipped them for the job, but also indicated that

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[9] hooks, bell. 1991. Essentialism and Experience. *American Literary History,* 3: 181.

[10] Davis, *Pre-school Childcare,* 53.

[11] Mooney, Anne. 2003. What It Means to Be a Childminder: Work or Love? In *Family Day Care,* ed. Anne Mooney and June Statham, 124. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley.

because childminding drew on their experiential expertise as mothers (rather than another form of qualification), it was not really a job at all.

This ambiguity intersected with more general questions about the role of women in post-war England. Janet Finch and Penny Summerfield have shown how the state of marriage, and the family were seen as a source of anxiety in the 1950s with concerns focusing on juvenile delinquency and divorce. Women working outside the home was seen as a contributory factor in both.[12] Therefore, while mothers were often celebrated in the post-war decades, they could also be vilified. Working mothers, poor mothers, lone mothers and mothers from ethnic minorities were the target of criticism from politicians and within wider society.[13] The close association between mothers and minders meant childminders often faced the same hostility. The image of the childminder in post-war England varied from being considered little better than a nineteenth-century baby-farmer,[14] to the ideal substitute mother. There were limits, then, to mothering as expertise and whose experience also mattered. The experiential expertise of marginalised groups, especially working-class women and women of colour, was considered suspect. Moreover, for all childminders their experiential expertise was deemed lesser than the professional expertise of the public health officials who regulated them. The fact they were seen as in need of increasing regulation as the period progressed further shows the limits of experiential expertise.

The chapter will focus on three legislative moments, 1948, 1968 and 1989, to see what they reveal about attitudes towards childminders. It will demonstrate the negotiations between the different actors, which

[12] Finch, Janet and Summerfield, Penny. 1991. Social Reconstruction and the Emergence of Companionate Marriage, 1945–1959. In *Marriage, Domestic Life and Social Change,* ed. David Clark, 19–20. London: Routledge.

[13] Taylor, Becky and Rogaly, Ben. 2007. "Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type": Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich 1942–1963. *Twentieth Century British History* 18: 429–452; Starkey, Pat. 2000. The Feckless Mother: Women, Poverty and Social Workers in Wartime and post-war England. *Women's History Review* 9: 539–557; Bailkin, Jordanna. 2009. The Postcolonial Family? West African Children, Private Fostering, and the British State. *The Journal of Modern History* 81: 87–121; Thane, Pat and Evans, Tanya. 2013. *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints?: Unmarried Motherhood In Twentieth-Century England*. Oxford: OUP.

[14] The term was usually an insult as it was associated with child neglect. Concerns about baby-farming led to the *1872 Infant Life Protection Act.*

are inherent in Pinker's idea of conditional altruism.[15] Childcare was an area where each of the parties involved—the children, their carers, their parents and families, employers, wider society and the state—had distinct and sometimes competing needs. The chapter will show how solutions were sought, not always successfully, to ensure all these different groups "fared well". It will employ a range of different published and unpublished materials to explore the subject. Several sociological and medical studies were conducted during the post-war decades about the health and well-being of children looked after by childminders which form the basis of the material discussed. There was also research into the preferences of parents looking for childcare, the economics of care studies of the strategies by which working women were able to combine home and family. To consider the role of childcare in popular debate, the chapter also makes use of contemporary newspapers. The immediate post-war period was the golden age of British newspapers, and they enjoyed a wide circulation,[16] which makes them a useful tool for accessing popular concerns in this period, as well as for seeing how these debates were being shaped by the media. The *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian, The Observer* and *The Times* newspapers have been considered as providing a range of readerships.[17] Governmental records and reports have also been examined. They reveal the decisions being made about pre-school services. Using these different sources will enable the chapter to examine the ways in which childminders' own experiences of mothering was seen as the basis of their expertise and the limits to this.

[15] Pinker, Robert. 2019. *The Idea of Welfare*. London: Routledge.

[16] In 1950, the average daily total paid circulation for British national daily newspapers was about 21 million (150% of households). By 2010, the average daily total paid circulation for British national daily newspapers was about 10.1 million (39.9% of households). Communications Management Inc. Sixty Years of Daily Newspaper Circulation Trends. 2011. http://media-cmi.com/downloads/Sixty_Years_Daily_Newspaper_Circulation_Trends_050611.pdf. Accessed 7 July 2019.

[17] The *Daily Mail* is a British daily middle-market and politically right-leaning newspaper. *The Guardian* has been a socially liberal and centre left daily paper. Its sister paper *The Observer* is a Sunday paper. *The Times* is a British daily newspaper with varied political support.

The Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act (1948)

The establishment of the welfare state, post-war reconstruction and focus on children within this, set the scene for developments in policy towards childminders in the years immediately after the war. The first act regulating childminders (The Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act) was introduced in 1948.[18] The 1948 Act defined childminders as "persons who for reward receive children into their homes to look after them" for the day or a "substantial" part of it and pertained to childminders looking after children to whom they were not related and where "(a) the number of children exceeds two, and (b) the children come from more than one household".[19] The act stated that every local authority must keep registers of people looking after children under the age of five; register those applicants who sought to look after children; and refuse if the premises or person involved was not deemed to be "fit". The local authority deemed how many children could be looked after and had the power to inspect the property to make sure it was being adequately maintained. Penalties and cancellation of the registration could be imposed if the conditions of registration were not met.[20]

Sue Owen notes that despite this first foray into regulation the government was anxious not to place too many restrictions on "neighbourliness". The Labour Party politician John Edwards, who was then Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Health said, "We do not want in any way to interfere with the kindly relative or friend who looks after one or two children while the mother is at work…we do not think that much harm can come to children looked after by friends and relatives in this way". He added, "We want to distinguish here between the good neighbourliness, the kind of services that relatives provide, and the people that are going into childminding as a business".[21] Edwards saw two different sorts of childminder. The first was the good neighbour looking after the children of a friend. He felt this was the type of exchange that

[18] Evans, Lesley. 2013. Early Years Childcare Provision in Rural Local Authorities in England: An Examination of Factors that Support Childminders in the Development of a Quality Service. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Sheffield, 20.

[19] Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act. 1948. London: HMSO, 1218–1221.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Hansard. 1948. 451, col. 521.

should occur naturally between women in working-class communities. There was no role for the state in such relationships, which could be left to women themselves to manage—they were the experts about their needs and those of their children. It was only the second sort of arrangement, where childminding was principally a commercial enterprise, that should involve the state.

In consequence, the provisions of the 1948 act were limited. The need for the privacy of a childminder's home to be respected was stressed. Being in possession of a fire-gate and a stairgate were the only criteria necessary for registration.[22] In their 1970s study of childminders the Brian and Sonia Jackson found a registered childminder who was totally deaf, illiterate and unaware of the names of the children she minded, but this had not led her to being deemed unfit for registration.[23] The fact that their own experience of mothering was seen as the most important qualification for a childminder meant it was impossible to verify their qualifications, and the informal nature of the relationship between mother and minder meant it was difficult to monitor. Berry Mayall and Pat Petrie, sociologists of early childhood who conducted extensive research into early years care from the 1970s onwards, noted the 1948 law was merely permissive and did not impose effective obligations.[24] Neither, as will be seen below, did the act prevent unregistered minding.

The Health Service and Public Health Act (1968)

A second moment of moral panic surrounding childminders emerged in the 1960s. There were concerns whether children were really "faring well" under childminding arrangements left solely at the discretion of mothers and minders. Worries about the expertise (or lack of it) among poor and ethnic minority childminders (and their clients) came to the fore. In January 1964 an article in *The Times* reported on the death of a baby in the care of an unregistered childminder who left six children alone

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[22] Owen, Sue. 2006. Organised Systems of Childminding in Britain: A Sociological Examination of Changing Social Policies, A Profession and the Operation of a Service. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz. 2006, 71–3.

[23] Jackson, Brian and Jackson, Sonia. 1979. *Childminder: A Study in Action Research.* London: Routledge, 113.

[24] Mayall, Berry and Pat Petrie. 1983. *Childminding and Day Nurseries: What Kind of Care?* London: Heinemann, 23.

in a room with an oil heater while she went to collect another child from school.[25] It was noted the baby's father was a recent immigrant from the Caribbean. A few months later in April, under the headline "Warning to Child Minders", *The Guardian* reported Birmingham Health committee had authorised prosecutions against three minders under the 1948 Act. Birmingham had previously been reluctant to prosecute but had changed approach due to the "undesirable conditions" in which children were being minded.[26] In December of that year the *Daily Mail* ran a story under the headline "Babies in the Shed" about a health visitor in North London who had found five babies in prams in sheds in the back garden and three further children in a room in the house sitting around an unguarded fire.[27] Two themes predominated in the newspaper reporting. The safety risks of unguarded heaters (which mirrored concerns about fire risks which had preceded the 1948 legislation),[28] and concerns about the prevalence of the use of childminding among poor Caribbean immigrants.

Both sets of fears combined in an article in *The Times* from February 1967 by Brian Priestley entitled, "West Indian Child Faces A SAD Life". In the article Priestley (who was *The Times*' Midlands correspondent and wrote many pieces about race relations) presents the imaginary, but he argues typical, life of a West Indian child in a working-class district of Birmingham, stating: "Because his parents both work, the infant spends most of the day with a procession of baby minders. Sometimes he will be penned up, with eight other children in a single room warmed by a paraffin heater. At one establishment the woman would tie him by the leg to the table before she went out".[29] These popular concerns were taken up by politicians. A Ministry of Health Inquiry in 1965 (Circular 5/65) questioned the quality of childminding. There were fears the large numbers of children taken by some childminders into homes that often

[25] Anon. 1964. Six Children Left With Oil Heater. *The Times*, January 25.

[26] Our Own Reporter. 1964. Warning to Child Minders. *The Guardian,* April 11.

[27] Kieran, P. 1964. Babies in the Shed. *Daily Mail*, December 16.

[28] There was a concerted multi-agency effort on fire prevention between 1950 and 1970s. Ewen, Shane. 2018. Why Red Tape Saves Lives: The Fire Service, Tombstone Legislation and Deregulating Safety in Britain. *History and Policy Papers*. https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/why-red-tape-saves-lives-the-fire-service-tombstone-legislation-and-the-der. Accessed 10 July 2023.

[29] Priestley, Brian. 1967. West Indian Child Faces A SAD Life. *The Times*, February 14.

relied on free-standing paraffin and oil heaters created serious risk of accidental harm.[30]

Encouraged by the work of social scientists, poverty had re-emerged as a political issue in the 1960s and was taken up by figures on the left.[31] The experience of poor children cared for unregistered childminders fitted into this wider debate.[32] Speaking during a debate on the Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act 1948 (Amendment) in April 1967, Joan Lester, Labour MP for Eton and Slough (and later a junior minister from 1969 to 1970 with responsibility for nursery education), said:

> Although it is an offence for any woman to look after children unless she is registered with the local authority, the means of ensuring that registration takes place are so loose and ineffective that more and more women are looking after children, the numbers of which we can only guess, without local authorities having knowledge of it or having any contact with the persons concerned through their public health departments. It might be said that in some areas it is becoming almost like the baby-farming which occurred in the Victorian era.[33]

In her speech Lester highlighted the limits of childminders' experiential expertise and the difficulties in rigorously monitoring and controlling their work. She also alluded to genealogies of experiential expertise, or the lack of it, by tracing a direct link from the nineteenth-century baby-farmers to the childminders in the 1960s.

Also in 1967, a working party with Simon Yudkin as its Chairman produced a report on the care of pre-school children for the National Society of Children's Nurseries. Yudkin was a consultant paediatrician at University College London. A committed socialist, he made important contributions in the field of social medicine as Chairman of the

[30] Owen, Organised Systems of Childminding in Britain, 88–9.

[31] Banting, K.G. 1979. *Poverty, Politics and Policy: Britain in the 1960s*. London: Macmillan, 1–13.

[32] See Chapter 3 in this collection for a discussion of attitudes to single-mothers and childcare.

[33] Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act 1948 (Amendment), House of Commons Debate, 24 April 1967, vol. 745 cc 1063–6.

Council for Children's Welfare and wrote about child health for a general readership.[34] Using similar language to Lester, he stated:

> The unregistered child minder has become something of a national problem, providing material for newspapers and magazines and an opportunity to criticize mothers, minders, the "modern family" or the government. It has become the sort of scandal that baby-farming in the mid-Victorian era provided for that generation. Like that situation, its extent is unknown, although it is certainly very common. The existing regulations about child minding are not only full of loop holes … but are also, except in rare instances, quite unenforceable.[35]

By referring to baby-farming both Lester and Yudkin stressed the continuation of "old-fashioned" nineteenth-century poverty in "modern" 1960s Britain. Yudkin's work also highlights the tension between professional experts on childcare, such as himself, and the experiential expertise of childminders. Professional experts suggested that children were not "faring well" because they were being looked after by unregulated childminders whose only qualification was experiential expertise.

The views of the professional experts were influential. Reporting about the Yudkin Report under the headline "Scandal of child-minders", *The Guardian* stated that it revealed "wholesale neglect and cruelty to children under 5".[36] The following year, also discussing Yudkin's Report, *The Observer* lamented "the appalling number of children farmed out to baby-minders" under the headline "Toddlers penned in cots all day".[37] Responding to these concerns, amendments in respect to the regulation of childminders and private nursery care were introduced as part of the Health Services and Public Health Bill at the end of 1967, which became law in 1968. Registration with the local authority was now necessary for a person other than a close relative who cared for children for more than two hours a day for reward, rather than for a substantial part of the day

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[34] Anon. 1968. Obituary Notices *Br Med J 2*: 247. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.2.5599.247.

[35] Yudkin, S. 1967. *0–5. A Report of the Care of Pre-School Children*. London: National Society of Children's Nurseries, 16.

[36] Our Own Reporter. 1967. "Scandal" of Child-Minders. *The Guardian*, April 5.

[37] Staff Reporters. 1968. Toddlers Penned in Cots All Day. *The Observer*. July 28.

as previously. Penalties for failure to register were also increased.[38] In the context of anxiety over the stability of the family which developed alongside the social changes seen in the 1960s,[39] unease about the continued increase in the number of working mothers and the effects of mass immigration were projected onto to the figure of the childminder. While the 1968 childminders' regulation was supposed to resolve the problem, in fact it did nothing (and perhaps nothing could have been done) to abate these underlying fears.

From the 1968 Act to the Children Act (1989)

From its inception, there were many criticisms of the 1968 act. Judy Warner, who had worked as a childminders' advisor for Social Services in the 1970s felt, "The law concerning childminding was mainly negative and its interpretation by individual local authorities was variable". Moreover, "because it gave very few clear guidelines about quality of care and grounds for refusal or cancellation, most local authorities were nervous of using their powers".[40] The Jacksons summed it up as a "law which does not work".[41] There were also criticisms from the other side; registration was seen as too intrusive. In a *Daily Mail* article from December 1970, its author, Diana Kareh, wrote of a friend of hers who minded another friend's baby for two days a week. The woman provided her services for free after abandoning the registration process because it was too onerous and intrusive. Kareh concluded that, "If councils want to increase their numbers of child minders (who, after all, save them a great deal of money), they must use a little more of the common sense that any good mother takes for granted".[42] Kareh's critique of registration was that it undermined the "good neighbourliness" model of childminding,

[38] Health Services and Public Health Act. 1968. London: HMSO, 41–42.

[39] Lewis, Jane. 1986. Anxieties About the Family and the Relationships Between Parents, Children and the State in Twentieth-Century England. In *Children of Social Worlds,* ed. Martin Richards and Paul Light. 31–54. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[40] Warner, Judy. 1994. Childminders and children. In *Working Together for Young Children: Multi-Professionalism in Action, ed*. Tricia David, 27. London: Routledge.

[41] Jackson and Jackson, *Childminder*, 29.

[42] Kareh, Diana. 1970. This Business of Baby-Minding. *Daily Mail*, December 1.

which prioritised experience as expertise. However, she also drew attention to local and national government's dependence on childminding as a cheap solution.

Press reports were joined by academic research. The initial studies principally focused on the health of women immigrants from the Caribbean. This no doubt tapped into a wider racialised discourse that constructed migrants, and particularly those from the Caribbean, as unhealthy and a burden on the NHS.[43] In 1969, Eva Gregory published an article, "Childminding in Paddington", in the journal *Medical Officer* based on a wider study of childcare practices among a group of "West Indian families".[44] She looked at eighty-seven mothers of infant children, finding just over half were working because of financial need and were often their families' sole providers. Most left their children with unregistered minders.[45] Gregory then compared seventeen illegal and thirty-nine registered childminders. Overcrowding was the main characteristic that distinguished the unofficial from the registered minders—they tended to be cheaper and to look after more children to make the work financially worthwhile. However, in other respects, there were similarities. Many of the children looked after by both registered and unregistered minders were confined all day to one room, sometimes with no toys or play equipment. Ten minders (including three registered and seven unregistered) admitted they did not play with the children.[46] Gregory concluded: "the most outstanding impression of the survey is not one of terrible child neglect but of widespread disorganisation".[47] Gregory felt the children were not "faring well".

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[43] Bivins, Roberta. 2015. *Contagious Communities*: *Medicine*, *Migration and the NHS in Postwar Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 193; Hanley, Anne. 2022. Migration, Racism and Sexual Health in Postwar Britain. *History Workshop Journal*, 94: 203.

[44] Other contemporary studies were Pollack, Margaret. 1972. *Today's Three Year Olds in London*. London: Heinemann; Hood, Catriona, Oppe, T.E, Pless, I.B. and Apte, Evelyn. 1970. *Children of West Indian Immigrants*. London: Institute of Race Relations; Moody, V. and Stroud, C.E. 1967. One Hundred Mothers: A Survey of West Indians in Britain. *The Nursery Journal*, 57: 4–8.

[45] Gregory, Eva. 1969. Childminding in Paddington. *Medical Officer*, 122: 135–139.

[46] Ibid. 135–139.

[47] Ibid. 138.

The most influential research into childminding at this time was instigated by Brian and Sonia Jackson. Brian was a former teacher and educationist from a working-class background in Huddersfield who had come to prominence with his book *Education and the Working Class* published in 1962 with Dennis Marsden.[48] He became increasingly concerned with pre-school care and published an article on childminding in *New Society,* stressing the consequences of minded children's early experiences on their later development.[49] His wife Sonia was trained as a clinical psychologist before moving into social work and then academia. In 1972, Sonia wrote an influential report on illegal childminding and the West Indian community for the government's flagship education initiative, the Priority Area Programme.[50] In 1973, Brian set up the Childminding Research Unit (CRU) in Cambridge, funded by the Social Science Research Council, to document the lives of children and childminders in Huddersfield, Yorkshire and Old Trafford, Greater Manchester. This would result in a joint-authored book between Brian and Sonia in 1979.[51]

Lesley Evans notes most research into childminders carried out in the 1970s was undertaken in urban areas and reported the unacceptable conditions minded children were experiencing.[52] Sue Owen, a researcher at the CRU in the 1970s gave some examples of the childminders she met in Greater Manchester, including "the elderly widow in an Old Trafford terraced house who daily took in about eight children as well as caring for her own two grandchildren"; the "the middle-aged West Indian woman in an even smaller terraced house in Moss Side"; and "the woman in a high rise apartment who consistently refused to open her door to anyone after the children had been delivered to her each day".[53] The childminders she interviewed and the children they looked after lived in very poor circumstances. Few were legally registered and most felt part of a community tradition of neighbours helping each other while earning a little extra

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[48] Hardwick, Kit. 2003. *Brian Jackson*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 14.

[49] Jackson, Brian. 1972. The Childminders. *New Society,* 26: 522–523.

[50] Jackson, Sonia. 1972. *The Illegal Child-Minders*. Cambridge: Priority Area Children for the Cambridge Educational Development Trust.

[51] Owen, Sue. 2003. The Development of Childminding Networks in Britain: Sharing the Caring. In *Family Day Care, ed*. Anne Mooney and June Statham, 81. London: Jessica Kingsley; Jackson and Jackson, *Childminder*, 3–14.

[52] Evans, Early Years Childcare Provision, 39.

[53] Owen, Organised Systems of Childminding in Britain, 36.

money.[54] Sonia Jackson found a similar picture. She described a West Indian minder from Liverpool who "had two children of her own at school and said she enjoyed looking after these young ones during the day. What little money she made came in handy. She only looked after the children sometimes and it had never occurred to her to register her activity with anyone … She was helping out a few friends who would have done the same for her".[55]

The academic debate reflected wider public and political concerns, often centred on the children of Caribbean immigrants. There were specific anxieties about educational consequences of childminding for ethnic minority children.[56] In the 1975 report *Who Minds?* produced by the Community Relations Commission, 186 childminders from different ethnic minorities (termed as "White", "Asian" and "Black") were interviewed about their experiences as childminders. They found all the childminders worked long days (80%) over eight hours a day, but that the days of the Black and Asian childminders were longer. They were also charged less than the White minders.[57] Minders from across the different ethnic groups conceived of their role in very similar ways, however, and a third of the childminders described themselves as substitute mothers.[58] While the authors of the study were positive about this role played by childminders, they felt it was problematic for children cared for by a childminder of a different national or ethnic background to their own.[59] The authors were therefore pointing to another limitation of experiential expertise: a woman's experience of mothering her own child did not equip her to care for children who came from different cultural backgrounds to her own.

These discussions of childminding among immigrant communities were shaped by the researchers' own attitudes towards gender and race and the norms prevalent within English culture. Examining the relationship between gender, "race" and national identity, Wendy Webster has

[54] Ibid. 36–37.

[55] Jackson, *Illegal Child-Minders*, 21.

[56] ibid. note 3, 173.

[57] Community Relations Commission. 1975. *Who Minds?* London: Community Relations Commission, 39.

[58] Ibid. 39.

[59] Ibid. 53.

shown how, "Black women were not constructed as economic dependents of men", and in consequence their "main role in the post-war welfare state was to subsidize it through their labour".[60] But many immigrant women were mothers who, in the context of the limited childcare available, had no choice but to employ childminders. There were different childrearing practices and traditions among women coming from the Caribbean which may have also meant they were receptive to the use of childminders. Mary Chamberlain has described how child fostering or child-shifting is a feature recognised in many African-Caribbean households,[61] so the notion of children being looked after by someone other than their biological mother was not a new one, or simply the result of the process of migration.[62] Fears about illegal childminding in the late-1960s were often centred on the care of immigrant children and formed part of wider criticism of immigrant family structures which pervaded academic research as well as public policy and wider English society as a whole.[63] Not all forms of mothering experience were viewed equally. Racism and the lack of understanding of different cultural practices and experiences could impact negatively on the value or legitimacy of mothers' and subsequently childminders' experiential expertise.

There were also class differences. Summarising the findings of their research from the CRU in their 1979 book, *Childminder*, Sonia and Brian Jackson showed how demand for childminders was highest in "poorer areas where mothers are under pressure to work". While they found middle-class mothers increasingly used childminders due to the scarcity and cost of other forms of care, the childminders who served professional families were often professionals themselves, and while "formally part of the same system, they are a different species from most of the minders we met". They concluded that childminding was "a service forged by the poor for the poor" and assumed it would remain the principle way poor working parents would care for their children. Nonetheless, they felt childminders had the potential to be more than substitute mothers

[60] Webster, Wendy. 1998. *Imagining Home: Gender, "Race" and National Identity, 1945–1964.* London: UCL Press.

[61] Chamberlain, Mary. 2017. *Family Love in the Diaspora*. Abingdon: Routledge, 123.

[62] Ibid. 124.

[63] Lawrence, Errol. 1982. In the Abundance of Water the Fool is Thirsty: Sociology and Black. "Pathology". In *The Empire Strikes Back*, ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 95–142. London: Routledge.

and could step up to the role of educators, offering the possibility of early intervention.[64] There was a tension inherent in the work of the Jacksons, who were professional experts, drawing on their own specialist credentials into the care of young children, while defining the experiential expertise of childminders. However, their work was deeply influential in social discussions of childminding, as seen in the BBC TV series, *Other People's Children* based on Brian's Jackson's Huddersfield centre,[65] and wider policy.

Childminding began to receive government backing as the solution to the country's childcare needs. In 1976 the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Education and Science held a conference in Sunningdale entitled "Low Cost Day Care Provision for the Under Fives". The conference included many professional experts, including Brian Jackson himself.[66] Minister of State, Dr David Owen, introduced the conference, explaining it had been called in the context of "restraint in social expenditure" and concern for the under-fives. He concluded that a possible solution to the dilemma would be "spreading the low-cost best practice which already exists". Most of the conference members agreed that this "low-cost best practice" was to be found among childminders and playgroups.[67] In the wake of Sunningdale, a group of registered childminders organised a conference in Birmingham at the end of 1977 at which the National Childminding Association (NCMA) was founded. It brought together two or three hundred registered childminders and other interested workers in the field from all over the UK to try and improve the profile of childminders and build upon the informal

[64] Jackson and Jackson, *Childminder*, 27–8, 130, 131, 117. Other researchers disagreed: Martin Hughes, Berry Mayall, Peter Moss, Jane Perry, Pat Petrie and Gill Pinkerton. 1980. *Nurseries Now: A Fair Deal for Parents and Children*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 165 and Mooney, What it means to be a Childminder: Work or Love? In *Family Day Care*, 118–128.

[65] Harwick, *Brian Jackson*, 22–23.

[66] Mayall and Petrie, *Childminding and Day Nurseries*, 24–25.

[67] Dr David Owen cited in Mayall and Petrie, *Childminding and Day Nurseries*, 24–25.

networks that childminders were already developing. It marked a significant shift in the recognition of experiential expertise as a legitimate qualification for being a childminder.[68]

The founding of the NCMA also coincided with the rising profile of childminders in the wake of *Other People's Children* which aired in 1977. A *Guardian* article about the series published in January of that year opened with the prediction: "This could be the year of the childminder".[69] In his book on early childhood services, the educationist Peter Baldock argues the increased profile of childminding encouraged several local authorities to offer childminders greater support with some creating specialist adviser posts to work alongside childcare inspectors.[70] Working with the Open University, the NCMA produced the first national training materials for childminders in 1986. It was followed up by the Childminding Quality Charter (1989).[71] By the later 1980s the profile of childminders in England seemed to be changing—their informal expertise was becoming organised, they had been positively endorsed by the state as the most suitable form of early years care, and their status had been enhanced.

THE CHILDREN ACT (1989)

However, at the same time as childminding was beginning to become publicised, organised and even professionalised, there was growing pressure for reform. In their 1979 book the Jacksons had claimed unregistered childminding was a huge problem, estimating half of the 200,000 children with childminders were unknown to the authorities.[72] While the figure was debated,[73] it became generally accepted by policymakers that a substantial problem had been unearthed. Campaigns followed to update the 1968 legislation reached fruition with the 1989 Children Act which

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[68] Evans, Early years childcare provision, 43; PACEY. 40 years of PACEY—How It All Began. https://www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/pacey-blog/2017/october-2017/40-years-of-pacey-how-it-all-began/. Accessed 13 July 2023.

[69] Anon. 1977. Mother Figures at Ten Pence an Hour. *The Guardian*, January 14.

[70] Baldock, Peter. 2011. *Developing Early Childhood Services. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill/OUP*, 61–62.

[71] Evans, Early Years Childcare Provision, 44.

[72] Jackson and Jackson, *Childminder,* 125.

[73] Ibid. 55–56.

replaced all previous legislation with a single national statute covering all early years and childcare provision.[74] The act allowed for the inspection of childminders who had to meet regulations concerning fire and health safety in their homes.[75] The NCMA was instrumental in the framing of the legislation through joining with 16 other organisations to form a lobbying group called Law Reform for Children's Day Care.[76] Immediately after the introduction of the act there was a decline in numbers of registered childminders from 109,200 in 1992 to around 81,000 in 1993 and the number of registered childminders in England declined further by 26% from 1996 to 2000, from 102,600 to 75,600.[77] The act revealed the limits of experiential expertise as childminding increasingly became seen as a recognised and accredited profession.

The act was not a panacea. Media reports about the risks of childminding continued unabated. The 1993 case of Helen Sangar, a baby who had been shaken to death by her registered childminder, Susan Cawthorne, in whose care a previous child had died, was well publicised. A *Daily Mail* editorial under the headline "Save the children" from May 1995 argued, "The laws safeguarding children may be fine in theory. The practice is clearly another matter".[78] In April 1996, in a *Guardian* article entitled "Childminder checks 'not working'", Martin Wainwright, the paper's northern editor, noted Sheffield city council's report on Helen Sangar's death warned parents against "placing too much reliance on the local authority system of registering and inspection, which was likely to be much less effective and reliable than they imagined".[79] A similar spate of negative reporting occurred in the early 2000s following the death

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[74] Peace, Sheila and Caroline Holland. 2001. Homely Residential Care: A Contradiction in terms? *Journal of Social Policy*, 397.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Owen, Organised Systems of Childminding in Britain, 117–118; Baldock, *Early Childhood Services*, 71.

[77] Mooney, Anne, Knight, Abigail, Moss, Peter and Owen, Charlie. 2001. *Who Cares?* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 15; Charlie Cameron, Anne Mooney and Peter Moss. 2002. The Child Care Workforce: Current Conditions and Future Directions. *Critical Social Policy*, 22: 583.

[78] Anon. 1995. Save the children. *Daily Mail*, May 11.

[79] Wainwright, Martin. 1996. Childminder Checks "Not Working". *The Guardian*, April 5.

of Joshua Osborne, in July 2000, also shaken to death by his registered childminder, Linda Bayfield, who had previously been accused of abusing another child. Under the headline "Hidden Past of the Killer Childminder", the journalist Rebecca English wrote in the *Daily Mail* in December 2001 that, "A disturbing loophole in the child-care system was exposed".[80] Even with increased regulation, childminding remained difficult to control.

Furthermore, despite the 1989 Act and the increasing regulation of childminding and efforts to provide training and support, childminders' views of themselves and their work changed little. Claire Cameron, Ann Mooney and Peter Moss, academics from the Thomas Coram Research Unit, published a study of practising childcare workers in 2002. Half the minders interviewed believed mothers should either not work or work only part-time when their child was under one year. If mothers had to work, though, they thought home-based care by relatives or childminders was preferable to centre-based, group care. They felt their mothering brought them experiential expertise and they offered children one-to-one attention in a homely setting based on their experience as a parent. They enjoyed the job as it allowed them "to earn an income, but at the same time be available for their children—an important feature of the 'ideal' mother".[81] Their responses indicate the inherent contradiction of mothering as expertise. On the one hand the association of childminding and mothering led to the valorisation of childminders as providing childcare most like that of the mother. On the other hand, the association of childminding with women's domestic work (which was further emphasised as their workplace was their own home) was devaluing. Even in the 1980s and 1990s, after half a century of regulation and reform, for many childminding was not conceptualised as real work at all.[82]

[80] English, Rebecca. 2001. Hidden Past of the Killer Childminder. *Daily Mail*, December 19.

[81] Cameron, Mooney and Moss, The Child Care Workforce, 575, 578–580.

[82] Bryan, Beverly, Stella Dadzie and Suzanne Scafe. 1985. *The Heart of the Race*. London: Verso, 30.

Conclusion

During the middle decades of the twentieth century, childminders occupied a marginal position within British childcare provision and were viewed with ambivalence. Largely outside state control and functioning through a private transaction between minder and parent, they were criticised for being untrained, unsupervised and greedy. At the same time however, they were championed as a traditional, community-based form of care that offered a personal relationship between minder, mother and child, based on their own mothering as experiential expertise. These competing representations of childminders meant that at different moments they were vilified or celebrated. Sometimes they were considered the ideal form of care for young children because they were usually mothers themselves[83] and cared for small numbers of children in their own homes; their experiential expertise was lauded. At other times they were censored for risking children's health and well-being, with minders looking after too many children in poor and overcrowded conditions. At these moments they were seen as needing to be under the control of professional experts.

These competing characterisations of childminders reflected ambivalences about the role of women in the post-war decades. The moments of legislative change discussed above were times of concern about the stability of gender, class and race relations. In 1948 fears centred on women's participation in the labour force which led to an unresolved tension about the role of women: if women were encouraged to engage in paid work, who would look after the children and ensure they "fared well"? These anxieties about the role of women and their relationship to paid work reignited in the 1960s as rising numbers of women engaged in the labour force. Such concerns were intertwined with anxieties over large-scale new commonwealth immigration. Despite the 1968 legislation, public and political attention on childminding, both positive and negative, intensified in the following years. Again, this mirrored wider concerns about the role of women, the stability of the family, society and the economy during the period of second wave-feminism, the economic crisis of the 1970s and then the conflict between the social conservative

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83 In the Jacksons' study only two men featured, one who was the husband of a childminder, who aged seventy, often left the baby in his care. Jackson and Jackson, *Childminder* 107; the other was a single parent, 109.

and neoliberal economics of the Thatcher years. The 1989 Children Act and its legacy demonstrate even at the turn of the twenty-first century, questions remained about how women should combine work and family, and what were often seen as the competing needs of children, families and society to "fare well". As in the decades that preceded, these uncertainties were often projected onto the figure of the childminder.

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Children

"Daddy Knows Best": Professionalism, Paternalism and the State in Mid-Twentieth-Century British Child Diswelfare Experiences

Michael Lambert

INTRODUCTION

Disclosures made to inquiries into historical child and family abuse challenge our understanding of state power in mid-twentieth-century Britain. The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA, 2014–2022), the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI, 2015–) and the Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into the Forced Adoption of Children of Unmarried Mothers (JCHR, 2021–2022) each demonstrate the consistent failure of the state to safeguard the welfare of children.[1] Such

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[1] Jay, Alexis. 2022. *The report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.* London: IICSA; Abrams, Lynn and Linda Fleming. 2019. *Report into the Historic System to Protect and Prevent Abuse of Children in Care in Scotland, 1948–1995.* Edinburgh: SCAI; Levitt, Ian. 2021. *The Knowledge and Definition of Child Abuse within Scottish Office departments, 1945–1974.* Edinburgh: SCAI; JCHR. 2022. *The Violation of Family Life: Adoption of Children of Unmarried Women, 1949–1976.* London: House of Commons & House of Lords.

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a failure occurred during the welfare state's "classic" period from 1945 to 1974/1976 where it enjoyed more abundant resources, respect for professional authority and bipartisan political commitment. This ideal is closely associated with the intellectual contribution of Richard Titmuss whose work constituted an article of faith in mid-twentieth-century social administration, where a large state apparatus was envisaged to deliver collectivist, unitarist and redistributive welfare to its constituent population.[2] Here, Robert Pinker made a significant contemporary distinction between these service-oriented horizons of the welfare state outlined by Titmuss and the subjective feelings of people realised in their own "state of welfare".[3]

This concept is considered in greater detail in the introduction to this volume, and underpins contributing chapters. Beyond their legalistic and inquisitorial purview, the inquiries were important in foregrounding lived experience within public understanding of the past. Moreover, these lived experiences came from adults primarily concerning their own childhoods, where officials had dismissed or discredited their complaints of abuse and harm. This points to the historical dynamic of how paternalistic and patriarchal social service logics gendered family relations and infantilised children as subjects about whose needs could be known by experts but not articulated through their own voices. Writing contemporaneously, Barbara Wootton succinctly captured this underlying assumption of the child welfare state: "Be quiet dear, daddy knows best".[4]

Child and family abuse inquiries, then, have begun to expose the limits of technocratic expertise and professional authority in realising the mid-twentieth-century social democratic welfare state. Yet established narratives retaining Titmuss's articles of faith remain seductive with their focus on the redistributive capacity of the state. Here the power of professional discretion was used in determining need in a context where the frontiers of state responsibility for the provision of welfare are being rolled forward by social democracy, not back by neoliberalism. This chapter, repurposing Titmuss's conceptualisation, argues that the omissions and commissions of the mid-twentieth-century child welfare state constitute

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[2] Titmuss, Richard M. 1958. *Essays on "The Welfare State"*. London: Allen & Unwin; Titmuss, Richard M. 1968. *Commitment to welfare*. London: Allen & Unwin.

[3] Pinker, Robert. 1971. *Social Theory and Social Policy*. London: Heinemann. See also the Introduction to this collection.

[4] Wootton, Barbara. 1959. Daddy Knows Best. *Twentieth Century*, 166: 249.

a diswelfare. That is, the actions and activities of the state as corporate parent, in purportedly acting in the best interests of the child to provide a normal family life, disregarded children's "state of welfare" both individually and collectively. Ultimately, the chapter shows that lived experiences of welfare state harm and abuse requires historians to foreground the coercive power of the state, rather than the redistribution of welfare, in our understanding of the mid-twentieth-century British child welfare state.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first explores the historiography of teleological technocratic social policy, social work professionalisation and the "classic" social democratic welfare state in Britain from the 1940s to the 1970s. The second contextualises contemporary understanding of welfare through the "Titmuss Paradigm", his idea of diswelfare, the challenge of Pinker and the feminist critique of Wootton. The third positions the role and legitimacy of child and family abuse inquiries as instruments foregrounding lived experience to revisit understanding of the past, and how these fit with developing understanding of histories of childhood. The fourth brings the preceding three sections together to reconsider the mid-twentieth-century child welfare state and argues that the coercive power of the state, through omission and commission, perpetrated diswelfare in its capacity as corporate parent. This, in turn, asks searching methodological questions about the historical study of social policy and the welfare state.

Imagining the "Classic" Welfare State

Daniel Wincott accurately contends that the "idea of a (golden) age pervades most academic analysis and debate about the welfare state".[5] It is a "historiographical commonplace", a convenient shorthand to bracket, periodise and understand social policy across the Western world in the thirty years following the end of the Second World War.[6] This "classic" welfare state, a phrase coined by Rodney Lowe, provided what Nicholas Timmins terms "the antonyms of the 'five giants on the road to

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[5] Wincott, Daniel. 2013. The (golden) Age of the Welfare State: Interrogating a Conventional Wisdom. *Public Administration*, 91: 806.

[6] Gordon, Daniel A. 2017. Full speed ahead? The *Trente Glorieuses* in a Rear View Mirror. *Contemporary European History*, 26: 189–199.

reconstruction'" as advanced by William Beveridge in his 1942 report.[7] Government commitments across the political divide to secure full employment, social security, education, housing and health for all were the means to slay idleness, want, ignorance, squalor and disease. Indeed, David Garland suggests the mid-twentieth-century moment resulted in the term welfare state being regarded as a label for disparate social policies becoming "accepted as a political fact and articulated as a political concept" despite its imprecision.[8] Narrating the rise and fall of these social policy domains from 1945 to 1974/1976 has been the hallmark of historical study of the welfare state.[9] This account has been accentuated by reliance on a narrow range of official sources.[10] Moreover the narrative has been further exaggerated through associated political analysis based on contrasting the underpinning ideology of the epoch with that which followed. Collectivist social democracy embodied by the post-war Attlee Labour Governments of 1945–1951, responsible for legislating the "classic" welfare state, has been contrasted against individualist neoliberalism of the Thatcherite Conservative Governments of 1979–1990, which

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[7] Lowe, Rodney. 1994. Lessons from the Past: The Rise and Fall of the Classic Welfare State in Britain. In *The Politics of Welfare*, eds. Ann Oakley and A. Susan Williams, 37–53. London: UCL Press; Timmins, Nicholas. 2017. *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State*. London: HarperCollins, 7.

[8] Garland, David. 2021. The Emergence of the Idea of "The Welfare State" in British Political Discourse. *History of the Human Sciences,* 35: 148.

[9] Laybourn, Keith. 1995. *The Evolution of British Social Policy and the Welfare State, c. 1800–1993*. Keele: Keele University Press; Gladstone, David. 1999. *The Twentieth Century Welfare State*. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Lowe, Rodney. 2005. *The Welfare State in Britain since 1945*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Glennerster, Howard. 2007. *British Social Policy: 1945 to the Present*. Oxford: Blackwell; Fraser, Derek. 2017. *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Timmins, *Five giants*.

[10] For example: Land, Andrew, Rodney Lowe & Noel Whiteside. 1992. *Development of the Welfare State, 1939–1951: A Guide to Documents in the Public Record Office*. London: HMSO; Bridgen, Paul and Lowe, Rodney. 1998. *Welfare Policy Under the Conservatives, 1951–1964: A Guide to Documents in the Public Record Office*. London: HMSO.

rolled back its frontiers.[11] The result is a caricatured but recognisable imaginary of the mid-twentieth-century social democratic welfare state.

This imaginary readily translates into social work historiography. The rise and fall of the "classic" welfare state is inextricably connected with the professional position, autonomy and influence of social workers.[12] "When an older generation of social workers refers to a golden era, this is the time they look back to", notes John Pierson.[13] Steve Rogowski similarly sees social democracy as the "zenith" and "high watermark" of social work, a view shared by Terry Bamford.[14] Central to this rise was social policy apparatus, which valued social work expertise, and its capacity to assess constituent client groups presenting social problems. This led to universities, departments and courses researching and teaching such knowledge to proliferate.[15] Expertise was applied in social work practice to diagnose deficiency, pathology or maladjustment in client groups and prescribe highly individualised interventions to remedy them. Children "deprived of a normal home life" were one of the main client

[11] Gough, Ian. 1984. *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*. London: Macmillan; Hill, Michael J. 1993. *The Welfare State in Britain: A Political History since 1945*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar; Clarke, John and Newman, Janet. 1997. *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare*. Thousand Oaks, LA: SAGE; Ling, Tom. 1998. *The British state since 1945: An introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Taylor-Gooby, Peter. 2013. *The Double Crisis of the Welfare State and What We can Do About it*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[12] Payne, Malcolm. 2005. *The Origins of Social Work: Continuity and Change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Rogowski, Steve. 2010. *Social Work: The Rise and Fall of a Profession*. Bristol: Policy Press; Pierson, John. 2011. *Understanding Social Work: History and Context*. Maidenhead: Open University Press; Bamford, Terry. 2015. *A Contemporary History of Social Work: Learning from the Past*. Bristol: Policy Press; Bamford, Terry and Bilton, Keith, eds. 2020. *Social Work: Past, Present and Future*. Bristol: Policy Press; Jones, Ray. 2020. *A History of the Personal Social Services in England: Feast, Famine and the Future*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Burt, Mike. 2022. *A History of the Roles and Responsibilities of Social Workers: From the Poor Law to the Present Day*. London: Routledge.

[13] Pierson, *Understanding Social Work*, 107.

[14] Rogowski, *Social Work*, 45, 46; Bamford, *A Contemporary History*, 110.

[15] Parry, Noel & Parry, José. 1979. Social Work, Professionalism and the State. In *Social Work, Welfare and the State*, eds. Noel Parry, Michael Rustin & Carole Satyamurti, 21–47. London: E.; Arnold; Harris, John. 2003. *The Social Work Business*. London: Routledge; Burnham, David. 2012 *The Social Worker Speaks: A History of Social Workers Through The Twentieth Century*. Farnham: Ashgate.

groups served through this expertise, defined by normative judgements transmitted through teaching of what constituted family life.[16]

In such circumstances deprived children were reliant upon the state as corporate parent, and the creation in 1948 of a dedicated service for children staffed by qualified, idealistic social workers invested in social democratic ideals is an important component of this narrative.[17] Crucially, this teleological historiography has been written almost exclusively by former social workers, social work academics and key social policy protagonists. The outcome is an idealised narrative which dovetails social work professionalisation with the "classic" welfare state, serving as the human face of its technocratic social policy apparatus. Power is wielded benevolently in the interests of child welfare, whilst the role of the state is disregarded.

The foregoing depiction of the "classic" welfare state, and the place of social work within it, is evidently simplified. Yet this imaginary exerts considerable influence against a tide of complex, contradictory and critical history. There remain few dedicated accounts of everyday complicity in harm and abuse through social work practice within the welfare state.[18] Scale is important, with a top-down high political view focused on male welfare entitlements overlooking the gendered, classed and racialised impacts of decision-making from below.[19] This has been challenged by a strong feminist tradition which foregrounds women as agents and

[16] Peplar, Michael. 2002. *Family Matters: A History of Ideas About the Family Since 1945.* London: Longman; Thane, Pat. 2003. Family Life and "Normality" in Postwar British Culture. In *Life After Death: Approaches to a Cultural and Social History of Europe During the 1940s and 1950s*, eds. Richard Bessell and Dirk Schumann, 193–210. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[17] Packman, Jean. 1981. *The Child's Generation: Child Care Policy in Britain.* Oxford: Blackwell; Brill, Kenneth. 1991. *The Curtis Experiment.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham; Holman, Bob. 1996. *The Corporate Parent: Manchester Children's Department 1948–71.* London: National Institute for Social Work; Holman, Bob.1998. *Child Care Revisited: The Children's Departments, 1948–1971.* London: Institute of Childcare and Social Education; Parker, Roy A. 2015. *Change and Continuity in Children's Services.* Bristol: Policy Press.

[18] Notable exceptions being Baár, Monika and van Trigt, Paul, eds. 2020. *Marginalised Groups, Inequalities and the Post-war Welfare State: Whose Welfare?* London: Routledge; Loakimidis, Vasilios & Wylie, Aaron, eds. 2023. *Social Work's Histories of Complicity and Resistance: A Tale of Two Professions.* Bristol: Policy Press.

[19] Struthers, James. 1994. *The Limits of Affluence: Welfare in Ontario, 1920–1970.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 4.

subjects, including within social work.[20] The gendered basis of social work expertise has been recognised, particularly the idealised norms of motherhood espoused through psychoanalysis.[21] Yet the "welfare state was not simply a device to subordinate women" as Sheila Blackburn argues, pointing to the enduring place of class in social policy.[22]

Classed assumptions were applied equally within discretionary decision-making.[23] David Burnham, although a social worker, sees the historical narrative of professionalisation reflecting "the officer class" rather than ordinary social workers, although I have argued elsewhere about the extent of mobility and interplay within the profession between above and below.[24] Like class and gender, social work and social policy

[20] Lewis, Jane. 1994. Gender, The Family and Women's Agency in the Building of "Welfare States": the British Case. *Social History* 19: 37–55; Thane, Pat. Visions of Gender in the Making of the British Welfare State: The Case of Women in the British Labour Party and Social Policy, 1906–1945. In *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, eds. Gisela Bock & Pat Thane, 92–118. London: Routledge; Pedersen, Susan. 1995. *Family, Dependence and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914–1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Hood, Pamela C., Everitt, Angela & Runnicles, Dorothy. 1998. Femininity, Sexuality and Professionalism in the Children's Departments. *British Journal of Social Work* 28: 471–490; Worth, Eve. 2021. *The Welfare State Generation: Women, Agency and Class in Britain since 1945*. London: Bloomsbury.

[21] Welshman, John. 1999. The Social History of Social Work: The Issue of the "Problem Family", 1940–70. *British Journal of Social Work,* 29: 457–476; Starkey, Pat. 2000. The Feckless Mother: Women, Poverty and Social Workers in Wartime and Post-War England. *Women's History Review,* 9: 539–55; Thomson, Mathew. 2013. *Lost Freedom: The Landscape of the Child and the British Post-War Settlement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Shapira, Michael. 2015. *The War Inside: Psychoanalysis, Total War, and the Making of the Social Democratic Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Bar-Haim, Shaul. 2021. *The Maternalists: Psychoanalysis, Motherhood and the British Welfare State*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; Chettiar, Teri. 2023. *The Intimate State: How Emotional Life Became Political in Welfare-state Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[22] Blackburn, Sheila. 1995. How Useful are Feminist Theories of the Welfare State? *Women's History Review,* 4: 383.

[23] Macnicol, John. 1995. From "Problem Family" to "Underclass", 1945–95. In *Welfare Policy in Britain: the Road from 1945*, eds. Helen Fawcett and Rodney Lowe, 69–93. Basingstoke: Macmillan; Taylor, Becky and Rogaly, Ben 2007. "Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type": Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich, 1942–1963. *Twentieth Century British History,* 18: 429–452.

[24] Burnham, David. 2011. Selective Memory: A Note on Social Work Historiography. *British Journal of Social Work,* 41: 14; Lambert, Michael. 2017. *"Problem families" and the post-war welfare state in the North West of England, 1943–1974.* Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 199–211.

were racialised. This delineated need and eligibility for certain types of welfare, whereby social and cultural differences were rendered into individual pathologies requiring separate consideration through professional and technocratic expertise.[25] Elsewhere this shaped social service logic, whereby white babies were desirable to adoptive families unlike black children in care who were unwanted, posing a "problem" to the authorities.[26] Inequality persisted and remained entrenched, both despite and because of the welfare state.[27]

Accordingly, a teleological view of the rise of the "classic" social democratic welfare state in Britain from 1945 to 1974/1976 continues to exert disproportionate influence on understanding historical social policy. This view is interwoven with narratives of social work professionalisation underpinned by ideological sympathy, which have intensified following the fall of the "classic" welfare state. Within this, services for children have particular significance as they were subsumed within generic social services as a result of reforms in 1970, leading to lament over the loss of specialist expertise. A rich vein of critical historiography influenced by feminism and socialist thinking has exposed the gendered, classed and racialised nature of the welfare state and social work. However this has not fundamentally rewritten the existing narrative, given its simplistic saliency in shaping disciplinary identities.

[25] Lewis, Gail. 2000. "*Race", Gender, Social Welfare: Encounters in a Post-Colonial Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Cox, Pamela. 2002. Race, Delinquency and Difference in Twentieth Century Britain. In *Becoming Delinquent: British and European youth, 1650–1950*, eds. Heather Shore and Pamela Cox, 159–177. Aldershot: Ashgate; Noble, Virginia A. 2009 *Inside the Welfare State: Foundations of Policy and practice in Post-War Britain*. London: Routledge; Bailkin, Jordanna. 2012. *Afterlife of Empire*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Fazakerley, Jed. 2016. Race as a Separate Sphere in British Government: from the Colonial Office to Municipal Anti-Racism. Callaloo 39: 185–202.

[26] Bland, Lucy. 2019. *Britain's "Brown Babies": The Stories of Children Born to Black GIs and White Women in the Second World War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press; Jur, Lena. 2022. Where Do They Belong?—Adoption of Mixed-race Children in late 1950s and early 1960s Britain. *Genealogy* 6: 1–16.

[27] Thane, Pat. 2018. *Divided Kingdom: A History of Britain 1900 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Theorising Welfare and the State: Titmuss, Pinker and Wootton

The foregoing historiographical currents of the collectivist, redistributive "classic" welfare state, the capacity of social work expertise and its critique from a feminist and socialist perspective can be found in the thought of three influential mid-twentieth-century social scientists: Richard Titmuss (1907–1973), Robert Pinker (1931–2021) and Barabra Wootton (1897–1988). Here, each of their contemporary contributions to understanding welfare is contextualised in turn: first, through an examination of the "Titmuss Paradigm" of social policy and his notion of diswelfare; second, Pinker's challenge to the "Titmuss Paradigm" which foregrounded subjectivity and sociology within social work practice; third, and finally, Wootton's feminist and socialist critique against the administrative assumptions of technocratic expertise within the "classic" welfare state, and their consequences for its client groups.

Richard Titmuss shaped the academic discipline of social administration around the practices of the British "classic" welfare state, occupying the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) Chair in the subject from 1950 until his death in 1973.[28] Across a voluminous body of work, he lacked a "clear and articulated political programme" or established theoretical position, his thought fluctuating with the fortunes of the post-war settlement.[29] This did not prevent him from defining the parameters of "traditional" social administration and becoming its "doyen".[30] Although critical of the term welfare state to describe a

[28] Reisman, David A. 1977. *Richard Titmuss: Welfare and Society*. London: Heinemann; Oakley, Ann. 1997. *Man and wife: Richard and Kay Titmuss: My Parents' Early Years*. London: Flamingo; Oakley, Ann. 2014. *Father and Daughter: Patriarchy, Gender and Social Science*. Bristol: Policy Press; Stewart, John. 2020. *Richard Titmuss: Commitment to Welfare*. Bristol: Policy Press.

[29] Kincaid, Jim. 1984. Richard Titmuss, 1907–73. In *Founders of the Welfare State*, ed. Paul Barker, 120. Aldershot: Gower.

[30] Quoted in Stewart, *Richard Titmuss*, 353. Wilding, Paul. 1983. The Evolution of Social Administration. In *Approaches to Welfare*, eds. Philip Bean & Stewart MacPherson, 1–15. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Mishra, Ramesh. 1986. Social Policy and the Discipline of Social Administration. *Social Policy and Administration*, 20: 28–38; Mishra, Ramesh. 1989. The Academic Tradition in Social Policy. In *The goals of Social Policy*, eds. Martin Bulmer, Jane Lewis & David Piachaud, 64–83. London: Unwin Hyman; Offer, John. 1999. Idealist Thought, Social Policy and the Rediscovery of Informal Care. *British Journal of Sociology,* 50: 467–488; Page, Robert M. 2010. The changing face of social

range of policies and practices, he has long been idolised as its "high priest".[31] Whilst "aware of the shortcomings of the postwar arrangements" associated with his eponymous paradigm, he remained optimistic of their potential, especially when confronted with the alternatives.[32] "There seems to be an important gap between what Titmuss thought and what he wrote" according to John Welshman.[33] This gap is crucial to understand the dissonance between the simplified, ossified framework of his work propounded by his disciples in his name, and Titmuss's own "unsystematic" and "inconsistent" thinking which ebbed and flowed with the currents of contemporary political, partisan debate.[34] The resulting "Titmuss Paradigm" therefore centred on the redistributive capacity of the state as a collectivist entity augmented through non-judgemental universal personal social services.[35] Expertise, rational planning and central decision-making were fundamental. This meant downplaying the agential capacity of constituent client groups and their articulations of need outside the administrative apparatus.[36] In addition, his paradigm is intellectually entangled with notions of "social citizenship" espoused by T. H. Marshall (1893–1981), occupant of the LSE Chair in Sociology from 1949 to 1956, who contended that rights to citizenship and participation were realised through essential welfare entitlements.[37] Ultimately,

administration. *Social Policy and Administration*, 44: 326–342; Pinker, Robert. 2017. Richard Titmuss and the Making of British Social Policy Studies After the Second World War: A Reappraisal. In *Social policy and Welfare Pluralism: Selected Writings of Robert Pinker*, eds. John Offer & Robert Pinker, 93–112. Bristol: Policy Press.

[31] Quoted in Halsey, A. H. 2004. Titmuss, Richard Morris (1907–1973). In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. H. C. G. Matthew & Brian H. Harrison. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available from https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31763. Accessed 4 October 2023.

[32] Thane, Pat. 1987. The Pursuit of Equality. *New Society,* 80: 27.

[33] Welshman, John. 2004. The unknown Titmuss. *Journal of Social Policy,* 33: 239.

[34] Welshman, Unknown Titmuss, 243. For a discussion see Stewart, *Richard Titmuss*, 541–557.

[35] Deacon, Alan. 2002. The Dilemmas of Welfare: Titmuss, Murray and Mead. In *The Boundaries of the State in Modern Britain*, eds. S. J. D. Green & Richard C. Whiting, 191–212. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[36] Welshman, The Unknown Titmuss. 225–247.

[37] Halsey, A. H. 1984. T. H. Marshall: Past and Present 1893–1981. *Sociology* 18: 1–18; Revi, Ben. 2014. T. H. Marshall and His Critics: Reappraising "Social Citizenship"

what welfare was and who it was for were considerations of the state and its rational technocrats, buttressed by academic knowledge.

Such a neat alignment between the theoretical horizons of LSE grandees—which also included Beveridge as its former Director (1919–1937)—and the realisation of mid-twentieth-century welfare is illusory.[38] There was no "systematic intellectual thought" underpinning the largely administrative and technocratic exigencies of welfare state logics. Instead, policies were propelled by narrow political and bureaucratic concerns with only a functional contribution from social science expertise.[39] In contemporary terms Titmuss's contribution was certainly functional; largely documenting and describing the practices of different social, health and welfare services, and seeking to influence their parameters by participating in, or being consulted on, government reforms. Simultaneously, and contradictorily, Titmuss "was the British welfare state's staunchest defender" whilst "also one of its most uncompromising critics".[40] To see his contribution as solely functional is to downplay his soft and informal influence, and that of his academic network including the so-called Titmice of Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend amongst others passing through the LSE, in wider social policy debate and decision-making.[41]

Titmuss was acutely aware of the reactive and limited capacity of the welfare state to manage "socially caused diswelfares". These diswelfares were a product of the constrained purview of social services within

in the Twenty-First Century. *Citizenship Studies* 18: 452–464; Moses, Julia. 2019. Social Citizenship and Social Rights in an Age of Extremes: T. H. Marshall's Social Philosophy in the Longue Durée. *Modern Intellectual History,* 16: 155–184.

[38] See Dahrendorf, Ralf. 1995. *LSE: A History of the London School of Economics and Political Science 1895–1995.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 380–386.

[39] Harris, José. 2002. Political Thought and the State. In *Boundaries of the State*, eds. Green & Whiting, 25; Harris, José. 1992. Political Thought and the Welfare State 1870–1940: An Intellectual Framework for British Social Policy. *Past and Present* 135: 116–141; Harris, José. 2007. Principles, Poor Laws and Welfare States. In *Making Social Policy work*, eds. John Hills, Julian Le Grand & David Piachaud, 13–14. Bristol: Policy Press.

[40] Alcock, Pete & Ann Oakley. 2001. Introduction. In *Welfare and Wellbeing: Richard Titmuss's Contribution to Social Policy*, eds. Pete Alcock, Howard Glennerster, Ann Oakley & Adrian Sinfield, 1. Bristol: Policy Press.

[41] Sheard, Sally. 2014. *The Passionate Economist: How Brian Abel-Smith Shaped Global Health and Social Welfare.* Bristol: Policy Press; Stewart, *Richard Titmuss.* Chris Renwick is currently researching and writing a biography of Peter Townsend as part of this series of LSE Pioneers in Social Policy which also includes David Donnison and Walter Holland.

the wider economic system. Economic exigencies produced social consequences—through skill obsolescence, urban decay and other changes with human impacts—which were beyond the functional purview of services concerned with distinct social problems. Diswelfares were the "losses involved in aggregate welfare gains" secured through both social policy measures and economic prosperity. Here, services "represent partial compensations for disservices, for social costs and social insecurities which are the product of a rapidly changing industrial-urban society". However, if "identification of the agents of diswelfare were possible—if we could legally name and blame the culprits—then, in theory at least, redress could be obtained" argued Titmuss. "[M]ultiple causality and the diffusion of disservices" made such naming and blaming "impossible".[42] Diswelfare was not a crude synonym for the creation of social problems by the economic system. Diswelfare was identifying and ascribing how and where the social consequences of economic activities lay, and the resulting constraints placed upon the unitarist state to realise the collectivist ideal.

The frames of reference in understanding and analysing the welfare state bequeathed by Titmuss through "traditional" social administration shaped them for the following generation, of which Robert Pinker was a part.[43] Criticisms emerged only tentatively. Following a series of sociology posts across London universities and colleges in the 1960s and 1970s, Pinker occupied the Chair in Social Work at LSE from 1978 to 1993, and then Titmuss's former Chair from 1993 to 1996. The disciplinary tension between social administration, sociology and social work had been historically fraught, particularly at the LSE, where professional and personal conflicts erupted between Titmuss and Eileen Younghusband (1902–1981) during the 1960s over the funding, responsibility and content for new generic social work courses.[44] Whilst being a clear clash of personalities, the undercurrents of the dispute hinged on gender, knowledge and power.[45] Despite historic overlaps, Titmuss sought to

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[42] Titmuss, *Commitment to welfare*, 133.

[43] Offer, John. 2023. On Welfare Pluralism, Social Policy and the Contribution of Sociology: Revisiting Robert Pinker. *Frontiers in Sociology* 8: 1–11.

[44] Jones, Kathleen. 1984. *Eileen Younghusband: A Biography*. London: Bedford Square.

[45] Donnison, David V. 1975. Taking Decisions in a University. In *Social Policy and Administration Revisited: Studies in the Development of Social Services at the Local Level*, eds. David V. Donnison, Valerie Chapman, Michael Meacher, Angela Sears & Kenneth Urwin, 253–285. London: Allen and Unwin; Pinker, Robert. 1989. Social Work and

preserve social administration as a distinct masculine intellectual discipline with scientific attributes against social work which emphasised interpersonal, relational and seemingly feminine qualities.[46] Pinker was stepping out from the shadows of these lingering institutional and disciplinary legacies during the fall of the "classic" welfare state. "[O]utside the frame of orthodox social policy studies of the day" according to John Offer, Pinker remained wedded to its liberal institutional parameters, unlike radical Marxist critics.[47] Rejecting the constraints of orthodoxy, Pinker foregrounded theoretical and sociological concerns in social work and social policy. These concerns included stigma, and how client groups experienced this by being bracketed together through administrative convenience rather than subjective welfare needs.[48] This aligned with grassroots campaigns empowered by these identities including claimants' unions, disability user groups and entitlement movements.[49] Each aimed to shrink the distance in decision-making within the welfare state, building policies in a participatory manner.[50] Whilst these were limited inside the constraints of the "classic" welfare state, they gained intellectual ground

Social Policy in the Twentieth Century: Retrospect and Prospect. In *The Goals of Social Policy*, eds. Bulmer, Lewis and Piachaud, 84–107; Unwin Hyman; Holman, Bob. 2001. *Champions for Children: The Lives of Modern Child Care Pioneers*. Bristol: Policy Press, 108–110.

[46] Jones, *Eileen Younghusband*, 58–71; Lewis, Jane. 1995. *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain: the Charity Organisation Society/Family Welfare Association since 1869*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 115–118; Oakley, *Father and daughter*, 123–194; Oakley, Ann. 2015. The History of Gendered Social Science: A Personal Narrative and Some Reflections on Method. *Women's History Review* 24: 154–173; see also Oakley, Ann. 2018. *Women, Peace and Welfare: A Suppressed History of Social Reform, 1880–1920*. Bristol: Policy Press.

[47] Offer, *On welfare pluralism*, 2.

[48] Pinker, *Social theory*; Offer, John. 2012. Robert Pinker, The Idea of Welfare and The Study of Social Policy: on Unitarism and Pluralism. *Journal of Social Policy,* 41: 620.

[49] Jordan, Bill. 1973. *Paupers: The Making of the New Claiming Class*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Denney, David. 1998. *Social Policy and Social Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Shah, Sonali & Priestly, Mark. 2011. *Disability and Social Change: Private Lives and Public Policies*. Bristol: Policy Press.

[50] Powell, Frederick. 2007. *The Politics of Civil Society: Neoliberalism or Social Left?* Bristol: Policy Press; Hills, John. 2014. *Good times, Bad Times: The Welfare Myth of Them and us*. Bristol: Policy Press.

through convergence with neoliberal ideals valuing individualism.[51] Yet like Titmuss and unlike market proponents, Pinker was also a staunch defender of the right to welfare against Thatcherite neoliberal attack, despite recognising their limits and offering his own criticisms.[52]

Whilst Titmuss's collectivist, universal and unitarist frames of reference bear a close relation to subsequent historiography on the rise and fall of the "classic" welfare state, Pinker's views of social policy and social work were more nuanced than the teleological historiography provided by the scholarship of professionalisation. He was a rare contemporary critic of "golden age" reverence.[53] This nuance, in turn, shaped his view of how needs were defined, identified and met. He distinguished between the welfare state as the institutional apparatus of the "Titmuss Paradigm", and a "state of welfare" as the personal, subjective feeling of people—not clients—about their own well-being. Unlike his contemporaries, Pinker's distinction was not about tinkering with existing policies and services. Those claiming to hear the client voice echoed administrative concerns, which reflected social work professionalisation, power and expertise.[54] Pinker's distinction was conceptualised in broader sociological terms.[55] He was critical of the monolithic unitarist approach of the collectivist "Titmuss Paradigm" and its associated "statist and dirigiste outlook".[56] Crucially, he exposed the limitations of a top-down approach to welfare

[51] LeGrand, Julian. 1982. *The Strategy of Equality: Redistribution and the Social Services*. London: Allen and Unwin; LeGrand, Julian.1991. *Equity and Choice: An Essay in Economics and Applied Philosophy*. London: Harper Collins.

[52] Pinker, Robert. 1990. *Social Work in an Enterprise Society*. London: Routledge; Pinker, Robert. 1992. Making Sense of the Mixed Economy of Welfare. *Social Policy and Administration,* 26: 273–284.

[53] Pinker, Robert. 2017. Golden Ages and Welfare Alchemists. In *Social Policy and Welfare*, eds. Offer & Pinker, 197–208.

[54] Mayer, John E. & Noel Timms. 1970. *The Client Speaks: Working Class Impressions of Casework*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Sainsbury, Eric. 1975. *Social Work with Families: Perceptions of Social Casework Among Clients of Family Service Units*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Thoburn, June. 1980. *Captive Clients: Social Work with Families of Children Home on Trial*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Starkey, Pat. 2007. Retelling the Stories of Clients of Voluntary Social Work Agencies in Britain after 1945. In *Medicine, Charity and Mutual Aid: The Consumption of Health and Welfare in Britain, c. 1550–1950*, eds. Ann Borsay & Peter Shapely, 245–261. Aldershot: Ashgate.

[55] Pinker, Robert. 2017. The Welfare State: A Comparative Perspective. In *Social Policy and Welfare*, eds. Offer and Pinker, 69–92.

[56] Pinker, Golden ages: 201.

derived through specialised technocratic expertise alone, even bearing the more human face of social work.

In contrast to Titmuss or Pinker, Barbara Wootton occupied a more liminal space in contemporary intellectual and practical welfare debates.[57] She arguably exerted more direct influence within the Labour Party itself than either Titmuss or Pinker. She worked for several years in their Research Department in the interwar period before becoming Professor in Social Studies first at the University of London (1948–1952), then Nuffield Research Fellow at Bedford College (1952–1957) and eventually a life peer. Despite this liminality, her rapier-like intellectual critiques extended to sparring with John Maynard Kenyes over economics, with William Beveridge over social policy, and Friedrich Hayek on internationalism.[58] However, in practical terms for both the Labour Party and post-war social policy, her influence was limited within the academic and decision-making establishment by her radical feminist and democratic socialist beliefs.[59] Whilst neoliberalism and its social policy reforms provided the fall of the "classic" welfare state and the right-wing attack on collectivism, hers was part of the left-wing attack which focused on the limitations of what Pinker termed the "administrative ethos". This was an ethos lionised and defended by Titmuss in face of the alternatives, despite recognition of their inherent limitations in the idealised welfare state.[60] It was these underlying assumptions of expertise, authority and legitimacy within welfare state structures which drew Wootton's acerbic attention.

[57] Wootton, Barbara. 1967. *In a World I Never Made: Autobiographical Reflections*. London: George Allen & Unwin; Oakley, Ann. 2011. *A Critical Woman: Barbara Wootton, Social Science and Public Policy in the Twentieth Century*. London: Bloomsbury Academic; Thane, Pat. 2014. Barbara Wootton (1897–1988): Pioneering Social Scientist, Feminist and Policymaker. *Women's History Review,* 23: 793–798; Bean, Philip. 2020. *Barbara Wootton and the Legacy of a Pioneering Public Criminologist*. London: Routledge.

[58] Jacobs, Ellen. 2007. "An Organising Female with a Briefcase": Barbara Wootton, Political Economy and Social Justice, 1920–1950. *Women's History Review,* 16: 431–446; Rosenboim, Or. 2014. Barbara Wootton, Friedrich Hayek and the Debate on Democratic Federalism in the 1940s. *International History Review,* 36: 894–918; Alves, Carolina and Guizzo, Danielle. 2023. When Economic Theory Meets Policy: Barbara Wootton and the Creation of the British Welfare State. *European Journal for the History of Economic Thought,* 30: 22–39.

[59] Gould, Tony. 1988. The girl who never made it: Barbara Wootton. *New Statesman Society,* 1: 9.

[60] Pinker, Mixed economy, 281.

Despite her political credentials, Wootton lacked sentimental attachment to the welfare state, being critical of its mythologisation which she saw weakening solidaristic commitments to countering poverty.[61] Throughout her work she remained critical of the authority—even superiority—which expertise possessed within the welfare state. Her critique of this expertise in the 1959 Younghusband Report on the future of local authority social work, which received voluminous written and oral evidence from professional, official and academic sources, but none from any client group or social service user, was scathing.[62] Not that she had much time for the label of client. She lambasted self-serving social work careerism which rested on categorising and cataloguing the miseries of the poor. Wootton contended that, for the welfare state

> Everything is viewed from the administrative angle, through administrative spectacles—benevolently, no doubt, but always from outside, at second-hand. Only those who supply the various services, never those for whose benefit they are supplied, are fit to judge their quality. Be quiet dear, daddy knows best.[63]

This was the inherent administrative paternalism which, as part of its expert collectivist rationale, muted—even silenced—the individual voices of those client groups in receipt of social services. For Wootton not only was this unacceptable, but it raised larger questions about the unitarist collectivist logic of the "Titmuss Paradigm".

The "Titmuss Paradigm" is inseparable from how historiography has imagined the "classic" welfare state and its grand narrative. His subsequent conceptualisation of diswelfare was framed around the limits of the state to provide welfare in a context of seemingly inevitable socioeconomic change, rather than considering how the state also created such diswelfares by its own logics. Pinker's critique anticipated the neoliberal challenge from the right which criticised its unitarist, monolithic and

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[61] Wootton, Barbara. 1983. Reflections on the Welfare State. In *Approaches to Welfare*, eds. Bean and MacPherson, 282–293; Wootton, Barbara. 1959. *Social Science and Social Pathology*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 16.

[62] Younghusband, Eileen. 1959. *Report of the Working Party on Social Workers in the Local Authority Health and Welfare Services*. London: HMSO.

[63] Wootton, Daddy knows best, 249.

collectivist assumptions. Welfare was not an aggregate population determinant but something that was lived, felt and experienced. Yet it was Wootton's socialist-feminist challenge of the "Titmuss Paradigm" from the left, which is of greatest significance in exposing and exploring the tension between lived experience and expertise within the mid-twentieth-century welfare state.

Children Abuse, Lived Experience and Historical Inquiries

Although articulated contemporaneously, Wotton's critique was given little credence until the late 1980s when first a trickle and then a tidal wave of grievances were aired over abuse inflicted upon children through omission and commission by the welfare state as corporate parent. This included sexual, physical and emotional abuse in children's residential institutions or homes, unaccompanied migration to the dominions without consent where similar forms of abuse occurred and their forcible removal from their mother and adoption with another family in their purported best interest simply because their mother was unmarried. Such children were only able to speak about these lived experiences and be heard as adults, pointing to the twofold iniquities of paternalism for those who were clients and children, unworthy of social and political agency. Here, I repurpose and subvert Titmuss's notion of diswelfare, applying it to the policies and practices of the "classic" welfare state towards children. This is combined with Wootton's recognised challenge of lived experience against professional expertise. Combining these critiques, this section explores how the twofold iniquity of being a client and a child means that rather than being viewed as a "golden age", the "classic" welfare state was, in fact, a child diswelfare state. The origins of inquiries into historical child abuse and harm, the volume of disclosures they contain and the concluding criticisms they make, raise a significant challenge to teleological historiography of the welfare state, social work and their professional technocratic expertise.

Inquiries into historical child abuse and harm have proliferated across the Western world over the past twenty-five years; those with a shared

"golden age" of welfare. Influences behind their initiation are plural.[64] Their first concern was the institutional environments of children in state care, with horizons being subsequently widened to other contexts of corporate parental responsibility. Activist mobilisation by campaigning groups of those with lived experience have been pivotal, lending shared legitimacy that their collective and subjective "state of welfare" has not been met by the welfare state.[65] For example, the Child Migrant's Trust has been important in building a common identity of victimisation by the state amongst former child migrants, articulating their shared needs based on common collective experiences, and using these to push for recognition through a public inquiry.[66] Such mobilisations often seek a combination of recognition, redress and reparations by adults for the harm they experienced as children in the care of the state discharging their duty as corporate parent. To paraphrase C. Wright Mills, they have returned otherwise individual private troubles to their original realm of public—that is, social—policy.[67] These mobilisations do not exist in isolation. Instead, they interconnect with expert reconceptualisations of child abuse and harm within social work knowledge. These, in turn, have emerged under concurrent criticism of professional practice in protecting

[64] Daly, Kathleen. 2014. *Redressing Institutional Abuse of Children*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Sköld, Johanna and Swain, Shurlee, eds. 2015. *Apologies and the Legacy of Abuse of Children in "Care": International Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Buckley, Sarah-Anne and McGregor, Caroline. 2019. Interrogating Institutional and Child Welfare: The Irish Case, 1939–1991. *European Journal of Social Work*, 22: 1062–1072.

[65] Wright, Katie & Henry, Alasdair. 2019. Historical Institutional Child Abuse: Activist Mobilisation and Public Inquiries. *Sociology Compass*, 13: e. 12754.

[66] Bean, Philip and Melville, Joy. 1989. Lost Children of Empire. London: Unwin Hyman; Humphreys, Margaret. 1994. *Empty Cradles*. London: Doubleday; Health Select Committee. 1998. *The Welfare of Former British Child Migrants*. London: House of Commons; Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. 2018. *Child Migration Programmes: Investigation Report*. London: HMSO; Constantine, Stephen, Harper, Marjory and Lynch, Gordon. 2020. *Child Abuse and Scottish children Sent Overseas Through Child Migration Schemes: Report*. Edinburgh: Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry; Baker, James. 2023. *Reconciling British child deportation to Australia, 1913–1970: apologies, memorials, and family reunions*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Hull.

[67] Mills, C. Wright. 2000. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 5.

child welfare through successive scandals and inquiries.[68] Combined with domestic and international political pressure for government action, catalysed by the media, activist campaigning and reconceptualisations of child abuse affirming their lived experiences, have provided the necessary legitimacy for state inquiries revisiting their historical activities.

Over the past decade in Britain, there have been three primary inquiries into child abuse and harm. These are the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA, 2014–22), the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI, 2015–) and the Joint Committee on Human Rights Inquiry into the Forced Adoption of Children of Unmarried Mothers (JCHR, 2021–22). Although each has a wider chronology, the "classic" welfare state provides their core focus. Each inquiry has a slightly different form, function and purview given their discrete origins, and these differences exert considerable influence on their outcome, findings and recommendations.[69] Whilst the JCHR inquiry provided a singular focus on forced adoption as part of the Parliamentary Committee's regular activities, both IICSA and SCAI were independently constituted and composite in their approach. Both IICSA and SCAI comprise several discrete investigations into particular institutions or policies which have harmed children, such as failures in oversight of residential child care institutions, the migration of children in care from Britain to overseas Dominions and abuse within foster families. Unlike the JCHR inquiry, as public inquiries, they were supported by commissioned academic historical research with powers to sequester access to historical records and compel witness participation from the statutory and voluntary organisations involved.[70]

[68] Butler, Ian and Drakeford, Mark. 2003. *Social Policy, Social Welfare and Scandal: How British Public Policy is Made*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Ferguson, Harry. 2007. Abused and Looked after Children as "Moral Dirt": Child Abuse and Institutional Care in Historical Perspective. *Journal of Social Policy,* 36: 123–139; Lonne, Bob and Parton, Nigel. 2014. Portrayals of Child Abuse Scandals in the Media in Australia and England: Impacts on Practice, Policy, and Systems. *Child Abuse and Neglect,* 38: 822–836; Wright, Katie. 2018. Challenging Institutional Denial: Psychological Discourse, Therapeutic Culture and Public Inquiries. *Journal of Australian Studies,* 42: 177–190.

[69] Wright, Katie. 2017. Remaking Collective Knowledge: An Analysis of the Complex and Multiple Effects of Inquiries into Historical Institutional Abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 74: 10–22.

[70] Lynch, Gordon, Markkola, Pirjo, O'Sullivan, Eoin, Sköld, Johanna & Swain, Shurlee. 2020. The Uses of Historical Research in Child Abuse Inquiries. *History & Policy*. Available from: https://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/the-uses-of-historical-research-in-child-abuse-inquiries. Accessed 4 October 2023; Lynch, Gordon. 2020. *UK*

Not all the evidence submitted and findings are accessible or published outside of these official inquiries.[71] This serves to protect both individual anonymity and organisational integrity in equal measure. Exclusions remain as inquiry purviews are delineated based on legalistic and administrative conceptions of child welfare defined through corporate parenthood. For example, abuse within adoptive families has been discounted from the purview of SCAI despite significant pressure and public appeals from the Scottish Adult Adoptee Movement (SAAM).[72] Crucially, each of the inquiries has made a point of principle in listening to survivor testimony. Their processes have foregrounded collecting and using disclosures of lived experience to reconstruct the public historical record.

The terms of reference, resources and parameters of inquiries serve to reinforce top-down categorisation of client groups through their historic relationship to the state. This shapes who speaks and who is now heard.[73] Despite categorisation and resultant shared experiences within the child diswelfare state, there is no single voice of lived experience. They are complex, contradictory, messy and competing. Neat distinctions are blurred between authority and agency, perpetrator and victim.[74] These become magnified given that the testimonies are provided by adults reflecting upon their often difficult and traumatic childhoods, where questions of narrative and memory elide in self-representations of the past.[75]

Child Migration to Australia, 1945–1970: A Study in Policy Failure. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[71] Lambert, Michael. 2019. *Preliminary Report Concerning Historical Child Migration Policies, procedures and practices of the Fairbridge Society in relation to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry*. London: The Prince's Trust.

[72] Scottish Adult Adoptee Movement. 2022. *Adoptee recommendations to the Scottish Government, Historic forced adoption practices, the violation of family life: rights of adopted people*. Available from: https://adultadoptee.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/4Scottish-AAM-Recomendations6926.pdf. Accessed 4 October 2023.

[73] Swain, Shurlee, Wright, Katie and Sköld, Johanna. 2018. Conceptualising and Categorising Child Abuse Inquiries: From Damage Control to Foregrounding Survivor Testimony. *Journal of Historical Sociology,* 31: 282–296.

[74] Swain, Shurlee. 2018. Both Victim and "Perpetrator": Finding a Voice Before Inquiries into Historical Abuse in out-of-home Care. *International Journal of Transitional Justice,* 12: 464–478.

[75] Cappelletto, Francesca. 2003. Long-term memory of extreme events: from autobiography to history. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 9: 241–260; Artmenko, Natalia A. 2020. Oral History, Remembering Practices and the Problem of "Access" to the Traumatic Experience. *Corpus Mundi* 1: 14–33.

Although there is an emphasis on lived experience affording an opportunity to speak truth to power, state legitimacy and validation remain central within inquiries, permitting some voices to be heard and silencing others.[76]

Not everyone wants to or can speak. Given their young age at the time of harm or abuse, or as aged adults during the inquiry, their own existing knowledge through seeking answers to complex questions, or lack of identification with stigmatising categorisation impacts on their ability to share their experiences.[77] Despite these considerations, in the final analysis, the very character of inquiries means that the state possess the final arbitration over what is heard.[78] These processes of selection hinge upon what Chris Millard terms the "politics of authenticity" when deploying lived experience, and how palatable such narratives are to inquiries and the public record in speaking to existing frames of reference.[79] Moreover, the legalistic nature of inquiries creates a tension between oral testimonies of lived experience and existing documentary evidence in how conclusions and recommendations are reached. All of these reinforce inquiries as instruments from above despite their reliance on experiential experience from below.

In relation to historical understanding, the roles and legitimacy of child and family abuse inquiries use lived experience to highlight failings in the laws, structures and systems of the state in ensuring the welfare of children. They offer a "standpoint critique" of social policy in action.[80] Here the welfare of the child is secondary to the coercive authority of the

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[76] Enright, Máiréad & Ring, Sinéad. 2020. State Legal Responses to Historical Institutional Abuse: Shame, Sovereignty, and Epistemic Justice. *Éire-Ireland,* 55: 68–99.

[77] For these considerations in narrative of the self for those with care experience see: Cox, Pamela. 1998. Home Girls: Writing Delinquency and Neglect in Early Twentieth Century Britain. In *Childhood Remembered: Proceedings from the 4th Annual IBBY/ MA Children's Literature Conference*, ed. Kimberley Reynolds, 64–76. London: National Centre for Research in Children's Literature.

[78] Lundy, Patricia. "I Just Want Justice": The Impact of Historical Institutional Child-Abuse Inquiries from the Survivor's Perspective. *Éire-Ireland,* 55: 252–278.

[79] Millard, Chris. Using Personal Experience in the Academic Medical Humanities: A Genealogy. *Social Theory and Health* 18: 194. See also chapter 'Justifying Experience, Changing Expertise: From Protest to Authenticity in Anglophone "Mad Voices" in the Mid-Twentieth Century' in this collection.

[80] McIntosh, Ian & Wright, Sharon. 2019. Exploring What the Notion of "Lived Experience" Offers for Social Policy Analysis. *Journal of Social Policy,* 48: 449–467.

state and shows abuse and harm not as an isolated, individual incident but as a systemic feature. Within this context it is virtually impossible to reveal the experiences of those impacted. This is due the top-down, technocratic and unitarist functioning of the "classic" welfare state, which disregarded the voices of those served, especially children, and the twofold iniquities of paternalism.

Grasping such experiences has been an emergent concern of recent historical scholarship on child welfare, which centres children as subjective actors and agents shaping outcomes rather than passive objects of the state.[81] This has also explored the complex relationship between the administrative exigencies of the state in protecting children, knowledge of and about childhood and contestations between professional adult expertise and those of children's experiences.[82] In relation to the "classic" welfare state, technocratic logics infantilised children as subjects about whose needs were known through expertise, and safeguarded within professional interests. This is not to deny the agency of children as historical actors, but to grasp how the state muted their capacity to articulate their "state of welfare" within the welfare state. These created the conditions for the normalisation of child diswelfare when the state acted as corporate parent. They existed on a spectrum from disinterest and a lack of due care through omission, to acts of sexual and physical abuse through commission. All are visible in the inquiry testimonies yet remained overlooked and ignored at the height of the "classic" welfare state.

The "Classic" Child Diswelfare State?

The foregoing discussion captures a contradictory tension in the history of the British welfare state. Firstly, that the period from 1945 to 1974/1976 constituted its "classic" form, informed by social democratic ideology and collectivist, unitarist, redistributive principles that produced a more equal society through the realisation of social policy. This was aligned with the professionalisation of social work which provided a

[81] Pooley, Siân and Taylor, Jonathan. eds. 2021. *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain*. London: University of London Press.

[82] Crane, Jennifer. 2018. *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Basannavar, Nick. 2022. *Sexual Violence Against Children in Britain since 1965: Trailing Abuse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

human face to the bureaucratic dimensions of social policy, with expertise and discretion the means to realise these ends. There remains some disconnection between this teleological view of a "golden age" and the critical historiography outside members of academic social policy and social work. Secondly, that these frames of reference align with contemporary thinking: the "classic" welfare state with the "Titmuss Paradigm"; the place of social work with Pinker's critique of Titmuss, although his emphasis on subjective states of welfare rather than the welfare state also extended to the capacity of social work; and Wootton's socialist-feminist critique from the left of the undemocratic and technocratic assumptions of social administration.

The proliferation of inquiries into historical child abuse have foregrounded lived experience to reconstruct the public record and bring about forms of redress. These experiences are plural rather than singular, and the state remains a powerful arbiter in sanctioning or discrediting revised narratives of the past and ascribing responsibility. Yet despite these limitations they show the fundamental limits of the top-down contours of debate about the welfare state when explored from the bottom-up. Although not their original intention, their centring of testimony and lived experience offers a "standpoint critique" which contrasts and contradicts existing frames of reference of the welfare state. Currently, the top-down narratives prioritise need, provision, redistribution and services. This is evident in narratives of post-war child welfare where archival policy sources and contemporary sociological and psychological studies continue to shape narratives.[83] Conversely, the bottom-up alternatives show the place of control, violence, harm and power. This has been validated through scholarship using feminist methods and approaches for the pre-war period which have reconsidered women's experiences with, and to, welfare.[84] Inquiries into harm and abuse have enabled this approach to be applied in relation to children for the first time due to the onus placed

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[83] Harris, Bernard. 1995. *The Health of the Schoolchild: A History of the School Medical Service in England and Wales*. Buckingham: Open University Press; Hendrick, Harry. 2003. *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debates*. Bristol: Policy Press.

[84] Gordon, Linda. 1989. *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston 1880–1960*. London: Virago; Jackson, Louise A. 2000. *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*. London: Routledge; Smart, Carol. 2000. Reconsidering the Recent History of Child Sexual Abuse, 1910–1960. *Journal of Social Policy,* 29: 55–71.

upon disclosures grounded in lived experience thereby shifting concern from private states of welfare to the public welfare state.

Repurposing Titmuss's notion of diswelfare and drawing on Wootton's critique of expertise, the coercive power of the state is foregrounded in seeing how the welfare state functioned as a corporate parent. Here, the proportions of the "classic" child diswelfare state can only be fully grasped by revisiting, rereading and repositioning archival and documentary historical sources in light of the challenge of lived experiences. As I have argued elsewhere: "everyday decision-making by officials… exposes processes of mundane governance and networks of power and authority which underpin the state".[85] Understanding how expertise within the welfare state was realised, rather than idealised, shifts the focus of attention from larger, political questions of welfare recognisable within the historiography, to intimate questions of the state and the power it exercised in shaping the lives of children and families.[86] It locates responsibility and accountability for what is effectively social harm by the state, child diswelfare, within a fragmented, complex, and diffuse welfare state. This is a welfare state underwritten by a mixed economy of care spanning the moving frontier of statutory and voluntary provision under central social policy auspices.[87]

Part of the answer can be found in asking what, and where the welfare state was located. For all intents and purposes, the "phalanx of officials" who constituted a range of services and functions in everyday experience, were the welfare state to the children and families who encountered them.[88] This is not to forget that behind the phalanx was a looping column of apparatchiks which enabled officials to march through the working-class homes and communities. This included local authority councillors, committee administrators, accountants, clerks,

85 Lambert, *"Problem Families"*, 245.

86 Lambert, Michael. 2019. Between "Families in Trouble" and "Children at Risk": Historicising "Troubled Family" Policy in England Since 1945. *Children and Society,* 33: 82–91.

87 Finlayson, Geoffrey. 1994. *Citizen, State and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830–1990.* Oxford: Clarendon; Stewart, John. 2019. The Mixed Economy of Welfare in Historical Context. In *Understanding the Mixed Economy of Welfare*, ed. Martin Powell, 21–40. Bristol: Policy Press.

88 Taylor, Becky and Rogaly, Ben. 2007. "Mrs Fairly is a Dirty, Lazy Type": Unsatisfactory Households and the Problem of Problem Families in Norwich, 1942–1963. *Twentieth Century British History* 18: 438.

voluntary organisation secretaries, dignitaries and fundraising collectors. Moreover swathes of junior and senior civil servants alike, who both managed continuity in everyday decision-making below and change in the work of high politics, were involved. Asking how the footsoldiers of the phalanx conceptualised and legitimised their function, gathered, filtered and drew on expertise and knowledge to undertake their role, and how they engaged with other officials and organisations, begins to reconstruct the everyday operation of the welfare state from within.[89] It is only by extending this approach and centring lived experience as the frame of reference, whilst at the same time recognising the complex apparatus surrounding them, that provides a view of the welfare state from below.

Glimpses of this everyday operation of the "classic" welfare state taken from historical anthropological and ethnographic studies of children's services provide such a view, although primarily from within rather than below. These studies begin to scratch beneath the veneer of social democratic intent to reveal how widespread lived experiences of harm were normalised and embedded through policy and practice. Like other contemporary expert accounts of child welfare seen through a disciplinary lens, their use is not without its problems. However, notwithstanding Burnham's oral history of social work, there are few studies which explore such social work "as work" in understanding how services for children in the welfare state operate. Selina Todd provides an exception, offering a class-based analysis which positions social workers as progressive, empathetic and caring figures opposed to the forms of social harm such as poverty, squalor and poor health which beset the families they supported. Todd is at pains to distinguish them from their "lady bountiful" middle-class forebearers, and the elites of officialdom inflected with eugenic assumptions, arguing that most "ordinary welfare workers… disagreed with such judgmental attitudes".[90] Such a view accords with Burnham's own distinction between the officer class and the footsoldiers of the phalanx.

The view of Todd and Burnham provides necessary balance to totalising analysis, but their position is hard to sustain. Social control

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[89] Noble, *Inside The Welfare State*.

[90] Todd, Selina. 2014. Family Welfare and Social Work in Post-War England, 1948–1970. *English Historical Review,* 129: 375.

rather than class solidarity abounded.[91] John Offer, summarising Pinker's contemporary contribution to social work knowledge, noted that whilst services were rarely oriented solely and purposively around extending stigma, that the "need to ration provision or the normative orientations of staff may be experienced as forms of coercion by the users of a service".[92] Others offer a less generous interpretation of the motivations which lay behind the actions of social work which reinforced stigma and control through the authority of the state. Carole Satyamurti's ethnography of several children's departments in the late 1960s shows how social workers became socialised into harmful norms which contradicted professional idealism, reflecting the purpose of social work as work within a larger system "rather than being a function of the personal qualities of the social workers".[93] Given her Marxist persuasion and focus on labour practices, she noted the "interesting similarity" in their relative positions of powerlessness echoed in relations between social workers and departmental managers operating under pressure within constraints.[94] This latter point is significant to contextualise narratives of lived experience which, within inquiries, reflect upon the personal dimensions of harmful encounters. These affirm a narrow, legalistic focus on individual blame rather than situating it within the state and its organisational structures.[95] This contextualisation returns private troubles back into the domain of public policy.

This distinction can then be traced through the fabric of the individual (personal, micro), organisational (local, meso) and institutional (national, macro) within the welfare state apparatus. This in turn can reveal how the activities of social workers were embedded in authority which stemmed from expertise to manage and control, rather than care for, the purported best interests of the child. Control encompassed policy

[91] Jones, Chris. 1979. *State Social Work and the Working Class*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

[92] Offer, Robert Pinker, 620.

[93] Satyamurti, Carole. 1981. *Occupational Survival: The Case of the Local Authority Social Worker*. Oxford: Blackwell, 193.

[94] Satyamurti, *Occupational Survival*, 181.

[95] Young, Iris Marion. 2011. *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

and professional purposes.[96] Joel Handler's study of children's departments during the 1960s traced this coercive control beyond the confines of personal encounters between workers and clients—primarily mothers, although the outcome of their decisions impacted children—to its broader context, situating it as a "structural relationship extend[ing] throughout all levels of government and all social classes".[97] Handler recognised that decisions were not a product of private judgement alone, but based on the purpose of the social work and the professional, policy and practice determinants of the best interests of the child. These determinants were emphatically rooted in professional expertise incapable of recognising and valuing the experiences of administratively subjectified clients. Instead, they produced professional projections which reified and nullified the perspective of others, especially for the gap between adult and child.[98]

What Pinker, Satyamurti and Handler are describing is different forms of Michael Lipsky's "street-level bureaucracy". Lipsky argues that

> At best, street-level bureaucrats invent benign modes of mass processing that more or less permit them to deal with the public fairly, appropriately, and successfully. At worst, they give in to favouritism, stereotyping, and routinizing—all of which serve private or agency purposes.[99]

In thinking about what and where the welfare state can be located, Lipsky's analysis and the above examples show the layers of complexity involved. In order to relocate private troubles back into public policy, and the harm of the child diswelfare state, the activities of social workers and officials in the welfare state need to be recast as work. Such work returns the coercive power of the state, rather than the distribution of welfare, to the fore, and its concomitant child diswelfare omissions and commissions. Omissions amount to bureaucratic indifference shaped by the socialisation

[96] Day, Peter R. 1979. Care and Control: A Social Work Dilemma. *Social Policy and Administration*, 13: 206–209.

[97] Hander, Joel F. 1973. *The Coercive Social Worker: British Lessons for American Social Services*. New York: Academic Press, 150.

[98] Young, Iris Marion. 1997. *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[99] Lipsky, M. 1980. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russell Sage, xii.

of officials into working norms. These were sanctioned from above by civil servants providing "paternal care of the state" and routinised from within by social workers working through process determined by expert delineations and resource limitations.[100] Commissions are shaped in two ways. First, by individuals operating within and empowered by such contexts, aware of their authority relative to both clients in general and children in particular. They then use this relation of the corporate parent to enact forms of harm and abuse. Second, by the state seeking to preserve its veneer of benevolent intent in the interests of its citizens' welfare, and its commitment to act paternally, using experiential expertise of children and childhood to engender social policy as social engineering and social control.

Ultimately, seen through Titmuss's lens of diswelfare, the state offset its modest gains catalogued in the existing historiography and social work teleology through a failure to discharge its responsibility as corporate parent. During its "classic" period from 1945 to 1974/76, it constituted not a lost "golden age" of social democratic welfare, but a "classic" child diswelfare state. This has only become visible through the lived experience of children as they have become adults and obtained the capacity to speak truth to power, albeit within significant limits. These disclosures have cut across and through the available top-down sources of the state which constitute the established social work and social policy literature by reconstructing and rendering the same encounters through the lens of subjective experience. Lived experiences foreground control, and their undemocratic and technocratic assumptions within professional, paternalistic social administration, over care and "faring well". Accordingly, when viewed from beyond the administrative angle—or spectacles—of Wootton's critique, the benevolence of welfare recedes in the face of state violence.

Conclusion

At present, established narratives of the welfare state, social policy and social work history in Britain during the "classic" post-war era remain anchored in idealisations that imagine it as a "golden age". This view persists despite critical historical scholarship. The Titmuss myth remains

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[100] Herzfeld, Michael. 1992. T*he Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western bureaucracy*. New York: Berg, 74.

strong notwithstanding Pinker's challenge giving primacy to subjective states of welfare in policy rather than the universal, collectivist and redistributive logics of social democracy. Whilst the challenge has since been taken by the left following the neoliberal critique of the right, where in policymaking and practice, lived experience has primarily been exploited as a means to deprofessionalise, deskill and proletarianise the workforce rather than reorienting authority and expertise.[101] Wootton's socialist-feminist critiques that paternalistic social policy silences people and marginalises them as clients remains as incisive today as when first expressed.

Inquiries into child and family abuse initiated through campaigning groups with lived experience and experiential expertise offer a sustained critique of the "Titmuss Paradigm" and its historiographical ossification. In using testimony of children as the subjects of the welfare state, told, and given legitimacy only as adults, they cast doubt on the "classic" welfare state as a "golden age" rooted in technocratic knowledge of the child and their best interests. Collective narratives of coercion, harm and lasting trauma have been articulated time and again across a range of historic child welfare policy domains. These are yet to engage meaningfully with or transpose the established narrative given its reliance upon sources produced by the same phalanx of officials, and its supporting looping column across the policy apparatus, who inflicted harm. Seeing social work "as work" undertaken as policy and enacted through professional authority permits existing archival sources to be reconstructed and re-examined to trace their structural contours.

In the final analysis, lived experience of child and family abuse by the welfare state vindicates Wootton's contemporary critique that only officialdom can know and judge: "Be quiet dear, daddy knows best". Whilst such a view endures through the conduct of inquiries, they should fundamentally question received wisdom on the mid-twentieth-century welfare state, instead seeing it as one perpetrating child diswelfare as corporate parent. Crucially, it requires historical understanding of the welfare state to afford primacy to the coercive power of the state to inflict collective, subjective harm, rather than the caring and redistributive capacities of welfare, in our understanding of mid-twentieth-century British child welfare.

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[101] Crossley, Stephen. 2017. Guest Editorial: Professionalism, de-professionalisation and Austerity. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 19: 3–6.

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Fire, Fairs, and Dragonflies: The Writings of Gifted Children and Age-Bound Expertise

Jennifer Crane

INTRODUCTION

Explorers Unlimited was a newsletter delivered by the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) to the primarily middle-class children identified by keen families as gifted.[1] Children used this newsletter to write to others, sharing poems, stories, and opinions. In the March 1981 edition, a seven-year-old girl published a poem discussing the many joys

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of a Christmas fair—delicious toffee apples, her favourites, and "all the little treats".[2] Yet, the girl wrote, her joy at the fair was restricted by parental control. The girl had to ask her mother if she could even have this apple; she needed social permission and money. Ultimately, when the girl was told she had had enough fun for the day, she had to leave. To this, she merely responded, "Oh".

This chapter uses children's writings to argue that age must be considered as a hugely limiting modifier of experiential expertise; of how it was lived and felt, and how it could be used. Despite substantive policy and media interest in gifted children in the mid-to-late twentieth century, gifted children's testimonies were typically published only when conforming to specific visions of the appropriate precocious child, whose critique was made humorous or "cute". Nonetheless, the chapter also argues, gifted young people did exert expertise within voluntary spaces that were meaningful to them, such as in newsletters of the National Association. Many young people enjoyed participating in these spaces, despite their limited influence.[3] Others used these spaces to experiment with lively written critique of adult authority, and this was meaningful in their peer communities and to adult readers. Linking to this collection's central framing, then, this chapter shows that young people labelled gifted were able to "fare well" within a broader "state of welfare", even if their specific needs were not always catered for in the institutions of the Welfare State.[4] Yet the chapter shows, also, that the holding of experiential expertise did not guarantee that children could "fare well"; many found this expertise a burden, rejected it, or sought to offer themselves self-care while negotiating their distinct new identity as gifted.

Children's writings are central to this argument. The chapter relies on both the known, famed Opie collection (observations and writings by children aged 8–14 about play, collected between 1950–1980s) and on the uncatalogued archives of the NAGC, as above, which were accessed following speculative contact with a successor organisation.[5] Looking

[2] National Association for Gifted Children archives, Bletchley (hereafter NAGC). 1981. The Christmas Fair. *Explorers Unlimited*, March 22.

[3] Miller, Susan A. 2016. Assent as Agency in the early years of the Children of the American Revolution. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 9, 1: 48–65.

[4] See detailed discussion of Robert Pinker in the Introduction to this collection.

[5] The Opie Archive is available from the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, and also much is digitised here and available under CC BY-NC 4.0 license: https://www.opiearchive.org/ (last accessed 01 July 2024). Descriptions of this work are available in:

from the perspective of those who held expertise, and using child-produced sources, are relatively unusual approaches in studies of expertise, which often privilege the policy workings of expertise, its impact, and its public ramifications.[6] The use of children's writings in the history of childhood likewise faces regular critique, whether for apparently lacking sources, or for studying a group described as without political influence.[7] This chapter uses a broad analytical framework of agency to demonstrate that the young were an organised constituency, who engaged in activism.[8] Traces of children's written and spoken word—their voices—are available for us to analyse, with awareness that such sources are "always produced in relationships, and they are always performative, always mediated".[9] This chapter contends, indeed, that ignoring children and youth is an active decision. By not seeking out the traces which children have left, via partnership work or archiving, we reinscribe the very hierarchies of age which we must critically analyse to fully understand expertise.

Bateman Amanda and W. Butler, Carly. 2014. The Lore and Law of the Playground. *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 125; Factor, June. 2014. Colleagues in the Antipodes: conversations with Iona and Peter Opie. *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 224; Giddings, Sean. 2014. What is the State of Play? *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 195; Finnegan, Ruth. 2014. Child Play Is Serious: Children's Games, Verbal Art and Survival in Africa. *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 293.

[6] Stehr, Nico and Grundmann, Reiner. 2011. *Experts: The Knowledge and Power of Experts*. Milton Keynes: Routledge; Turner, Stephen P. 2013. *The Politics of Expertise*. Milton Keynes: Routledge; Hilton, Matthew, McKay, James, Crowson, Nicholas, and Mouhot, Jean-Francois. 2013. *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[7] Heywood, Colin. 2020. On the Margins or in the Mainstream? The History of Childhood in France, *Nottingham French Studies* 59, 2: 135; Maza, Sarah. 2020. The Kids Aren't All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood. *The American Historical Review*. 125, 4: 1261–1285, and the responses to Maza's article.

[8] Gleason, Mona. 2016. Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education. *History of Education* 45, 4: 446–459; Thomas, Lynn M. 2016. Historicising Agency. *Gender & History* 28, 2: 324–339; Miller, Susan A. 2016. Assent as Agency in the early years of the Children of the American Revolution. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 9, 1: 48–65; Abebe, Tatek. 2019. Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence. *Social Sciences* 8, 3: 1–16.

[9] Kristine Alexander, Stephanie Olsen, and Karen Vallgårda, "Voices and Sources: Lessons from the History of Childhood", *Digital Handbook of the History of Experience,* September 2023, https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/methodology/voices-and-sources-lessons-from-the-history-of-childhood/. Accessed 1 March 2024.

This chapter first briefly maps out the emerging power of giftedness in mid-to-late twentieth century Britain. The second section of this chapter asks: what was the lived experience of expertise? It demonstrates that children labelled as gifted felt a distinct sense of identity; these children felt like experts, though many also grappled with a linked sense of responsibility and felt unease about this. Third, the chapter asks, to what extent was expertise born from experience? The chapter emphasises that the expertise of the gifted young was never uncontestable.[10] It had been bestowed by adult authority and was frequently dismissed due to prevailing cultural ideals of childlikeness. Age was a significant modifier of expertise, even, as in this chapter, for children who were typically privileged by being middle-class and who had supportive, engaged families.[11] Age shaped hierarchies between children and adults and within childrens' peer groups. The concept of experiential expertise is therefore a useful and provocative one, but one which we must continue to explore closely, particularly from the perspective of those who were said to hold it.

What Was Giftedness?

While there had then long been scientific, medical, and social interest in ideas of precocious youth, interest in children labelled gifted—and indeed in their ability to become experts—accelerated markedly in the mid-to-late twentieth century in Britain.[12] Testing was embedded in the post-war British welfare state within the 11+ examination, which determined young people's entry to different types of secondary school.[13] Yet

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[10] Scott, Joan. 1991. The Evidence of Experience. *Critical Inquiry*, 14: 778.

[11] See Crane, 'Gifted Children, Youth Culture, and Popular Individualism'.

[12] Shuttleworth, Sally. 2010. *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840–1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Sutherland, Gillian. 1984. *Ability, Merit and Measurement: Mental Testing and English Education, 1880–1940*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[13] On the 11+ and 1944 Education Act: Mandler, Peter. 2020. *The Crisis of the Meritocracy: Britain's Transition to Mass Education Since the Second World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chap. 3. On grammar schools, see: 'Briefing paper: grammar schools', *Secondary Education and Social Change Project (SESC)*, January 2018, https://sesc.hist.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Briefing-paper-Grammar-Schools.pdf. Accessed 13 September 2021, 1; Harris, Richard, and Rose, Samuel. 2013. Who Benefits from Grammar Schools? A Case Study of Buckinghamshire, England. *Oxford Review of Education* 39: 151–171; Brine, Jacky. 2006. Tales of

the 1944 Education Act was framed, by the Conservative and Labour politicians alike, around providing for "all children", rather than specifically for the gifted.[14] Grammar schools—for children of the highest academic ability—went on to educate between 24.6% and 37.8% of the secondary school-aged population between the late 1940s and start of the 1960s.[15] With relatively large factions attending, one criticism of these schools—from teachers in local press and in the Houses of Parliament— became that they were not sufficiently catering for the very highest levels of gifted children: the 0.1–2% of young people with the most remarkable intellectual capacities.[16]

Slowly, and mostly at a local level, educational experiments began to provide for these "hyper-gifted" young people from the 1960s.[17] Bringing the issue further to national attention in this decade, in 1966 a

the 50-Somethings: Selective Schooling, Gender and Social Class. *Gender and Education,* 18: 431–446; Reay, Diane. 2006. The Zombie Stalking English Schools: Social Class and Educational Inequality, *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 54: 288–307.

[14] Butler, R.A, Education Bill, House of Commons, 19 January 1944, vol. 396, col. 232; John Parker, Education Bill, House of Commons, 19 January 1944, vol. 396, col. 233. For debates on which party—or civil servants—were most influential in introducing this Act, see: Kopsch, Hartmut. 1970. The Approach of the Conservative Party to Social Policy during World War Two. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of London, 385–386, as cited in Simon, Brian. 1986. The 1944 Education Act: A Conservative measure? *History of Education* 15 1: 31; Jeffreys, Kevin. 1984. R. A. Butler, the Board of Education, and the 1944 Education Act. *History* 69, 227: 415–431; Wallace, R. G. 1981. The Aims and Authorship of the 1944 Education Act. *History of Education* 4: 283–290. An influential account about the effect of wartime on post-war social policy is in: Titmuss, Richard. 1950. *Problems of Social Policy.* London: HMSO.

[15] Statistics are taken from: 'Briefing paper: Grammar Schools', *SESC*, January 2018 https://sesc.hist.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Briefing-paper-Grammar-Schools.pdf. Accessed 13 September 2021, 1. This figure was to continue to fall, sharply to 9.8 in 1975, down to 5.2% by 2015, due to the comprehensivation process, see on this: Mandler, *The Crisis of the Meritocracy*, Chaps. 4 and 5; 'Briefing paper: Comprehensives', *SESC*, October 2017 https://sesc.hist.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Briefing-paper-Comprehensives.pdf. Accessed 13 September 2021, 3.

[16] See for example: Anon. 1950. School Entrance. *The Manchester Guardian*, June 7, 6; Anon. 1965. Education changes must "aid gifted". *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 8, 7.

[17] Anon. 1965. Public Notices. *Reading Evening Post*, September 28, 9. See also: Tisdall, Laura. 2017. *A progressive education? How Childhood Changed in Mid-Twentieth-Century English and Welsh schools.* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Bridges, S. A, ed. 1969. *Gifted Children and the Brentwood Experiment.* London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd; Bodleian Library (Bod), Gibson, Joy, and Chennells, Prue, eds. 1976. *Gifted Children: Looking to their Future.* Essex: The Anchor Press, 73–87.

former journalist and psychiatric social worker, Margaret Branch, founded the National Association. A later *Guardian* profile claimed that Branch's interest sprung from her clinical work, where, in 1952, she had met "a disturbed and epileptic boy with an IQ of 150" who had "put her on the track of the lonely ones who are so much more gifted than their contemporaries, their parents, or their teachers".[18] The National Association would flourish in subsequent years. It had 4,863 members by 1981, as well as 277 associated schools and other institutions such as Child Guidance Clinics.[19] Its membership was primarily middle-class, though it made efforts to work closely with, and recruit families in, inner city areas.[20]

One key focus of the National Association was providing counselling for parents, and extra provision in school holidays and at weekends for the gifted young, enabling them to meet one another and engage in activities beyond schools' curricula.[21] In the organisation's most active years, the 1970s and 1980s, conservative press and politicians also began to fixate on gifted children, and to emphasise their key role in constructing national futures, notably reversing the perceived issues of permissiveness, egalitarianism, feminism, and national and economic decline. Throughout the 1970s, right-wing tabloid press emphasised that gifted children were critical for forging "our future".[22] Gifted children were presented by the *Daily Mail* as the "most important asset that Britain possesses", and "our greatest hidden asset".[23]

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[18] Stott, Mary. 1967. In April, *The Guardian*, April 6, 6.

[19] NAGC, Annual Report 1981, 7.

[20] Survey of membership demographics: Mason, Patricia and Essen, Juliet. 1987. *The Social, Educational, and Emotional Needs of Gifted Children*. London: Ciceley Northcote Trust, 6; NAGC, Newsletter, Undated but inner material says 1984; Recipe for Success: Merseyside & Wirral, 11; NAGC. 1979. *Looking to their Future*, March, Gifted Children and Inner City Areas, 1. See on this: Crane, Jennifer. 2023. Britain and Europe's Gifted Children in the Quests for Democracy, Welfare and Productivity, 1970–1990, *Contemporary European History,* 32 (2): 235–253; Crane, 'Gifted Children, Youth Culture, and Popular Individualism'.

[21] Crane, 'Gifted Children, Youth Culture, and Popular Individualism'.

[22] Smith, Ian. 1978. Treated Like a Freak for Being Clever. *Daily Mail*, November 28, 6–7.

[23] Barritt, K. D. and Price, E. 1979. Come on, Britain, Use Your brains. *Daily Mail*, April 20, 36; Southworth, June. 1979. Everything We All Need to Know About Gifted

While these ideas were framed in terms of distinct narratives about British declinism, transnational voluntary groups also sought to identify and mobilise gifted children from the 1970s and 1980s.[24] The World Council for Gifted Children was founded in 1975 in London, and the European Council for High Ability was founded in 1988, with leadership from British psychologist Joan Freeman. These groups aimed to identify and use gifted children to promote "East–West cooperation" across Europe and to develop more broadly "a better world and our common future". Gifted children, in the accounts of these organisations, could promote international development goals, prevent future World Wars, and spread ideals of liberal democracy across Eastern Europe and 'the world'.[25]

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the emergent discipline of educational sociology began to offer significant critique of giftedness, particularly from America. Researchers demonstrated that IQ tests and teacher recommendations did not adequately identify children who were poor, female, from a minoritised culture, minoritised ethnic, or spoke English as a second language. Testing was not always applied properly and existing tests had been designed to cater best for white, middle-class boys. Psychologists disagreed on whether to abandon, or merely reshape, intelligence testing as a result.[26] Interest in the 0.1–2% of children who performed best on IQ testing began to fade from this point. Yet, the idea that an elite faction of British youth may assist with national futures

Children, *Daily Mail*, August 18, 6–7; Smith, Treated Like a Freak for Being Clever, 6–7.

[24] Edgerton, David. 2018. *The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History*. London: Allen Lane.

[25] See forthcoming monograph, Crane, Jennifer. Forthcoming 2025. *"Gifted Children" in Britain and the World: Equality and Elitism since 1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chap. 6.

[26] For example: Richert, E. Susanne. 1985. Identification of Gifted Children in the United States: The Need for Pluralistic Assessment. *Roeper Review* 8, 2: 68–72; Richert, E. Susanne. 1987. Rampant Problems and Promising Practices in the Identification of Disadvantaged Gifted Students. *Gifted Child Quarterly* 31, 4: 149–154; Ford, Donna Y. 1998. The Underrepresentation of Minority Students in Gifted Education: Problems and Promises in Recruitment and Retention. *The Journal of Special Education* 32, 1: 4–14; Harris, J. John, and Ford, Donna Y. 1999. Hope Deferred Again: Minority Students Underrepresented in Gifted Programs. *Education and Urban Society* 31, 2: 225–237.

did not disappear entirely in British policy or culture; testament to the flexibility of these constructions.

Notably, versions of these ideas were brought into national policy for the first time, in broad form, by Tony Blair's New Labour governments (1997–2007).[27] The government's white paper *Excellence in Schools* (1997) called for the creation of "an atmosphere in which to excel is not only acceptable but desirable", and stated that every school and local education authority must "plan how it will help gifted children".[28] More children than ever were expected to be identified under this programme. The *Excellence in Cities* report (1999) stated that "local authorities must identify 5–10% of children as academically gifted or talented in art or sports, and also that 25% of schools should become 'specialist schools'".[29] Government select committees, meanwhile, heard evidence that even as high a proportion as 30–40% of children may in fact have significant "gifts".[30] While more and more children were being identified, and the term gifted was positioned within a social mobility agenda, older ideas of the national and global roles of the gifted remained. New Labour's National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, for example, was established in 2002 as a summer school for high-performing young people, and contained such ideas of these youth as future leaders.[31]

Ideas about the gifted child were significant from the 1950s until the 2000s in Britain. These ideas were flexible, but in general associated with visions of future leadership, and often—at least until New Labour efforts—looked to identify a hyper-minority of the young population. Rhetoric from policy, press, and voluntary sector looked to position the gifted young as saviours of Britain's economy, protectors of its morality, and key international ambassadors. This raises the questions: how did it

[27] See *Excellence in schools*, July 1997, Cm 3681; Brady, Margaret. 2015. An Exploration of the Impact of Gifted and Talented Policies on Inner City Schools in England: A Case Study. Unpublished PhD thesis, Brunel University, 69–70.

[28] *Excellence in schools*, July 1997, Cm 3681. See also: Levitas, Ruth. 2005. *The Inclusive Society? Social Exclusion and New Labour* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

[29] Brady, Gifted and Talented Policies on Inner City Schools, 69–70.

[30] Education and Employment Committee, Highly Able Children, 1998–1999, Volume 1: Report and Proceedings of the Committee: xix, 15–22.

[31] See for example: Modern Records Centre (MRC), UWA/PUB/DEP/29/5, *Aspire* (magazine) for gifted and talented youth, 2002–2007, Summer Edition 3—July 2003. Students letters and comments, 10. Crane, *"Gifted Children" in Britain and the World*, Chap 5.

feel to have lived experience of being gifted, and were the gifted young— who were apparently so powerful—given realistic mechanisms through which to use their apparent expertise to exert change?

The Lived Experience of Expertise

Children's own poetry, games, and letters provide revealing traces of how they lived with the label of gifted as it expanded through the mid-to-late twentieth century. This section examines such materials from two sources. First, the highly celebrated Opie Archives, which contain a "pioneering", "ground-breaking", and "magnificent" "wealth" of material collected by Iona and Peter Opie between 1950 and the 1980s, including their own observations and writings by young children about play.[32] Second, the uncatalogued archives of the NAGC. These have been kept, in disordered form, in boxes by a successor organisation, and include newsletters produced for child-members in the 1970s and 1980s. These newsletters varied significantly: some were A5, some A4 size; some for children who had attended summer clubs, some for postal subscribers; some bright yellow, some white; some demarcated as for members aged 5–12, 12– 17, or thereabouts. Newsletters were published every few months, and filled with children's poetry, letters, drawings, and contributions.

The children's games documented by the Opies were at times "not intended for adult ears", yet also shaped by dialogue with adults from families, schools, communities, and culture.[33] The National Association materials, meanwhile, were constructed with the adult-editor of these magazines, and in imagined dialogue with involved adult and child-readers. These sources then reveal how young people looked to construct relationships with others, how they felt about their lives, and how they

[32] Bateman Amanda and W. Butler, Carly. 2014. The Lore and Law of the Playground. *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 125; Factor, June. 2014. Colleagues in the Antipodes: conversations with Iona and Peter Opie. *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 224; Giddings, Sean. 2014. What is the state of play? *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 195; Finnegan, Ruth. 2014. Child play is serious: children's games, verbal art and survival in Africa. *International Journal of Play* 3, 3: 293.

[33] Warner, Marina. 2001. Introductory. In *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, eds. Iona Opie and Peter Opie, 1. New York: New York Review of Books.

looked to navigate identities in relation to their own social worlds; relationships of framing and representation have been further explored by Colpus and Millard in this collection.[34]

In keeping with the approach of this collection, these texts are read with "empathic inference", as conceptualised by Mona Gleason, looking to "imagine and to interpret historical events and sources from the point of view of young people".[35] While this process is imperfect, comparing the Opie and National Association materials suggests that many children were aware of, and interested in, negotiating ideas of intelligence through peer culture and play in the mid-to-late twentieth centuries in Britain. Children who had been labelled as gifted, however, also felt that this label gave them not only a new type of expertise, but also, entwined, a new social identity and new responsibilities. These could be empowering and exciting, or daunting, sparking challenging new expectations from peers, adult cultures, and children themselves.[36]

Poetry written by children—whether labelled or not labelled as gifted—shared a common sense of darkness, satire, and resentment. Poetry from the National Association children, for example, discussed the destructive power of fire, the slyness of spiders in killing flies, and the dangerous beauty of the dragonfly.[37] A poem written by a ten-year-old, published in a March 1981 edition of *Explorers Unlimited*, was written from the perspective of a fox, lamenting: "Oh I wish I was away far from this horrible place".[38] Another poem, entitled, "Hungry", and collectively written by three thirteen-year-olds, spoke to potential vengeance wreaked by animals: discussing how "poor old Clive", presumably a human adult, was subsequently eaten by a piranha while out fishing.[39]

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[34] See chapters 'Claiming and Curating Experiential Expertise at the Children's Telephone Helpline, ChildLine UK, 1986–2006' and 'Justifying Experience, Changing Expertise: From Protest to Authenticity in Anglophone "Mad Voices" in the Mid-Twentieth Century' in this collection.

[35] Gleason, Avoiding the agency trap, 452.

[36] Ibid. 446–459.

[37] NAGC. 1981. The Fox. *Explorers Unlimited*, March, 23; NAGC. 1981. Catch a Bat. *Explorers Unlimited,* March, 24; NAGC. 1981. The Spider. *Explorers Unlimited*, March 1981, 24; NAGC. 1981. The Tube Train. *Explorers Unlimited*, March, 23.

[38] NAGC, The Fox, 23.

[39] NAGC. 1980. Hungry. *Bulletin*, November, 11.

Poetry from the Opie collection offered similarly dark perspectives and visions. One poem from 1952, written by a girl attending a non-selective school in the West Midlands, wrote of a pair of dogs, happily swimming along a river when, suddenly, "One seized the other dog and ate up all his liver"—the animals were not domestic "friends" but rather violent and unpredictable.[40] Other examples, also from the 1950s, come from boys attending Sale County Grammar School, who were thus identified as highly intellectually able, though before rhetoric about giftedness expanded in the 1970s and 1980s. One poem, from these boys, suggested that those hunting out in the woods, looking for birds and game, "no [sic] nothing about my aim": closing by darkly threatening "Protect all life/And all Game".[41] Common to these poems were ideas of powerlessness, expressed through empathy with caged animals, or envy of the destructive power of fire or wild dogs, which potentially signalled a desire for an anarchistic approach to existing hierarchies. Children, whether those attending selective or non-selective schools, or those labelled as gifted by voluntary groups, schools, or not, were all interested in using their leisure time—and their opportunities to share their thoughts with adults—to construct what Marina Warner described in 2001 as a "playground tone, irreverent, daring, laced in equal parts with blitheness, morbidity, and callousness".[42]

Again, looking across these sources and samples, we find that children also all shared an interest in thinking about their own intelligence, and in contrasting it to those of their peers. Poetry from a northern grammar school reflected explicitly on the social capital of attending such a school—writing that it was one "for a swot", not for "a careless lot", and warning others not to enter unless "daring".[43] Other poems from this school reflected on the power of books ("a friend/For those in need", "for most"); and the role of talent in society (which made a boy "gallant",

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[40] Opie Archive, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, (hereafter Opie), OP/A/1/9/8/40/2, MS. Opie 9 fol. 495r, Acocks Green Junior Mixed School, Birmingham, Warwickshire, 1952–1953.

[41] Opie, OP/A/1/1/3/13/6, MS. Opie 1 fol. 112r, Sale County Grammar School for Boys, Sale, Cheshire, England.

[42] Warner, Introductory, ix.

[43] Opie, OP/A/1/1/3/13/11, MS. Opie 1 fol. 112v, Sale County Grammar School for Boys, Sale, Cheshire, England.

but also potentially liable to "ravings").[44] Students at a non-selective school in Kirkcaldy, Fife, likewise, were interested in reflecting on intelligence; for example responding to a question about the definition of "sap" by stating that this denoted "a stupid person, a mug, High School Mug"; someone "soft and not quite all there", "a fool or a cissy", "a trifle soft in the head", and "someone soft in the head".[45]

Further pieces from the Opie collection suggest that such perceived connections—between intelligence and social worth—shaped playground behaviours. An eleven-year-old girl, writing from a non-selective school in the West Midlands, discussed childhood games with friends where one team labelled themselves, "Reds Reds clever heads".[46] Another eleven-year-old girl reporting from this same school discussed a playground game in which you invited a partner to pull your finger, while holding out a thumb. If they pulled that thumb, you would say, "Your [sic] not very clever that was my thumb".[47] Other children from these schools and beyond described the phrase "big head", for a "show off".[48] Children hoped to prove themselves more intelligent than their peers, and expressed and tested notions of intelligence through daily play, with irreverent tones.

Children in selective and non-selective schools alike were interested in categorising and considering intelligence. Yet the writings from children explicitly labelled as gifted in the 1970s and 1980s, amidst more frenetic interest in this term, and through participation in the National Association, gave distinctive responses. The application of the label gifted gave these children a distinct and formal sense of their own expertise and authority; an expertise which shaped their experiences and often bestowed them with a new sense of responsibility. One example of this comes from a thirteen-year-old child's testimony published in 1979 by the National

[44] Opie, OP/A/1/1/3/13/11, MS. Opie 1 fol. 112v, Sale County Grammar School for Boys, Sale, Cheshire, England.

[45] See for example: Opie, OP/A/1/3/8/32/1, OP/A/1/3/8/34/1, OP/A/1/3/8/31/1, MS. Opie 3 fol. 381r, Kirkcaldy High School, Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland, c. 1952.

[46] Opie, OP/A/1/9/8/44/5, MS. Opie 9 fol. 499r, Acocks Green Junior Mixed School, Birmingham, Warwickshire, 1952–1953.

[47] [Opie, OP/A/1/9/8/44/5, MS. Opie 9 fol. 499r, Acocks Green Junior Mixed School, Birmingham, Warwickshire, 1952–1953.

[48] Ibid., Warwickshire, 1952–3. Idea of 'Big head' also visible in Opie, OP/A/9/6/51/5, MS. Opie 9 fol. 344v, Ipswich, Suffolk, England.

Association, captured at one of their Saturday clubs for gifted children in London.[49] Opening his reflections, the child reflected that he "contemplate[d] my own existence knowing that my potential may or may not be great", with "a mind, and this I feel I can offer to the world".[50] The boy described that until the age of three, he was "told" that he was "a very demanding, almost violent child".[51] He found school "very uninteresting" and struggled to mix with his peers. When a psychologist tested his IQ "and explained to me that I was 'gifted'", his life had changed.[52] Notably, he joined the National Association and, when able to meet with other gifted children, felt he could "socialise more freely", developing interests in computers, photography, and philosophy, to "be proud of".[53] Overall, the child stated that when he died he must hope "that my journey has not been in vain and that I have played my part in the world around me".[54]

Being labelled as gifted, working within the National Association, and then speaking for one of their publications, had all left this boy grappling with a new and distinct sense of responsibility—one which seems specific to the 1970s and 1980s, and to the writings of those mobilised in voluntary groups for gifted children. These themes of identity and responsibility were echoed across writings by members of the National Association. Other children likewise stated that they felt connected to other geniuses in the past, for example, Isaac Newton.[55] Others, still, felt empowered or perhaps compelled to comment on global affairs in Association publications, most commonly on nuclear deterrence and the Cold War.[56]

There are three key, and more broadly applicable, points to note about the distinct forms of experiential expertise, held in this moment by these

[49] Bod, Per 264,505 e. 4, NAGC. 1979. Saturday Club. *Journal of the Gifted Child,* Autumn, 50–51.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] NAGC. 1981. Limericks. *Explorers Unlimited*. March, 13.

[56] NAGC. 1980. Community Spirit? *Looking to Their Future*, November, 29; NAGC. 1982. Political Forum. *Dialogue*, Easter, 9.

child-members of the National Association. First, we can ask whether this expertise was best defined as experiential, professional, structural or by some other category. The children's expertise was critically drawn from their knowledge, yet it was also as likely bestowed by, or recognised after contact with, clinical professionals, parents, or voluntary organisers. This experiential expertise was dependent on interaction with adults, as much as with peer groups of other experiential child-experts. Do we ever then have an unadulterated form of experiential expertise, or is such expertise always entwined with, bestowed and modified by, or even dependent on, professional forms of knowledge?

A second point of reflection is that gifted children, also, in this moment often found their expertise a lived burden, as much as an empowering tool for change. The holding of experiential expertise was not always desired, and by no means guaranteed that recipients would "fare well". This became particularly visible in the National Association's *Explorers Bulletin* newsletter of Summer 1979, as a group of "ninth and tenth graders" in a "Mentally Gifted Programme" in Alhambra, California, wrote a composite letter to address British children, entitled "What's it like then?"[57] For these children, having passed "a silly test of describing pictures", they now encountered new burdens and expectations—they were "expected to always be straight A or on top".[58] Rather than being defined as holding experiential expertise, these children argued together, adults should instead, "recognize my wishes and help me", and "[u]nderstand me a little more".[59] These ideas of resisting the status of experiential expert, or of looking to negotiate it with self-care were reiterated in poetry published by the National Association that discussed childhood bullying. This raises the question, is the delegation of experiential expertise always sought out, and wanted; do we tend to assume it is powerful and positive?

Despite the resistance that many children felt to the label gifted, a third key reflection is that, in their daily lives, many children did feel that their experiential expertise should override established hierarchies of age and gender. This is clear in many writings by children and parents of the National Association. The May 1977 newsletter, for instance,

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57 NAGC. 1979. What's it like then? *Explorers Unlimited*, Summer, 1.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

provided a report about a summer course run in South Wales, by a parent member, for over forty children aged between six and ten.[60] This report suggested that the children had internalised the idea of giftedness as an identity which entitled them to special treatment and, importantly, to the experiences of intellectual and physical victory. Reflecting, the parent organising the course argued that these children, "had not played with other Explorers before", and thus "were not used to competition. They were used to winning".[61] Consequently, the author reported, one "sturdy nine-year-old took it very hard that he could be beaten at target shooting by a weedy seven-year-old"; and other sessions were "a real struggle for a ten-year-old, used to the masculine environment of preparatory school where he shone at everything, to accept that a mere girl was better at making a camp fire that he was".[62] These writings are by an adult, and may reflect an adult-reading of children's interactions. Nonetheless, the reflections suggest that giftedness may have reshaped deeply held identities, and they also raise the question, how did identity of experiential expert reshape expectations of established social hierarchies?

Overall, analysing the testimonies of children who had, and who had not, been explicitly labelled as gifted, from schools or voluntary groups, and in different periods in the history of this term, revealed many parallels. Children across these samples, and across schools with different policies of selectivity, were interested in exploring relative intelligence through peer culture. Nonetheless, the children who had been labelled as gifted by the National Association and their families also developed distinct forms of understanding and identity. This section therefore highlights the significance of looking closely at what the experience in experiential expertise was, how it was understood by those who held it—if at all—and how it reflected, as well as critiqued, existing systems of power.

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[60] *Looking to their Future: The News Letter of the NAGC*. 1977, Country Holidays for Young Explorers, May, 5. This is further discussed in Crane, 'Gifted Children, Youth Culture, and Popular Individualism'.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

The Expertise of Experience

The gifted young did not have the same capacity to use their expertise as adult experts. Despite their relatively privileged position (given the typical demographic of National Association membership, and press and policy interest), gifted young people were rarely given the capacity to enact meaningful change. Indeed, critique of the gifted young meant they were typically taken as "cute" and absorbed, by press in particular, within cultural tropes around precocity. Despite this, while at times taken as entertainment, gifted young people did use the spaces available to them in the "state of welfare"—such as voluntary newsletters—to experiment with their expertise in ways that were meaningful to them. Gifted young people had influence, because of their distinct experiences, in "the world of the neighbourhood" and "acquaintance networks".[63]

Gifted children rarely exerted expertise in the same ways as many other voluntary actors encountered in this book—for example by speaking to Parliament or press, or writing policy reports. At times, the gifted young were brought in to policy and media, but typically only briefly.[64] New Labour's National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth gave young members brief visits to government organisations, working on short courses and making presentations. Yet members wrote in subsequent newsletters that this interaction had primarily functioned to change their view of politicians, rather than to harness their expertise, stating for example that, "I thought politicians were really evil, but they listened to our ideas and it was great to see where everything happens".[65] Demonstrative of how unusual this was, and self-performance as disruptive thinkers, young attendees also expressed shock that they were able to enter these spaces, writing that, for example, "I can't believe they let us in!".[66]

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[63] Gleadle, Kathryn. 2009. *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815–1867*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 17; Hendrick, Harry. 2008. The Child as a Social Actor in Historical Sources: Problems of Identification and Interpretation. In *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*, eds. Pia Christensen and Allison James, 46. London: Routledge.

[64] See for example: British Film Institute, *Horizon*, 1969; Anon. 1966. New Body Aims To Get Help For The Gifted Child. *The Times*, June 18, 10.

[65] MRC, UWA/PUB/DEP/29/5, *Aspire* (magazine) for gifted and talented youth, 2002–2007, July 2007, Goal Programme scores again!, 3.

[66] Ibid. 3.

The gifted young did not necessarily become expert, or influential in exerting change, in spaces of policy and media. Indeed, newspaper and television coverage was typically most interested in presenting the criticism of the gifted young as entertainment, as if to prove their fun, precocious wisdom, and to show their unique, disruptive, senses of self. To offer an extreme and unusual example: Doron Blake was a famous gifted child in America, famed because he had been conceived in the early 1980s, at a sperm bank explicitly intended to distribute the sperm of Nobel Prize winners across the nation. 240 children were born from this bank, and press coverage throughout his early life discussed Blake in line with established tropes about gifted children: emphasising in particular his fascination with computers and interest in building complex toys.[67] From his 18th birthday, in 2001, Blake began to use media interest to critique the term gifted. He stated that his IQ did not make him "good" or happy—it provided no guarantee that he would "fare well".[68] Blake's criticism was made into entertainment, as newspapers in America and Britain were able to absorb it within a fascinating narrative journey from "perfect baby" to adult critic of "the new master breed".[69]

While the Blake example is unusual, it exemplifies the ways in which the critique of young people labelled gifted—whether made in press or in small-scale voluntary spaces—was often not only dismissed, but actively incorporated into a vision of a gifted disruptive self, used to confirm stereotypes around the gifted child. This was also a feature in repeated newspaper accounts in the 1990s, asking "What becomes of child prodigies?"[70] At the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, likewise, critiques made by the gifted young—for example about

[67] Lowry, Katharine. 1987. The Designer Babies Are Growing Up: At Home With the First Children of the 'Genius' Sperm Bank. *Los Angeles Times*, November 1; Walmsley, Ann. 1985. The "genius" babies. *Macleans*, September 2.

[68] *BBC Science and Nature*. 2019. The Genius Sperm Bank http://www.bbc.co.uk/sn/tvradio/programmes/horizon/broadband/tx/spermbank/doron/index_textonly.shtml Accessed 5 August 2019.

[69] Anon. 1983. Is this little boy a perfect baby? *Daily Mirror*, August 17, 8–9; Kingstone, Heidi. 1986. Superbabe... or just another little boy? *Daily Mail*, September 18; Chalmers, Sarah. 2001. The New Master Breed? *Daily Mail*, February 10.

[70] Southworth, June. 1995. What becomes of child prodigies? *Daily Mail*, December 2, 3; Clark, Susan. 1992. How Gifted Children Can Wither Under the Hot-House Pressures. *Sunday Telegraph*, July 19; Wavell, Stuart. 1995. Prodigies: A Suitable Case for Treatment. *Sunday Times*, May 21.

whether the pursuit of career "success" at present made for a "wasteful life"—were again fitted within glossy published newsletters, disseminated to supporters, which simply amplified the idea that these young people had particularly challenging minds, ripe for exploration.[71]

Even within the spaces constructed by voluntary organisations, which sought to bring gifted children together, the ability of these children to exert change was highly limited—particularly by awareness of their age. In leisure camps organised by the National Association, for example, leaders providing accounts of these courses emphasised that they had to maintain discipline during physical activities, "for safety's sake". They also described how the childlikeness of participants remained clear in their emotional and physical expressions: children were sometimes "in tears" during final farewells, or experiencing homesickness.[72] Children in newsletters were directly told that, while they may enjoy science experiments, they should also "ask your parents" for key components, such as surgical spirits, "as chemists won't sell alcohol to children", and that they should not engage without adult supervision.[73]

While restricted in their power, it is also the case that the gifted young did find ways to use their expertise to exert influence, in ways that were meaningful to them. On this, a first reflection is that, if we are to recognise the lived complexities of young people's agency, we must take seriously the possibility that many young people enjoyed participating within these spaces. On this account, perhaps young people did not have significant critique of these spaces, despite their limitations, and that this is why critical writings about such spaces are not visible. This point is framed by the analytical works of Susan A. Miller and Tatek Abebe.[74] While adult-generated sources, contemporary surveys (conducted by the National Association and by academic auditors of the National Academy) found high levels of youth satisfaction with various giftedness programmes.

[71] MRC, UWA/PUB/DEP/29/5, Aspire (magazine) for gifted and talented youth, 2002–2007, April 2003, Give a Child a Life, 11.

[72] *Looking to their Future: The News Letter of the National Association for Gifted Children*. 1977. The Week at Ardtrostan, November, 13.

[73] NAGC. 1981. Young Scientists. *Explorers Unlimited*, March, 37.

[74] Miller, Susan A. 2016. Assent as Agency in the early years of the Children of the American Revolution. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 9, 1: 48–65; Abebe, Tatek. 2019. Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence. *Social Sciences* 8, 3: 1–16.

Such surveys concluded that the young saw these as spaces to meet other friendly young people, and to pursue interesting hobbies beyond school.[75]

A second reflection is that we can draw meaning from the limited—but present—ways in which gifted children did use the spaces available to them for critique. Notably, young people used voluntary newsletters to challenge ideas of giftedness, value, and hierarchy. Such newsletters had a relatively small audience, yet their pages reflected significant efforts from involved young people, who thought about their letters, wrote them, found stamps and stationary, and posted them. Such newsletters were likely meaningful in the lives of the young, who saw their words published, perhaps for the first time.

A particular theme, from young people's writings in these newsletters, was criticising the lack of power assigned to the young—as visible in the poem this chapter opened with. Frustration at a sense of restriction, due to parental control, emerged likewise in another poem in the same newsletter about experiences of London Underground travel. While the author reported that such travel made her feel "engulfed" by "[f]ear", with the train's "continuous humming" insisting that "yourrr neverrr goinggg toooo gettt outtt of herrre aliveee", the child knew that she could not escape underground travel. Echoing the sense of resignation and foreclosure, that this chapter's first testimony opened with, the Underground poem likewise ended on the reflection that, "there's always a next time" on the train.[76] The experiential expertise of gifted children did not then entitle them to unlimited authority, by any means—children were restricted by adult agendas and structural power. Nonetheless, children could use the voluntary areas available to them to challenge their lack of power. They could express their discontent, and share their disappointment or frustration with one another, in text.

[75] See for example: MRC, UWA/PUB/DEP/29/6. Evaluation of the Summer School, 2004.

[76] NAGC. The Tube Train, 23.

Conclusion

What then are we to conclude about the lived experiences of being a gifted child in the mid-to-late twentieth century in Britain? What can we conclude about the level of expertise which these young people were able to exert? First, it is worth reflecting on the ways in which the gifted young people in this chapter were distinct experts to those across this collection. Unusually in this book, gifted young people were highly disempowered experts—they were rarely able to control letters to newspapers, or to speak at public events or directly lobby politicians, for example. When press interviewed gifted young people, they were more likely represented as entertainment or human-interest stories; they were intelligent—despite their age! Age, then, critically moderated both how the gifted young saw their own expertise, and also their ability to reshape society.

Despite the fact that the gifted young were relatively disempowered by age, many still felt like experts, and they felt like they held experiential expertise. The writing of National Association children shows that gifted children felt special. Often, those labelled gifted felt a huge sense of responsibility—and some relished this, seeking to advise national governments or challenge social norms, while others rejected it. Gifted children were unusual experiential experts, also, because they did not always believe that claiming experiential expertise could enable them to "fare well", or to lobby for productive change for their peers. The range of ways in which the gifted child responded to their social authority—whether by embracing it to critique adult-structures, rejecting it, or reshaping it—all represented the exercise of agency.[77]

Overall, we must look to the testimonies of experiential experts themselves, if we are to understand this category fully. We must also consider case studies from children in our analysis of experiential expertise; age critically moderated how adults responded to children's expertise, and how these children understood one another. Analysing the lives and experiences of the young remains surprisingly contentious in modern British scholarship, as discussed recently by Colin Heywood and, from a critical

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[77] Gleason, Mona. 2016. Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education. *History of Education* 45, 4: 446–459; Thomas, Lynn M. 2016. Historicising Agency. *Gender & History* 28, 2: 324–339; Miller, Susan A. 2016. Assent as Agency in the early years of the Children of the American Revolution. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 9, 1: 48–65; Abebe, Tatek. 2019. Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence. *Social Sciences* 8, 3: 1–16.

perspective, by Sarah Maza.[78] For Heywood, this may reflect a lack of historical sources, and also the fact that children are not "an organized political constituency".[79] This chapter demonstrates that, with inference, imagination, and collaboration, sources are available to understand young people's lives. Further, this chapter shows the young were an organised constituency—they simply mobilised in spaces less familiar to adults, such as through voluntary groups and in school playgrounds. If we wish to analyse historical power dynamics, rather than to reinscribe them, we must take young people seriously, and find and analyse their testimonies.

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

Claiming and Curating Experiential Expertise at the Children's Telephone Helpline, Childline UK, 1986–2006

Eve Colpus

INTRODUCTION

ChildLine UK was launched in October 1986 as the first nationwide telephone helpline "for children in trouble or danger".[1] The helpline offered twenty-four-hour confidential support to children and adolescents who telephoned or wrote letters, and made referrals to other agencies with the child caller's consent, or if the child was in a life-threatening situation.[2] ChildLine's inception occurred amidst a high-profile public debate in the

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[1] 'ChildLine UK'/'ChildLine' is used in this chapter to refer to ChildLine's foundational service provision, which originally covered the whole of the United Kingdom. ChildLine Scotland was launched in 1990, ChildLine Wales was launched in 1993, and ChildLine Northern Ireland was launched in 1999.

[2] Harrison, Hereward. 2000. ChildLine—The First Twelve Years. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 82, 4: 284.

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UK about child abuse, including sexual abuse of children. By the mid-1980s, this extended widely in academic and media discussions and within the voluntary sector and public organisations.[3] Internationally, ChildLine was also connected to a growing discourse of children's rights, signalled strongly through the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which formalised the right for young people to express their opinions. ChildLine joined other groups in pushing for this Convention to be ratified in the UK, which was achieved in 1991.[4]

This chapter uses the case study of ChildLine UK to take an innovative methodological approach to examine the communication and translation of experiential expertise about children's wellbeing. My focus is on tracing where experiential expertise lies in the functioning of Child-Line, the mechanisms of how it was employed, and with what impacts. To do so, I read organisational literature from the first twenty years of the helpline and evidence of the reception of ChildLine UK's work amongst policy-makers, practitioners, and children. In thinking about the flow of experiential expertise within and between these different seams, this approach looks to reach the encounter between "client"-shared experience and organisational interpretation.

[3] For discussion of the launch of ChildLine UK in the context of national polls on child sexual abuse, see Bell, Stuart. 1987. Childwatch: Is This the Most Dangerous Show on TV?, *Daily Mail*, October 28, 6. 'Available via: *Daily Mail Historical Archive*': © **Associated Newspapers Limited**. https://url6.mailanyone.net/scanner?m=1tHPm2-000000019y2-3rJ1d=4%7Cmail%2F90%2F1732981800%2F1tHPm2-000000019y2-3rJ1%7Cin6m%7C57e1b682%7C10937368%7C14344598%7C674B34CE12E509E5CF17F1B3E898B1B8o=%2Fphto%3A%2Fgtsol-g.-cmaedoso..imtngcocpor%2Fl.ees%2FerivrtI%3F.d%3DabDotesNesaprwpsp%26alreum%3BpstL%3DTyeitLUREST_ISLemT%26r%3Bsaap techTulsRsg%3DypeinleS%3B%26TaemprbaIetr%3Daldiv8d5ce79-ca0-4c89f-942-0a9fc64cab32p8%26m4bnt%3Bh%3DoutiCem1%26r%3BsaapAychve%3DdTpaeancSercdmrhF%3B%26apomPrcusntore%26oitm%3D1ain%3Dop%3BAIdGdc17LE6EE8%25C%26513m05a75pop%3B%3DTyedc%26iArmleatcPop%3Bbt%3Dusrot%2BDw%2BFraeo%2Bar%26hrndCt%3BamnonepctgtSZen%3Dem1-DMaOD%26HMIpmp%3Dodd%3BrpADMpam%3BH%261Nagam%3D%26euecmptntn%3BoE%3DSe7AL%25tG31CE5617E8%3B%2650emps5aRhar%26d%3D7cIr%3BamrseGpu%3DNounmeupaatispn%26moorP%3Bie%3DtunSs=xwRup8mfZQuAxM-2Hoqw_IAtUgQ. Accessed 6 September 2024. For articles attempting to interpret survey results see Markowe, H. L. J. 1988. The Frequency of Child Sexual Abuse in the UK. *Health Trends* 20: 2–6; Markowe, H. L. J. 1988, July. Implications of the Cleveland Inquiry. *British Medical Journal* 16: 151.

[4] Miles, Tim. 1991. Children's Charities Call for Watchdog. *The Times*, June 17, 6. 'Available at url': © **Times Newspapers Limited**. https://www.gale.com/intl/c/the-times-digital-archive. Accessed 8 June 2023.

In her important book on child protection in England, Jennifer Crane discussed ChildLine as an organisation that worked self-consciously with children's testimonies, and which promoted children's sharing of experience and emotion as "a positive phenomenon".[5] The discussion of ChildLine UK here provides a case study of experiential expertise flowing from individual actors to an organisation and on to policy in the model that this collection defines as individuals (in this case, children) moving into a new space (in this case, the new service provision of the telephone helpline).[6] ChildLine UK's targeting of children offers historians new insights, moreover, into the development of experiential expertise in relation to children and young people. Indeed, more than simply representing children's experience, ChildLine looked to cast the children and young people who reached out to the organisation as experiential experts. ChildLine's approach is particularly notable and remarkable given the pre-existing social hierarchies of age that continued to be at work within late-twentieth-century society. This framed ChildLine UK as a service in which adults worked as counsellors and leaders to support children. Experiential knowledge was held first by the children that telephoned ChildLine and shared their own understandings of their experiences with the helpline, and whom the organisation then treated as experiential experts. ChildLine in turn harnessed this experiential expertise, and the organisation went on to claim professional expertise in children's welfare, speaking back to practitioners, policy-makers, parents, and children themselves.

The second new intervention this chapter makes is to think more deeply about how children addressed their own desires to "fare well", and how this worked in dialogue with organisational attempts to represent children's experiences and experiential expertise. Here, I am contributing to work on the relationality of children's agency with reference to children's communication practices.[7] In thinking about these issues, the social and cultural frameworks of ChildLine UK's provision to children are noteworthy. Launched on national television, the telephone helpline

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[5] Crane, Jennifer. 2018. *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience and Emotion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 56–57. 'Available at url': © **Times Newspapers Limited**.

[6] See 'Introduction' in this collection.

[7] Abebe, Tatek. 2019. Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence. *Social Sciences* 8, 3: 1–16.

was aligned through the popular television programme, *That's Life!* (BBC One, 1973–1994) both to a culture of campaigning journalism and a burgeoning, wider movement of patient consumerism, that Alex Mold has discussed.[8] Framed within these contexts, ChildLine was very deliberately positioned as outside of the family, formal educational provision and established statutory and voluntary children's services. A founding aim was to give children and young people an alternative space to share and harness experiences about their own wellbeing.[9]

ChildLine was not entirely dissonant in this endeavour: within the UK, charities such as Kidscape (founded in 1985) offered new spaces for child protection (through a focus on education), and internationally, children's telephone helplines proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s (although many remained attached to existing services).[10] However, ChildLine's founding aim to offer a stand-alone listening service that was confidential to use was distinctive. Early marketing presented ChildLine as a crisis line, and the helpline's specially shortened telephone number, "0800 11 11 11", was displayed below the emergency "999" number on the inside front cover of all telephone directories and in all of British Telecom's public telephone kiosks.[11] The helpline acknowledged the urgency of children being listened to. Indeed, ChildLine encouraged children to claim agency in their own welfare by making the decision themselves to contact the helpline, and then to help individual children to find resources within their local community.

Beginning in the 1990s, ChildLine developed also as a lobbying body, advocating for improved services and approaches to support children's wellbeing. In this work, too, the organisation actively promoted children's capacities to address their own wellbeing. It used this insight to

[8] Mold, Alex. 2011. Making the Patient-Consumer in Margaret Thatcher's Britain. *The Historical Journal* 54: 509–528.

[9] Writing in the 1990s, Nigel Parton argued that the foundation of ChildLine illustrated the collapse of confidence of the "welfare consensus in child care" and embodied a wider critique of state-led children's services that had begun in the 1960s and expanded in the 1970s and 1980s. Parton, Nigel. 1996. The New Politics of Child Protection. In *Thatcher's Children? Politics, Childhood and Society in the 1980s and 1990s*, ed. Jane Pilcher and Stephen Wagg, 46. London: Falmer Press.

[10] On Kidscape, see Crane, *Child Protection*, 77–105.

[11] British Telecom Supports ChildLine, October 23 1986, TCE 452/2 (2/2); British Telecom Increases Help to ChildLine, 28 December 1986, TCE 454/3, Press releases, BT Group Archives, London.

argue within wider social and policy terms that children's welfare needs were not being met. As part of this work, ChildLine represented children's experiential expertise in order to critique existing cultures, systems and structures of children's welfare. In tracing this process, I look at how, whilst advocating for the agency of children as communicators, it was ChildLine, rather than the children themselves, that used children's experiential expertise to help children "fare well". In the final part of the chapter, I discuss evidence that points to some children cutting across these organisational goals in ways that are complementary to the resistance shown by clients of charity workers in the early twentieth century that historians such as Emily Abel have discussed.[12] These subversive acts show children engaging with the telephone helpline precisely to articulate alternative ideas about the usefulness of the service within their own logics of fairness and wellbeing, which might be different to ChildLine's.

Children Sharing Experiential Expertise

As a new resource to support children's wellbeing, ChildLine UK appealed to children on its launch in 1986 to talk proactively about their experiences and emotions. The launch film, first shown on the television programme, *Childwatch* (BBC One, 30 October 1986), depicted a young girl using a telephone kiosk to make a telephone call to ChildLine, and ended with a voiceover encouraging child callers to "talk to someone who cares". The language exemplifies the late-twentieth-century voluntary sector's conscious engagement with a discourse of compassion.[13] At this moment, the logic also set apart ChildLine's provision from the field of professional children's services, which were associated with bureaucratic and formalised modes of engagement. ChildLine's launch materials rooted the helpline within a third context, too, of popular culture representations of children's unchaperoned access to the telephone. Hotlines, including those linked to celebrity culture, targeted children and adolescents in their leisure time. In the 1990s other helplines offered confidential and increasingly specialist advice services to young

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[12] Abel, Emily. 1998. Valuing Care: Turn-of-the-Century Conflicts Between Charity Workers and Women Clients. *Journal of Women's History* 10, 3: 32-52.

[13] Crane, *Child Protection*, 58.

people.[14] The image of children using telephones for their own purposes also appeared widely on children's television programmes. Although there were very real challenges of telephone access for many children, the centrality of telephones within wider consumer culture in the 1980s and 1990s stressed the potential opportunities for young people's telephone use—whether on home telephones or public payphones—and including the use of telephone helplines.

From the first weeks of ChildLine's service, children and adolescents contacted the telephone helpline in significant numbers. Between late October 1986 and early January 1987, the national press reported that 10,500 callers were trying to get through to the helpline daily, though resources stretched to covering a maximum of 500 calls.[15] In the 1990s an average of 10,000 calls a day were attempted; by 2000, this had risen to approximately 15,000 calls a day, of which ChildLine was resourced to answer 4,000.[16] These figures underline the experience of children attempting to call the helpline, as much as they do the experience of actually making contact with the helpline—they highlight, in other words, the experience of children who did not get through to the helpline, as much as those who did.

There were inequalities in the demographics of children who did make contact. The typical caller to ChildLine UK was female and aged between twelve and fifteen, but children as young as 4 and up to eighteen called the helpline, as did adults seeking advice. Over time, ChildLine looked to address some of the limitations in its reach: for example, it launched

[14] Magazines targeting teenage girls regularly featured adverts for hotlines. For examples sampled from the year 1998, see Anon. 1998. Hollywood Hotline: Secrets of the Stars Direct from America. *Just Seventeen*, January 20, 26. For adverts for specialist helplines targeting young people in the magazine *Mizz* see, for example Anon. 1998. Body and Soul, February 25–March 10, 51; and How to Help a Friend in Need, February 25–March 10, 56-57; The Truth About Skipping School, November 4–17, 38–39; Alcohol—the Truth, November 18–December 2, 36–37; AIDS—Should You Be Scared? December 2–15, 38-39. All titles accessed at The British Library.

[15] Sherman, Jill. 1987. Childline Shake-Up as Pressure Grows. *The Times*, January 9, 3. 'Available at url': © **Times Newspapers Limited**. https://www.gale.com/intl/c/the-times-digital-archive. Accessed 8 June 2023.

[16] Clare, Anthony. 1986. Centrepiece: Keeping Violence in the Family. *The Listener*, 116, 2985, November 6, 22. 'Available at url': © **BBC logo 1996; BBC & THE LISTENER are trademarks of the British Broadcasting Corporation and are used under licence**. https://www.gale.com/intl/c/the-listener-historical-archive . Accessed 8 June 2023; Harrison, ChildLine—The First Twelve Years, 284.

campaigns to encourage boys to call the helpline; it set up a Minicom service for hearing-impaired children; and established a dedicated telephone helpline for children in care.[17] But inequalities in telephone access amongst children were multiple, and reflected age, gender, regional differences, language and speech ability, as well as personal contexts. It is important to remember that accessing ChildLine was not an experience equally shared by all children. Some children would not have been able to impart their experiential knowledge to the helpline at all; for others doing so involved courage, planning and stress.

The contexts in which children contacted ChildLine UK varied substantially and made calling the helpline potentially a very variable experience for children. Most calls were one off, and the helpline's role might begin and end as a listening ear, or involve a child being immediately referred to another agency (if they consented). However, a proportion were "ongoing" calls, made by repeat callers. In these cases, child callers built up a relationship with ChildLine counsellors through making calls to the helpline over an extended period of time.[18] Children's contacts with the helpline also indicate young people's wide-ranging conceptualisations of what it meant to "fare well". ChildLine's 1996 report about boys' use of the helpline quoted young callers checking with the helpline about precisely what subjects they could discuss: "Can you ring ChildLine about school?"; "Can I ask you anything?"; "I've got a friend whose parents are getting divorced, can she ring you?"; "I suppose you've got lots more serious problems than mine".[19] These comments are interesting as they speak specifically to boys' understandings of "faring well" as constituting both inward-facing worries about the self, as well as concerns about the family. This was a conceptualisation shared more widely amongst the children who contacted the helpline, and by the early 1990s, the most

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[17] ChildLine. 1996. *We Know It's Tough to Talk: Boys in Need of Help*. ChildLine; Harrison, ChildLine—The First Twelve Years, 284; Morris, Sally and Wheatley, Helen. 1994. *Time to Listen: The Experiences of Young People in Foster and Residential Care*. ChildLine.

[18] Easton, Carole and Carpentieri, J. D. 2004. *Can I Talk to You Again? Restoring the Emotional and Mental Wellbeing of Children and Young People*. ChildLine, 54.

[19] *We Know It's Tough to Talk*, 5.

common set of problems that children telephoned to talk about were family problems.[20]

Young callers imparted experiential authority to ChildLine not only around the issues in their life that might compromise their own wellbeing. They also offered up experiential knowledge to helpline workers about children's attempts to seek help within their local communities, and their own concerns to support friends.[21] ChildLine recorded young callers explaining that they had contacted the helpline because adults within their communities either were not listening or lacked the resources to be able to support them. For instance, in a 1998 ChildLine report, a young caller to the helpline was quoted as explaining that: "Mum's solicitor and school staff suggested I ring you. I don't want to live with my dad. He's beating me. I want to live with my mum. There's going to be a court case; but no-one's listening to me".[22] In other instances, child callers passed on to ChildLine their own cultural literacy in listening to friends' problems, but still how they might not feel able to help. ChildLine's 2005 report about children's drug use quoted a twelve-year-old girl who telephoned the helpline and talked about her friend who had had sex and now kept talking about the song *Stan* by Eminem. The girl explained to the Child-Line workers that the song included lyrics that talked about someone killing themselves, and it was in this context that she worried about her friend cutting her hand and sniffing solvents.[23] In this exchange, experiential knowledge worked in two ways. The young caller passed on to ChildLine an experience about her friend's circumstances, and also an understanding of the mode (popular culture) through which her friend was trying to convey feelings.

In the act of getting through to the helpline, children conveyed additional experiential knowledge of the opportunities and limits for

[20] Christopherson, R. James. 1992. The Impact of Children's Helplines: An International Comparison. *Social Work in Action* 6, 4: 302–303.

[21] On experiential knowledge, see Borkman, Thomasina. 1976. Experiential Knowledge: A New Concept for the Analysis of Self-Help Groups. *Social Service Review* 50, 3: 445–456.

[22] ChildLine. 1998. *Unhappy Families, Unhappy Children: A ChildLine Study*. Child-Line, 26.

[23] National Children's Bureau and ChildLine. 2005. *Dangerous Highs: Children and Young People Calling ChildLine About Volatile Substance Abuse*. National Children's Bureau, 17.

supporting their own wellbeing. Some of this knowledge was ambient, meaning that it was not directly spoken of to ChildLine workers, but it was discernible, nonetheless, via the wider mechanisms through which the child contacted the helpline. Certainly, this was the case in terms of telephone calls, where what sort of telephone a child used to call the helpline could be illuminating. In the first twenty years of ChildLine's existence, children who telephoned the helpline typically did so from a telephone kiosk, a landline telephone in a family or friend's home, or from a telephone at school (only from 2000 did ChildLine start recording children contacting the helpline in significant numbers from mobile phones).[24] ChildLine also recorded the time of day or night of a child's telephone call, and worked out when children were calling in relation to other parts of their day (the school day or bedtime, for example).[25] In some calls, ChildLine counsellors inferred additional knowledge about the caller's immediate surroundings. For example, twelve-year-old Ian's story, reproduced in one ChildLine publication, described the young caller speaking quietly to a ChildLine counsellor in the call he made in the early hours of the morning on his home telephone as he tried not to wake his parents who were sleeping upstairs.[26] The telephone call to the helpline, then, could be a route into various layers of children's lived experience. Through this medium, children taught ChildLine workers about their opportunities (and limitations) to "fare well", as much as their desire to do so.

Curating Children's Experiential Expertise

ChildLine's stated methodology was twofold: first to listen to children's needs and problems and then to amplify the experiences that children shared with helpline workers for a wider public audience. Alongside

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[24] Anon. 2000. I Had No One Else To Turn To. *ChildLine 2000 Annual Review*. ChildLine, 7; 15. ChildLine UK Annual Reports have been accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service.

[25] See, for example, Epstein, Carole and Keep, Gill. 1996. What Children Tell Child-Line About Domestic Violence. In *It Hurts Me Too: Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Refuge Life*, ed. Alex Saunders. Alex Saunders, Women's Aid Federation for England, ChildLine and National Institute for Social Work, 46; ChildLine. 1996. *Listening to Ten Year Olds: A ChildLine Study*. ChildLine, 13.

[26] Anon. 1994. What Children Tell Us. *ChildLine Annual Report 1994*. ChildLine, 8.

looking to represent children's experiences to broader publics, ChildLine in this work cast children as experiential experts in their own lives, and curated the experiential authority children shared with the helpline. As a process, this was neither straightforward nor without mediation. Indeed the two goals—representing children's experience and children's experiential expertise—could jar. Listening to children, a methodology that was modelled on the provision of an anonymous service developed by older helplines, notably the Samaritans, raised questions about precisely what experiences ChildLine workers heard children speak about in the context of the goal to amplify children's testimonies.[27] Representing children's experiential knowledge for a broader public required the organisation to translate material shared by children either verbally (in a telephone call) or in text (in a letter) into formats that could have impact for various public audiences. There was a multi-layered process of selection, presentation, and interpretation of children's experiential expertise undertaken in this work. The experiential knowledge children shared with ChildLine and the messages ChildLine conveyed were not, then, one and the same thing; indeed there could be substantial, as well as subtle, reformulation between the two.

To unpick these processes, I look first at ChildLine UK's Annual Reports. These texts are a noteworthy example of the formal reporting genre: beyond the standard obligations, ChildLine's Annual Reports featured testimonies of child callers as well as writings and drawings that children had sent in to the organisation. I am interested in the presentational devices that ChildLine used in these texts to depict the experiential knowledge that children shared within their testimonies and writings. Stories and poems sent in by children were often reproduced in full in the reports, indicating how the organisation looked to bring children's voices directly to its supporters.[28] More generally, feature stories typically included quotations from callers, invoking the idea of children "speaking

[27] Varah, Chad. 1973. Introduction. In *The Samaritans in the '70s: to Befriend the Suicidal and Despairing*, ed. Chad Varah, 52. London: Constable. For additional discussion of telephone helplines, including the Samaritans, see Kate Bradley's chapter ('Connecting the Disconnected: Telephones, Activism, and "Faring Well" in Britain, 1950–2000') in this collection.

[28] See, for example, Anon. 1989. Saturdays at Half Past Three. *ChildLine: The Second Year*. ChildLine, n.p.; Anon. 1991. Julie's Story. *ChildLine Annual Report*. ChildLine, 1; 13.

for themselves". Many feature items used de-contextualised short quotations to present children's experiential expertise.[29] This approach linked to the international discourse of children sharing testimonies that was prevalent from the mid-1980s. It worked specifically here to make the children's experiences that ChildLine mediated in these materials evocative. In other features in the reports, embedded boxes of quotations were used to attribute an experience to an individual child who was often named (though names were changed for anonymity), and which were placed alongside a photograph of a child. Here, children's experiences appeared potentially more personal for readers, and the use of the long-standing technique amongst children's charities and Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of showing imagery of a suffering child might have aimed at encouraging sympathy.[30] Further presentational strategies of interpretation included using statistics to distil patterns in the data of calls and callers.

The in-text devices used by ChildLine to curate children's experiential expertise raise important questions about the power of, but also the limits to, the sharing of individual testimony. The testimonies that Child-Line drew upon in its official reports were typically fragments; they were curated snapshots of the experiential authority that individual children shared with the helpline. It is important to appreciate that the snapshot, whilst shining shafts of light upon elements of children's experiences, did not illuminate fully an individual child's experience, nor did it amount to the "collective experience" of a group of children. In form, the snapshot is very different, for example, from more extended and reflective expressions of experience that children might share in other genres of spoken testimony, or in children's life-writing, including children's diary-keeping.[31] We can also think critically about precisely what form of representation of experience the snapshot gave. If we think of the snapshot as analogous

[29] See, for example, Anon. 1990. Children Talking. *Childline Annual Report 1990*. ChildLine, 6–7; Howarth, Valerie. 1992. Executive Director's Report. *ChildLine Annual Report 1992*. ChildLine, 4.

[30] Koven, Seth. 1997. Dr Barnardo's "Artistic Fictions": Photography, Sexuality and the Ragged Child in Victorian London. *Radical History Review* 69: 6–45.

[31] The "Dear Diary" format is a key example here. There is also an especial tradition of diary-keeping amongst children undergoing persecution; for more on this see, for example, Dwork, Debórah. 2014. Raising Their Voices: Children's Resistance Through Diary Writing and Song. In *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis*, ed. Patrick Henry, 279–299. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.

to case-work files of social workers, we might locate in this evidence, as Mark Peel has done in the context of the Charity Organisation Society's case-files, the complexities of everyday organisational confrontations with shared experience. As Peel has argued, this could involve workers at an organisation making impressions and judgements, but it could also see them being moved and impacted by the experiences they heard.[32]

Curating children's experiential expertise for wider audiences involved ChildLine UK mediating and re-framing the experiential knowledge that children had shared still further. To understand this process, it is necessary to consider the data collection and storage methods used at the helpline. ChildLine counsellors used a caller record form to log details of calls made to the helpline, the caller's first name and their home town, which were then stored on a computerised database.[33] In this practice, ChildLine can be seen to be working via a form of "bureaucratic media". Scholars such as Jacqueline Wernimont have argued that over time such media came to represent the professional tools of many public bodies, ranging from the demographer, enumerator, insurance broker and health provider, and which have had huge ramifications for the ways in which data gets mediated to wider publics.[34] ChildLine's caller record form was a material outcome of the organisation's mediation of children's experiential knowledge. However, the form contributed to a process that shifted this knowledge from its original form to another. Indeed, in using this system, ChildLine schematised what was the very complex and multi-stage process of the transmission of knowledge from a child to the organisation.

On the caller record form, a ChildLine counsellor recorded their immediate distillation of the knowledge a child caller had shared with them during a telephone call. As a collected body of evidence, the forms provided datasets for many of ChildLine UK's research studies. These studies were disseminated in a number of thematic reports, published from the early 1990s onwards. Some reports featured findings from specific campaigns or studies, for example *Listening to Ten Year Olds*

[32] Peel, Mark. 2005. Charity, Casework and the Dramas of Class in Melbourne, 1920–1940: Feeling Your Position. *History Australia* 2, 3: 83.3.

[33] ChildLine's caller form is reprinted in Harrison, Hereward, Irgens, Peter, and Williams, Sarah. 2001. *European Telephone Helplines for Children and Young People*. ChildLine, 58–59.

[34] Wernimont, Jacqueline. 2018. *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media*. London: MIT Press, 22, 81.

(1996). Others were more synoptic, for example *Talking With Children About Child Abuse: ChildLine's First Ten Years* (1996); and others were specially commissioned by government or private agencies, for example *Time to Listen: The Experiences of Young People In Foster And Residential Care* (1994). In 1997 alone, ChildLine UK published eight reports and leaflets. ChildLine's reports varied in whether they were aimed at parents, policy-makers, practitioners, or the wider public. Reports typically stressed the formal research process ChildLine had undertaken, making explicit the sampling size used in the studies, the qualitative and quantitative research methods, and wider contextual knowledge that had been consulted.

In a range of ways in these reports we can see how ChildLine workers layered interpretation upon the children's testimonies. The complexity of first hearing children's experiential knowledge and secondly curating children's experiential expertise is evidenced both in terms of the subject matter and in how the reports theorised young callers' communication practices. For example, in a 1998 report on child callers to ChildLine from Northern Ireland, the organisation treated the experiential expertise of children growing up during "The Troubles".[35] Quotations used in this report referenced children's fear of paramilitary organisations. This included children's bullying of peers that they were a member of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) or Irish Republication Army (IRA); and children's recognition of the political status of adults in their community (one child caller identified a friend's father as a member of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA): "he's got guns").[36] Such evidence showed that in the lived expertise of children, it could be dangerous for people to know someone's name or address and work out which religious and political community they belonged to, but the report also drew conclusions about distinctive communication practices of these callers. As the author of the report, Anne Mason concluded: "Children and young people from Northern Ireland are more reluctant to give information about themselves

[35] "The Troubles" refers to the years of violence c. 1969 to 1998 in Northern Ireland. ChildLine opened its first counselling centre in Northern Ireland (in Belfast) in December 1999. Before then children calling the helpline from Northern Ireland had their calls answered on ChildLine telephone lines in the North West Centre, in Manchester, England.

[36] Mason, Anne. 1998. *Children Calling from Northern Ireland: A ChildLine Study.* ChildLine 21, 27. Accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service.

than their counterparts in the rest of the UK".[37] Equally, in ChildLine's 1996 report, *Children and Racism*, Mary MacLeod discussed how children did not name their experiences to fit adult categorisations, and what could be learnt from the knowledge children did share might be as much "the holding of a mirror" onto oneself and society.[38] Children's experiential knowledge, it was acknowledged, could be impenetrable to adults, if not certainly often difficult to access. And as this example suggests, the work of casting and treating children as experiential experts could pose the organisation challenges in achieving its goal of speaking for children.

CLAIMING EXPERTISE OVER CHILDREN "FARING WELL"

As a voluntary provision for young people, ChildLine UK heard from young callers asking for help, not necessarily making an allegation or a complaint against an individual. It heard children "referring themselves", rather than being referred to a service by an outside agency; and it heard children critiquing the limitations of established welfare structures. In this respect, the telephone helpline sat outside of the framework of professional services. Yet from its beginnings ChildLine engaged with a range of professional expertise. On the television programme *Childwatch*, which launched the helpline, professional experts from the voluntary sector, statutory social services, and child psychiatry were each given platforms to speak. From its formal establishment, ChildLine worked with both an Advisory Council and a dedicated Professional Advisory Group. Over time, ChildLine's goal to publicise the experiences children shared with the helpline shifted the organisation's image to a body with professional expertise in its own right. This was typically presented in terms of organisational proximity to children's experiential expertise. ChildLine reports emphasised the "unique insights" into children's wellbeing and the feelings of being disregarded that child callers conveyed, which underscored their arguments for new forms of support to be put in place.[39]

[37] Ibid. 31.

[38] MacLeod, Mary. 1996. *Children and Racism*. ChildLine 4; 6.

[39] ChildLine, *Unhappy Families*, 2; Keep, Gill. 2000. *No Home and Alone: Runaway and Homeless Young People Calling ChildLine*. ChildLine, 2.

A case study of ChildLine's work around child bullying can help to show in closer detail the mechanisms through which the organisation worked to cast children's experiential expertise and translate it into professional expertise. ChildLine's research on bullying followed its institution of two specialist telephone helplines: the Bullying Line (March–May 1990) and a second line that ran in 1994. The evidence of children's use of these helplines resulted in ChildLine producing a series of texts targeting variously parents, teachers, governors, and children and adolescents, including in reports published in children's and teenage magazines.[40] A key finding of ChildLine's research was that there were significant differences in adults' and children's definitions of bullying. In *Why Me? Children Talking to ChildLine About Bullying* (1996), authors detailed how young callers differentiated types of bullying as well as effects.[41] However, as significant in ChildLine's claims to professional expertise was its interpretative work around the tenor of how children talked about being bullied. Authors of an article published in *Childright* in early 1995, following the closure of ChildLine's second bullying helpline, wrote that: "The most powerful message is how dreadful they [children] feel, this comes over from how they sound as much as from what they say: fear, shame, hopelessness and despair".[42]

The organisation went on to affirm its expertise in bullying in the early 2000s, reporting that bullying was the most common problem that children had talked about both to ChildLine UK and ChildLine Scotland since 1996.[43] In 2001, ChildLine organised a national conference on bullying and produced materials for teachers and other professionals

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[40] Mary MacLeod has talked about ChildLine's relationship with the children's magazines *Mizz* and *My Guy* which supported the helpline to reach a wide child readership. MacLeod, Mary. 2016. In *30 Years of ChildLine (1986–2016): Witness Seminar Held 1 June 2016, at the BT Tower, London*. Transcript held at Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Coventry, eds. Eve Colpus and Jennifer Crane, 22. https://warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/archives_online/speakingarchives/childline/1178-1-4-3_transcript_30yearschildlinesubmit_pdf.pdf. Accessed 8 June 2023.

[41] MacLeod, Mary and Morris, Sally. 1996. *Why Me? Children Talking to ChildLine About Bullying*. ChildLine, 39–40, 73.

[42] Anon. 1995. Over 58,000 calls later: ChildLine's Bullying Helpline Closes. *Childright*: *Bulletin of Law and Policy Affecting Children and Young People in England and Wales* 113, 7. Accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service.

[43] Anon. 2004. Caring About Bullying. *ChildLine Annual Review 2004*. ChildLine, 1.

supporting children.[44] In 2003, the organisation commissioned with the Department for Education and Skills an independent research study on child bullying.[45] Indeed, this final intervention is striking in terms of ChildLine's status as an expert service. By the early 2000s, the organisation had evolved from listening to children's experiential knowledge, to curating this knowledge as expertise, and now claiming their own expertise to commission external bodies to carry out further research.

In appropriating children's experiential expertise around wellbeing, ChildLine had a number of targets. One was children and adolescent policy-makers. ChildLine worked through a number of channels to develop an advisory role amongst these professionals. The organisation undertook lobbying work, for example in 1997 as part of the Children's Charities Consortium, for the creation of the Sex Offenders Register under the Sex Offenders Act (1997), and, separately in campaigning for the creation of a Children's Commissioner, which was established under the Children Act 2004. From the mid-1990s onwards, the helpline submitted evidence as an authority on a number of national commissions.[46] ChildLine also had success in direct advisory work in governmental policy. For example, a number of its recommendations about pregnancy amongst young people made to the New Labour Cabinet's Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 1999 were taken up by the Cabinet. These included improved education for adolescents about sex and relationships, and the expansion of telephone helpline provision for teenagers seeking advice about sex and pregnancy.[47] Such recommendations, which fed into government-sponsored projects, were a direct result of ChildLine UK harnessing the experiential expertise of child callers. Its report to the SEU drew upon a research sample of 771 case records of calls to

[44] Bond, Henrietta. 2002. *Bullying: Symptoms, Strategies and Solutions That Work. A ChildLine Conference*. ChildLine.

[45] Oliver, Christine and Candappa, Mano. 2003. *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the Views of Children and Young People*. London: Queen's Printer.

[46] For example, UK National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse (established in 1994) and National Inquiry into Self-Harm among Young People (established in 2004).

[47] Keep, Gill, 1999. Teenage Pregnancy: "I Can't Believe It's Happened to Me". *Childright* 156, 5–7 (Accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service); Social Exclusion Unit. 2001. *Preventing Social Exclusion*. London: Cabinet Office, 67–70.

the helpline in 1997–1998 in which young callers talked about the lack of community resources and sex education programmes for young people.

ChildLine UK researchers and personnel also published articles in specialist academic and practitioner publications. Here, authors used the experiential knowledge young people had shared with the helpline to argue for reforming practice. The targeted titles (and thereby intended readerships) of this work ranged widely, from law and policy publications, to feminist journals, and journals aimed at medical health professionals.[48] Other publications shared the organisation's expertise in telephone helpline counselling.[49] The potential for ChildLine to re-shape professional practices was suggested in many of these writings. The magazine *Community Care,* which commissioned ChildLine UK to write the report, *Child Protection: Everybody's Business* (1997), later argued that "social services practitioners have welcomed" the organisation's recommendations.[50]

Separately, the paediatrician Dr Shelia Cross evaluated the records of young callers who telephoned ChildLine about health problems for the publication, *I Know You're A Doctor But…Children Calling ChildLine About Their Health* (1998). Cross wrote that she had discovered through her engagement with the testimonies children shared with ChildLine a newfound understanding of children's non-compliance with medical treatment, which was about the need for children to be in control of their bodies.[51] As a specialist, Cross observed how the children's experiential expertise that ChildLine represented augmented her own insights and understanding. Having claimed the experiential expertise of children in their own wellbeing and "faring well", therefore, ChildLine was not only

[48] See, for example, Keep, Teenage Pregnancy; Saraga, Esther and MacLeod, Mary. 1997. V. False Memory Syndrome: Theory or Defence Against Reality? *Feminism and Psychology* 7, 1: 46–51; MacLeod, Mary. 1997. Responsibility for Services for Runaway Children Must Be Shared. *BMJ* 315, 312, doi:10.1136/bmj.315.7103.312. Accessed 6 September 2024.

[49] Harrison, Irgens, and Williams, *European Telephone Helplines;* Epstein, Carole. 1997. You Can Do Therapy on the Telephone. *Young Minds Magazine* 29: 12–15; Dow, Pamela. 2004. Boys Allowed: Using What Boys and Young Men Tell ChildLine to Inform Training for Helpline Counsellors. *Working With Young Men* 2, 3: 23–27 (Accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service).

[50] Siddall, Rhondda. 1997. Keep Them Safe. *Community Care* 18, 2: 1178.

[51] Kmietowicz, Zosia. 1998. ChildLine Report Reveals Extent of Children's Health Fears. *BMJ* 316: 1766, doi:10.1136/bmj.316.7147.1766a. Accessed 6 September 2024.

applying this expertise within its own work. The helpline also affirmed its expertise amongst the developing work of a wider body of professionals. This had implications for a diffused level of impact in terms of responses to children's welfare.

Back to the Children

As well as speaking to policy-makers, professionals, and practitioners about children's wellbeing, ChildLine's campaigns centred messaging to children. In this process, ChildLine harnessed the experiential knowledge that children had shared with them to talk back to children, now in the position of an expert organisation. What about children's reactions? How did children respond to ChildLine's casting of experiential expertise around children's lives?

There is evidence that some children did not accept ChildLine UK's professional expertise. The organisation's work regarding child witnesses in court is an instructive example here. Following campaigning by Child-Line and the publication of the *Pigot Report* (1989), the Criminal Justice Act (1991) allowed child witnesses to provide evidence in court. In 1993, ChildLine worked with the Department of Health, Home Office and other UK children's charities to produce *The Child Witness Pack*. The pack comprised a guidance book for parents, and separate booklets aimed at children going to court as witnesses aged under ten and over ten. The booklets aimed to demystify the process of giving evidence in court and the feelings that child witnesses might have, and tried to use approachable formats. For example, the publications aimed at children used plain English and cartoon drawings, and included games and tips.

In one academic study of May 1993 evaluating *The Child Witness Pack* which canvassed the views of Year 8 (thirteen- and fourteen-year-old) pupils from an outer London state school, their teachers, and educational psychologists, 79% of pupils were found to be positive about the materials. However, some of the schoolchildren pushed back at the representation of children and their situations within the texts. Some pupils found the illustrations in the booklets "babyish and old-fashioned", and others described the source material as "boring and irrelevant".[52] This evidence suggests that whilst some children accepted ChildLine's emphases, not all did. It

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[52] Gersh, Irvine S., Gersh, Adam N., Lockhart, Ruth and Moyse, Shirley A. 1999. The Child Witness Pack: An Evaluation. *Educational Psychology in Practice* 15, 1: 45–50.

might reveal a broader practice whereby ChildLine UK, in drawing upon the experiential knowledge of a minority of children who had self-selected to share their experiences, missed other children. What is more certain from this evidence is that in speaking authoritatively back to a broader constituency of children, ChildLine did not always get it right.

Evidence of children critiquing ChildLine UK-produced materials can be read as part of a broader picture showing how some children cut across the narratives of expertise that the organisation claimed. This could happen at various stages from the process of children sharing experiential knowledge to the translation of this knowledge into professional expertise. In some cases, it happened at the point that children telephoned the helpline. A common experience was telephone calls where children were silent, said little, or used a questioning style of communication. ChildLine categorised such calls as "testing calls" and these were one example of the organisation's broader analytic category of "inconclusive calls". Such calls were prolific. For example, across its six-month duration, between January and July 1991, 80% of telephone calls to the dedicated Boarding School line were recorded as "inconclusive".[53] Prank or hoax calls by child callers, very much part of the broader telephone cultures of children and young people in the 1990s, were also common at ChildLine. Critics argued callers took advantage of the organisation's policy of confidentiality by pretending to suffer from abuse or to seek attention.[54] In other cases, ChildLine counsellors reported children hanging up on a telephone call.[55] This evidence shows children's engagement with the permissive nature of ChildLine, as a space for them to have agency over making contact with the helpline. It also shows that, for their own reasons, children might exercise the right not to share experiences with the helpline. In each of these cases, the young caller withheld sharing their own experiential knowledge with the organisation. In doing so, they disrupted the processes upon which ChildLine came to build its professional expertise.

Other children's behaviours compromised ChildLine's project to amplify the experiences of children precisely because young callers used

[53] La Fontaine, Jean and Morris, Sally. 1991. *The Boarding School Line, January–July 1991* (*A Report from ChildLine to the D. E. S.*). ChildLine, 3.

[54] Odekon, Mehmet. 2015. *The Sage Encyclopaedia of World Poverty*. London: Sage, 213.

[55] See, for example, Anon. 2000. Being a Counsellor Is About Ordinary People. It's Open to All. *ChildLine 2000 Annual Review*. ChildLine, 13.

the helpline to claim alternative logics of "faring well". Specifically, as commentators by the 1990s noted, some children engaged with the helpline in order to push back against adult authority within their everyday life. Colin Chalmers, who edited the bi-monthly magazine *Scottish Child*, noted this phenomenon in an article published in the magazine in 1991, the year following the launch of ChildLine Scotland. Chalmers mused that "the work that ChildLine does has got a lot to do with power", and he went on to ask

> So what exactly goes on at ChildLine, this organisation that seems to have a brand recognition level up there with Levis and Coca-Cola? What do they do that gets kids telling adults "I'll get ChildLine" when they want to even up the score a bit?[56]

This recognition that the helpline might operate for some children to "even up" the imbalance of power between adult and child was perceptive and pointed to children's alternative ideas about the usefulness of the service within their own logics of fairness and wellbeing.

Although it is difficult for the historian to find evidence beyond the anecdotal, folk memory dating from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s does point to the phenomenon of the joke made by children that they would phone ChildLine on adults (often parents). For some this meant simply reciting ChildLine's telephone number.[57] It is important here to come back to the diversity of the young people who were telephoning ChildLine, and why they were doing so. The practice of reciting the helpline's number might have been often a hollow threat. Certainly it was a starkly different experience to those of children who called the helpline and shared experiences of long-term trauma or immediate danger. These latter children might be very stressed when making a call, and often struggled to find the privacy to do so safely. The practice of jokingly stating Child-Line's number is revealing, however, of a more commonplace belief that children's engagement with the telephone helpline could be personally empowering (often especially against parents), which has since been seen

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[56] Chalmers, Colin. 1991. Talking to Strangers: ChildLine in Scotland. *Scottish Child* August/September: 13. Accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service.

[57] See, for example, 2017. Why I'm Glad I Called ChildLine. *Shout Out UK* website, October 25, https://www.shoutoutuk.org/2017/10/25/why-you-should-probably-call-childline/. Accessed 4 April 2023.

to represent generational change.[58] In all of these instances of joking or threatening to contact ChildLine, children's own experiential authority around their wellbeing is centred in dialogue with the helpline provision. But the examples also point to the potential limits that might be placed upon organisational deployment of experiential expertise by young users of a service whose own purpose in contacting the helpline might be different to the formal intended aims.

Conclusion

Writing in a 1995 paper presented to the UK National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse, Mary MacLeod, then Director of Policy at ChildLine UK, elaborated on ChildLine's methodology of listening to children and amplifying their experiences. "ChildLine, in fulfilling its aim to bring children's voices into the public domain", MacLeod argued, "is not arguing that children are the only ones who know about themselves, or the ones who know best, but that children's views, experiences and feelings should be taken into account both in defining abuse and analysing outcomes of interventions".[59] Writing within the context of policy work, MacLeod offers the historian one example of ChildLine's theorisation of the experiential knowledge that children possessed of their lives, and the need for professional accountability to demonstrate that this was used for the good of children's wellbeing. Activating children's experiential knowledge was a central goal in this argument, and informs what we see in this collection as children's chances to "fare well". This knowledge did, however, need to be interpreted by professional bodies, as well as harnessed. As the quotation infers, this involved active work. As this chapter has shown, this work could itself be contested.

In turning attention to questions of process, this chapter has offered a distinct way of thinking about the complexities involved in the organisational claiming of experiential expertise. ChildLine UK's direct proximity to children's experiential knowledge did not amount to a straightforward act of transference from children to the helpline; it also gave the

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[58] See, for example, Brooks, Ben. 2020. *Every Parent Should Read This Book*. London: Quercus Editions, 2.

[59] MacLeod, Mary. 1995. *What Children Tell ChildLine About Being Abused*. ChildLine, 3. Accessed at NSPCC Library and Information Service.

organisation the opportunity to proclaim children's experiential expertise and then harness it themselves for children's welfare and wellbeing. In deploying this expertise over understanding children's wellbeing, Child-Line had substantial impact in the 1990s and 2000s on a range of policy areas around children's rights and protection, as well as a more diffused impact amongst a wider body of professionals. Through close reading of the presentational strategies that underpinned the work, this chapter has shown the multi-layered processes through which the experiential expertise accredited to one group—those children who shared testimonies with ChildLine—was translated and transposed into organisational expertise. This involved an active dialogue between children's shared knowledge and organisational interpretation on at least two levels. ChildLine counsellors first interpreted the material in their reporting practices and then its researchers and leading policy figures analysed and interpreted this data for publications and policy recommendations.

In tracing the mechanisms through which experiential knowledge was transposed into expertise, this chapter has also highlighted the potential for children to contest organisational appropriation of children's experiential expertise. Children's "testing" and hoax telephone calls to ChildLine, as well as the practices of hanging up early on a call to the helpline, is evidence of how some children might be sceptical of the helpline's approach. In this way callers were able to subvert the process of sharing and translating experiential knowledge that ChildLine foregrounded. Indeed, these children did not share experiential knowledge with the helpline, they held it back. Children's use of the helpline to push back at family and local community authority show that in other cases, some young people rejected the helpline's framework of amplifying children's experiences altogether. Looking at this evidence, the chapter underscores the limits of the appropriation of experiential expertise that organisations themselves had to negotiate. In doing so, the chapter highlights the need to pay attention to how differing frameworks of "faring well" might clash as the work of claiming experiential expertise, and then curating it, rubbed up against each other.

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Identity

Justifying Experience, Changing Expertise: From Protest to Authenticity in Anglophone "Mad Voices" in the Mid-Twentieth Century

Chris Millard

Introduction

Between the 1960s and 1980s, many accounts written in English by people who had been inmates in asylums and psychiatric hospitals were republished and re-publicised. This creation of a canon of English-speaking historical "mad voices" was dominated by accounts from England but included some from the USA. Insofar as this canon was limited to those who had been institutionalised, it normally stretched back to the end of the eighteenth century (although efforts were sometimes made to include those such as late-medieval Christian mystic Margery Kempe). From at least the 1830s, changes emerged in the justifications given by the authors for writing and publishing these accounts—which are glossed over in the twentieth-century republication. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these accounts are predominantly published by those who never accept that they are mad and are overwhelmingly focused on the injustice of their confinement. By the 1960s,

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there is an established sense—both in the accounts that are written at that point and in the gloss accompanying their republication—that the authenticity of the madness narrated is a key (although ambivalent) part of the value of publication.[1]

This chapter analyses these changes by focusing on the various justifications offered for publishing such accounts, sometimes contrasting the original justifications with those prevalent in the twentieth century when republishing them. Two of the most famous collections are Dale Peterson's collection *A Mad People's History of Madness* (1982) and Roy Porter's synthetic *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane* (1987).[2] Accounts have been also analysed from a literary perspective, especially thinking about tense, time and narrative.[3] By the early 1960s, there are hundred-strong bibliographies of such accounts, so this chapter is not a comprehensive survey.[4] I also make no apology for the Anglo-American, English-language focus of this tradition. This is an influential canon that exists, and it needs to be historicised. It certainly excludes a huge number of voices, is disproportionately educated, and overwhelmingly white.

The present volume is committed to pluralising ideas of welfare and experience, and this chapter participates in that by separating out the varying ways that people articulate their experiences, and the uses to which they are put. I agree with the editors that "expertise gleaned

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[1] Alongside this, accounts are collected and excerpted by psychiatrists because they are said to constitute the raw material of psychopathology, for clinicians to study. This tradition is important, but different enough that it needs separate analysis. For example, Kaplan, Bert. 1964. *The Inner World of Mental Illness*. Harper and Row; Landis, Carney, and Mettler, Fred A. 1964 *Varieties of Psychopathological Experience* Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

[2] Peterson, D. ed. 1982. *A Mad People's History of Madness*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press 1982; Porter, Roy. 1987. *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane*. London: George Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

[3] Glew, L. K. 2021. Memoirs of Madness. *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, 9: 97–104; Hanganu-Bresch, Cristina, and Carol Berkenkotter. 2012. Narrative Survival: Personal and Institutional Accounts of Asylum Confinement. *Literature and Medicine*, 30; Ingram, Allan. 2000. Time and Tense in Eighteenth-Century Narratives of Madness. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 30: 60–70.

[4] Sommer, Robert and Osmond, Humphry. 1960. Autobiographies of former mental patients. *Journal of Mental Science,* 106: 648–662; Sommer, Robert and Osmond, Humphry. 1961. Autobiographies of Former Mental Patients: Addendum. *Journal of Mental Science,* 107: 1030–1032.

through lived experience is not reducible to a unified mode of type of action"[5]; further, I contend that the category of "experiential expertise" contains strands it is useful to separate. There is a sense, shared across this section that "categories of identity expressed as experiential expertise" (here: madness, sanity, illness) are important enough that we should dig down into the precise (plural, changing) articulations of experience that buttress them.

This chapter first considers the role of experiential expertise in Mad Studies (especially history) and in psychiatric healthcare, linking both these concerns to the accounts considered. Then the accounts are analysed in three broadly chronological sections: the protest literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the change in experiential expertise around the mid-nineteenth century and the continuing shifts afterwards, towards a sense of authenticity becoming one basis for experiential expertise.

Mad Studies and Experts by Experience in Psychiatry

Histories of these experiences are valuable today in at least two ways. First, the twenty-first century's flourishing of Mad Studies has "specifically centred the knowledges and theorising of those who have been deemed mad [with] much focused attention… on the retrieving, documenting, understanding, revisiting and teaching of mad people's history".[6] History is central here. Geoffrey Reaume back in 1994 was bullish about the value of such accounts to historians

Why should historians be interested in looking at the history of psychiatry from the perspectives of, those deemed to be mad by their contemporaries? The answer should be obvious: to try to give a voice to those who have been and continue to be among the most marginalized members of society.[7]

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[5] See Introduction to this volume.

[6] Gorman, Rachel and LeFrançois, Brenda. 2017. "Mad studies". In *Routledge international handbook of critical mental health,* ed. Bruce Cohen, 107. London: Routledge.

[7] Reaume, Geoffrey. 1994. Keep Your Labels Off My Mind!… Psychiatric History from the Patients' Perspectives. *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History,* 11: 397.

This chapter seeks to understand the different kinds of supposedly obvious value that these texts might (or might not) have had, according to who wrote, published, republished, collected or edited them. Drawing upon the editors' argument that experiential expertise must be precisely contextualised, and its plural and open-ended uses emphasised, this chapter untangles experiential expertise types (that are often elided together) as part of recovering the individual, heterogeneous strategies that characterise "faring well" as much as welfare.

Alongside Mad Studies, the emergence of experts by experience, with ideas of specifically psychiatric experiential expertise (opposed to clinical "expertise by training"), has centred experiential expertise in policy and service provision.[8] As the editors indicate, this expertise has been theorised at least since the 1970s, in the context of self-help groups.[9] One article from an Australian context notes that it is only in the past thirty years that "there has been an increasing focus on including consumers/survivors in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of services [and] as involvement of consumers/survivors has increased, views about authentic and effective engagement have evolved".[10] This is not simply the case for psychiatric services. One argument in the context of cancer care is that "experiential knowledge is a central element of involvement and one that is sidelined to the detriment of the organisations and individuals concerned".[11]

This idea of experiential expertise and "authentic" engagement has been historicised and analysed more broadly.[12] Diana Rose has written

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[8] Care Quality Commission "Experts by Experience" https://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us/jobs/experts-experience Accessed 17 January 2023.

[9] For more discussion of this see the Introduction to this collection.

[10] Daya, Indigo, Hamilton, Bridget and Roper, Cath. 2020. Authentic Engagement: A Conceptual Model for Welcoming Diverse and Challenging Consumer and Survivor Views in Mental Health Research, Policy, and Practice. *International Journal of Mental Health Nursing,* 29: 299.

[11] Cotterell, Phil, & Morris, Carolyn. 2011. The Capacity, Impact and Challenge of Service Users' Experiential knowledge. In *Critical Perspectives on User Involvement* eds. Marian Barnes and Phil Cottrell, 69. Bristol: Policy Press.

[12] For example Beresford, Peter. 2002. User Involvement in Research and Evaluation: Liberation or Regulation? *Social Policy and Society,* 1: 95–105; Scourfield, Peter. 2009. A Critical Reflection on the Involvement of "Experts by Experience" in Inspections. *British Journal of Social Work,* 40: 1890–1907; Millard, Chris. 2020. Using Personal Experience in the Academic Medical Humanities: a Genealogy. *Social Theory & Health*, 18: 184–198;

persuasively that "the idea of 'lived experience' as the ultimately authentic voice of marginalisation, especially in mental health, requires serious attention and will need to be reconfigured to ensure whiteness and class are not the norm".[13] This "ultimately authentic voice of marginalisation" is how the experiences have been understood in Mad Studies, and is a definition that does not map well onto the pre-1830s material considered here. Whilst the concept of experiential expertise emerged most explicitly from the 1970s, in this chapter I am content to describe the protest literature as simply a different kind of experiential expertise, although not named as such at the time. Rose has long argued for a more collective and critical reflection on what we think of as experience—drawing on Joan Scott (critiquing experience) and Sandra Harding (emphasising collective subject positions).[14] These questions are also rooted in anti-racist practice, as Rose has rightly noted

> Long before Scott published her article, women of colour critiqued the Whiteness of the feminist movement, most notably beginning with bel[l] hooks... the Patriarchy analysed by feminism had no place for the experience of Black women—it was a White Patriarchy.[15]

There are thus many questions to answer about experience, and many are approached in this collection. This chapter focuses on psychiatry specifically, looking at texts that have been considered the historical roots of expertise by experience in mental healthcare, and "mad voices" in history.

Nikolas Rose introduces his chapter "Experts by Experience?" by running through some of this publishing effort in the twentieth century

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Rose, Diana. 2017. Service user/Survivor-Led Research in Mental Health: Epistemological Possibilities. *Disability & Society*, 32: 773–789.

[13] Rose, D. 2022. *Mad Knowledges and User-Led Research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 194.

[14] Scott, Joan W. 1991. The Evidence of Experience. *Critical Inquiry*, 17: 773–797; Harding, S. 1992. Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is "Strong Objectivity"? *The Centennial Review*, 36: 437–470.

[15] Rose, Diana. "Service user/Survivor-Led Research", 782. See also Rose, Diana, and Jayasree Kalathil. 2019 Power, Privilege And Knowledge: The Untenable Promise Of Co-Production In Mental "Health". *Frontiers in Sociology* 4; hooks, bell. 1989. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. South End Press; Collins, Patricia Hill. 2002. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* London: Routledge.

(including Peterson's and Porter's collections, Clifford Beers' *Mind That Found Itself* (1908) and Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964)). He asks "When it comes to madness, then, what has been the experience of those deemed mad?"[16] I approach these texts with more modest ambitions: understanding how people at the time defended the publication of their accounts, why they might have been republished or collected later, and whether any trends might be discovered in these given reasons. I want to see when these accounts begin to base their value on a specific kind of experiential expertise: having seen madness from the inside and having special insight to give as a result. This type is well expressed by Peter Barham's characterisation of Daniel Paul Schreber's *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (1903) as "an intimate and searing account of what life really amounted to below the surface façade".[17]

In its simplest form "Experts by experience have lived illness that form[s] the basis of the expertise", and this is what I looked for in these accounts, contrasting it with protest writing.[18] I refer to these accounts as "from asylum inmates" rather than "the insane" or "the mad". Particularly I want to be as descriptive as possible and avoid imputing madness or insanity to people at a distance. Many in Mad Studies use terms such as "deemed mad", and this is the tradition I wish to follow. The commitment to flexibility and plurality at the heart of this collection—finding differences of emphasis, centring local negotiation and agency, and refusing homogeneity—is what motivates this chapter. This enables keeping apart different kinds of articulations of experiences, because they do different work, underwrite different kinds of identity and activism, and are based upon different justifications.

These texts' explicit justifications for their worth take on added importance because psychiatry has traditionally disregarded the words of those considered mad. As Michelle Alison Spinelli has noted: "Because their authority could not be assumed, ex-patient writers had to rely upon other strategies to ensure that their voices were recognized as legitimate".

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[16] Rose, Nikolas. 2018. *Our Psychiatric Future*. Cambridge: Polity, 151.

[17] Barham, Peter. 2022. The Mental Patient in History. In *Palgrave Handbook of the History of the Human Sciences* vol.2. ed. David McCallum, 1229. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[18] Jones, Marjaana and Pietilä, Ilkka. 2020. Personal Perspectives on Patient and Public Involvement–Stories about Becoming and being an Expert by Experience. *Sociology of Health & Illness,* 42: 810.

Among these, Spinelli notes that accounts might draw upon literary traditions such as captivity narratives or sensation novels, ideas of a cult of mystery and also "a certain authority with readers because of their role as tour guides in the asylum underworld".[19] The question of why people might want or need to read an asylum account sits at the forefront of many of them. This forefront is often literally the foreword, preface or the introduction. These parts of books are sometimes called "paratextual" in academic analysis. This is defined by Genette as

> all those things that surround the actual literary work that we may be inclined to consider not wholly a part of it, but that nevertheless append themselves to it, whether physically, as with book covers, prefaces, afterwords, and choices over paperstock and typeface, or conceptually, as with reviews, interviews, ads, and promotional materials.[20]

My concern is considerably narrower, concerned with the bits of text inside the covers of the book under different headings: acknowledgements, prefaces, forewords—writing positioned somehow outside the main story, and how they explicitly seek to justify the writing.

Protest and Injustice—A Different Kind of Experience

The earliest texts here were first published in the eighteenth century—Alexander Cruden's *The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured* (1739), alongside Samuel Bruckshaw's *One More Proof* (1774) and William Belcher's *Address to Humanity* (1796). These wrongful confinement or protest narratives stretch throughout the nineteenth century too, with Richard Paternoster's *The Madhouse System* (1841) and Louisa Lowe's *Bastilles of England* (1883) being two of the most famous.[21] Cruden's account states that he was taken to Bethlem asylum by those "who had no

[19] Spinelli, M.A. 2020. *"Sound the Alarm": Patient Experience, Print Culture, and the American Asylum in the Nineteenth Century*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Stony Brook University, 59–60.

[20] Brookey, Robert and Gray, Jonathan. 2017. "Not Merely Para": Continuing Steps in Paratextual Research. *Critical Studies in Media Communication,* 34: 101–110.

[21] See 'Wrongful Confinement: Introduction' part of *Deviance, Disorder and the Self* online at: http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/deviance/wrongconfine/intro.htm. Accessed 26 January 2023.

right, warrant or authority in law"[22] and is implicitly, but fairly obviously, part of his efforts to seek legal redress for this confinement. Bruckshaw opens his account with an explicit justification

> When an obscure individual presumes to appeal to the public, and to state to them his private grievance, two things ought to be part of his case… importance to the public at large [and that] legal redress has been sought in vain.[23]

So a sense of importance (that his fate might befall others) along-side a legal reason: "it is this ground that the attention of the reader is requested".[24] Belcher opens his account with the justification that if this "be the means of turning the thoughts of men in power to atrocities… sacrificing my feelings to a faint hope of public good".[25] So these accounts are all penned by those who strenuously denied they were mad, seeking reform and legal redress. Not only that, these reasons were also offered as justifications for the publications.

These accounts cannot really be subsumed into the kind of experiential expertise that functions as Diana Rose puts it, as "the apex of authenticity" (Rose is rightly critical of such a framing).[26] The idea that the author is not actually mad does not match up very well with ideas of experiential expertise being valuable because of this special, authentic character. It might be a different kind of experiential expertise—if one is comfortable calling it that—but these should not be elided. It seems odd that the accounts of people whose whole reason for publishing is to demonstrate their sanity could be confidently subsumed into *A Mad People's History of Madness*, especially when the editor of that collection claims to have "tried, mostly, to have mad people and mental patients themselves address the most serious, difficult and complex issues… those who, by experience, are more closely connected to the issues".[27] Peterson, in the 1980s, glosses Bruckshaw's narrative claiming that "What may seem

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[22] Cruden, Alexander. 1739. *The London-Citizen exceedingly injured* London: Gale Ecco, 1.

[23] Bruckshaw, *One More Proof,* 4.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Belcher, *Address to Humanity* [unnumbered page].

[26] Rose, *Mad Knowledges,* 91.

[27] Peterson, *Mad People's History,* xiv.

at first glance to be an unbiased presentation… in fact contains a good deal of bias… he reveals himself to have been suspicious to the point of pathology… twice during his imprisonment he hears anonymous voices, which may have been hallucinations".

Peterson's later claim that "it is of course impossible to know whether Bruckshaw was sane or not at the time of his incarceration" rings a little hollow.[28] Roy Porter (whose collection seeks explicitly to complement Peterson's) notes that whilst both Samuel Bruckshaw and William Belcher "claim to have been perfectly sane… their self-vindication must leave that question open".[29] So if mad experience is to be taken seriously and be authentic, how can it also be called into question so fundamentally? Using this protest literature as an historical root of expertise by experience (let alone mad experience) risks retroactively transforming it (against the explicit thrust of the authors writing it) into evidence of madness. It is certainly one kind of experience, and it is used to buttress a kind of protest and activism, but in the pluralising spirit of "faring well", we must take care to draw out the differences. Cristina Hanganu-Bresch and Carol Berkenkotter are extremely careful in their article "Narrative Survival" which analyses two accounts (Herman Charles Merrivale's and Walter Marshall's) which contain "multiple variations of a central theme— in both of these cases, denial of insanity". They frame these as "Accounts of Asylum Confinement".[30] Allan Ingram, on the other hand, includes both Cruden and Bruckshaw as "Narratives of Madness" even whilst slipping uncertainly between "the negotiation of personal insanity, or imputed insanity', mentioning how "Cruden and Bruckshaw both wrote in assertion of their sanity".[31]

Reaume approaches this question explicitly, noting that "not all of the authors included by Peterson considered themselves mad, either at the time of confinement or later" and correctly points out that this "raises the methodological issue of how a historian determines whether or not someone belongs in a study of mad people's history". His decision on this point is interesting:

[28] Ibid. 58.

[29] Porter, *Social History of Madness*, 168.

[30] Hanganu-Bresch and Berkenkotter Narrative Survival, 36; Walter Marshall's "account" is fundamentally different as it is testimony to a governmental committee, rather than a published account of experiences.

[31] Ingram. Time and Tense, 64.

> The key methodological factor should be, in the case in which someone was locked up or treated as a mad person, whether or not the individual in question saw themselves as mad, then this person deserves to be included as part of mad people's history based on their experiences as being considered as such by their contemporaries In Peterson's anthology, it is clear that each person included was deemed mad at some point in his or her life, whether or not the author agreed with this definition… their perspectives have much to contribute, given their own lived experiences as being placed in this category of mental otherness.[32]

Thus, Reaume excludes those who were not treated or hospitalised as mad but includes those who were treated or incarcerated but denied they were mad. His mobilisation of "lived experience of being placed in this category of mental otherness" does not quite square with the idea of lived experience as something authentic, where the person expressing the experience has considerable interpretive power over the meaning of their utterances. The limits of certain kinds of experiential expertise become clear here—especially as it relates to activism, because the power conferred through authenticity also substantially closes off debate and critique. As Richard Flores wrote in a different context (a scholarly debate over the personal in literary criticism in the 1990s): "Could my peers write in their reviews that my account is incorrect and that I must reconsider my experience? How do they argue with my lived reality?"[33] These questions are a persistent worry in these accounts that try to root mad people's experiences through these historical accounts.

PERCEVAL'S NARRATIVE—RELIGION, PROTEST AND AUTHENTICITY

This problem cannot be solved here, but it recedes (or is displaced elsewhere) when approaching one of the most famous accounts from first half of the nineteenth century, John Thomas Perceval's *A Narrative of the Treatment Experienced by a Gentleman during a State of Mental Derangement…* (2vols 1838, 1840). Here we see something slightly more recognisable as "expertise by experience" as it is currently deployed. The

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[32] Reaume, Geoffrey. 2017. From the Perspectives of Mad People. In *The Routledge History of Madness and Mental Health* ed. Greg Eghigian, 280. London: Routledge.

[33] Flores, Richard. 1996. Problems with Personal Criticism. PMLA, 111: 1166.

son of assassinated British Prime Minister Spencer Perceval, John's life works have been much analysed: he went on to co-found the Alleged Lunatics' Friend Society and was an advocate for the rights of those deemed mad. The relation between his texts and this activism is not always clear, and much of Perceval's standing related to his class and family background, rather than the account he published. An abridged edition of this text was edited and republished by prominent anthropologist Gregory Bateson in the early 1960s, and some historical work was done on Perceval in the 1980s. The text keeps cropping up: in 2007 Hugh Gault explicitly claimed that "John Thomas [Perceval] had become an expert by experience".[34] A small excerpt of Perceval's *Narrative* was also published in *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* in 2018.[35]

One key way that the *Narrative* is different from Cruden, Bruckshaw or Belcher (or the later accounts of Merrivale, Lowe or Paternoster) is that whilst Perceval was broadly extremely unhappy at his treatment, he accepted he was mad. The opening line makes this clear: "In the year 1830, I was unfortunately deprived of the use of reason".[36] Roy Porter makes the very clarifying point that "Unlike many lunacy reformers such as Alexander Cruden, Richard Paternoster or Louisa Lowe, but centrally in the tradition of religious *apologia*, Perceval confessed that he had indeed been truly insane".[37] This shows that whilst the acceptance of having been mad—and thus being able to describe his experiences as madness—does potentially shift this account closer to an approximation of "expertise by experience", this might be down to a completely different literary (and indeed, spiritual) tradition: apologia. This point would doubtless repay further study, because it emerges elsewhere, too.

Allan Ingram contrasts Bruckshaw's and Belcher's protestations with Hannah Allen (who was not confined, but in any case) "made no such objections" about her sanity. Indeed, her pamphlet *A Narrative of God's Gracious Dealings With that Choice Christian Mrs. Hannah Allen* [1683] was written precisely to broadcast God's triumph over Satan with regard

[34] Gault, Hugh. 2008. Looking Back: An Expert by Experience. *The Psychologist*, 21: 463.

[35] Perceval, John Thomas. 2010 [1838]. Perceval's Narrative (selected by Femi Oyebode). *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 16: 22.

[36] Perceval, John Thomas. 1961 [1838/1840]. In *Perceval's Narrative* ed. Gregory Bateson, 3. Stanford University Press: Redwood City CA.

[37] Porter, *Social History of Madness*, 172.

to her "deep melancholy".[38] Whilst Ingram casts this as "madness", this religious framing, which appears extremely strongly in Perceval, might be the key to unlocking his narrative. So whilst we can appreciate similarities with current ideas of experiential expertise, we must be careful not to collapse Perceval (or Allen) into these twentieth-century categories. I should also emphasise that I am not saying one must admit madness (much less, acceptance of any specific diagnostic category) in order to be an "expert by experience" in mental healthcare.

However, it is almost impossible for the modern reading of "expertise by experience" as based on authenticity to function adequately to describe anyone who denies (in the manner of Cruden, Belcher or Bruckshaw) that they were ever mad. It may well be that there are multiple kinds of experiential expertise, or rather, multiple traditions that could be collected under that term. Clearly there are also differences between these accounts functioning as an anchor for "Mad Studies", and those as part of a genealogy of "Expertise by Experience"; running through both is a sense of respect for the experiences, of taking them seriously or "on their own terms". This does not always happen, of course, and Jilian Voronka mentions the risks of "entrenching and naturalizing difference outside of our own terms" when discussing the dangers of collaboration on the basis of "lived experience".[39] But this does show that part of the conceptual architecture of that kind of experiential expertise is that it needs to be taken on its own terms—not undercut, undermined or instrumentalised—the "apex of authenticity".

One of Perceval's justifications for writing is to raise awareness of the plight of the mad: "I wish to stir up an intelligent and active sympathy, in behalf of the most wretched".[40] But he also sees fit to justify this publication on the grounds of what he has seen

> Having been under the care of four lunatic doctors... having conversed with two others, and having lived in company with Lunatics, observing their manners, and reflecting on my own, *I deem that alone sufficient excuse*

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[38] Ingram, Time and Tense, 65–66.

[39] Voronka, Jijian. 2016. The Politics of People with Lived Experience. Experiential Authority and the Risks of Strategic Essentialism. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 23: 198.

[40] Perceval *Perceval's Narrative*, 3.

for setting forth my griefs and theirs… and for obtruding upon them more of my personal history than might otherwise be prudent or becoming.[41]

So there is desire for reform, a sense of having witnessed things worth telling, alongside an intriguing ambivalence about divulging something personal. The activism and the personal experience are distinct here. Perceval is also explicit about the role of empathy, of emotional connection: "I intreat you to place yourselves in the position of those whose sufferings I describe, before you attempt to discuss what course is to be pursued towards them. Feel for them".[42] So whilst this is still concerned with policy ("what course is to be pursued"), it is clearly emotional and personal too—chiming with the present volume's commitment to excavating the more personal and specific responses to various kinds of provision.

This personal, emotional aspect of Perceval—and its difference from what preceded it—is analysed by mother and son psychiatrist team Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, reviewing Bateson's edition of the *Narrative* in the 1960s. They note that

> The first half of the nineteenth century saw the publication of a number of tracts by former inmates of private madhouses which are unfortunately partially vitiated for the purposes of psychological study by their avowed intent to publicize the misdemeanours if not actual atrocities perpetrated in them.[43]

The "protest" seems to get in the way of something. They begin by framing Perceval's narrative as seeking to expose the conditions of the care of the insane ("needless tyranny") and thereby "procure a reform of the law".[44] Perceval's text is also framed as an object for psychological study as well as evidence of the "conditions of the insane". But from there they actually emphasise something quite different. The text is said

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[41] Ibid. emphasis added.

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Hunter, Richard and Macalpine, Ida. 1962. John Thomas Perceval (1803–1876) Patient and Reformer. *Medical History,* 6: 391–395.

[44] Hunter and Macalpine. John Thomas Perceval, 392.

to "form not less than a classic addition to the canon of the records of insanity seen from the inside".[45]

The value of the experience emerges differently here. The lengthy title of the *Narrative* does show that Perceval seeks to "explain the causes and nature of insanity", but Macalpine and Hunter see such autobiographical accounts as Perceval's as

> opportunities for the student of the human mind to study its aberrations in pure culture as it were, untrammelled and uncoloured by those subtle but uncharted influences which result from the interaction of observer and observed in the doctor-patient relation of the formal psychiatric interview.[46]

This idea of "pure culture", "uncoloured", "from the inside" (one might even say authentic), very much positions this account as a modern-sounding experience. But keep in mind that Macalpine and Hunter are reading in the 1960s, not the 1840s. They dwell upon how contemporary Perceval sounds, when his recommendation that lunatics should be free to express themselves, and that this might be therapeutic, "strikes the modern psychiatrist as almost prophetic in the accuracy of its prevision of present-day developments in mental health policy".[47] Whilst this links well with the collection's concerns on action and activism, I am wary of imputing such temporally distant meanings to Perceval's narrative—although it is clearly relevant that the text becomes used to further 1960s efforts at reform.

A number of reviews in the 1960s also mention how much Bateson cuts from his reissue, and he himself admits "There are, however, many pages devoted to bitter protest against his family and against the institutions in which he was confined… Perceval's justifications of his bitterness become repetitive".[48] Peterson (in the 1980s) notes that "Bateson has left out much of the protest material in his edition".[49] Hunter and Macalpine have no truck with this since "the value of such records lies to a large extent in their being complete and unadulterated as no observer study

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid. 391.

[47] Ibid. 395.

[48] Bateson, G. "Introduction" to *Perceval's Narrative*, xxi.

[49] Peterson *Mad People's History*, 95.

can ever be, editorial licence of this kind is hard to condone whatever the reason".[50] The purity concerns ("unadulterated") are clearly part of a strategy to frame the *Narrative* as authentic.

The positioning of the account by Peterson, Hunter and Macalpine means it functions (in the 1960s and 1980s) more as reflection of a psychological state than an overt set of policy recommendations or a recapitulation of injustices. The text might well function as all three, and yet the first of these three framings is the one eventually preferred in the 1960s—as Perceval perhaps becomes detached from a protest tradition and absorbed into a more experiential one (something made explicit by Hugh Gault's "expert by experience" comment in 2007). Peterson mentions this protest tradition in the 1980s: "The purpose of the *Narrative* seems to be very clearly stated in a preface to the second volume: to reform the laws regarding the alleged mad, the management of asylums, and the treatment of patients by their relatives".[51] Interestingly, this preface is part of what is cut from Bateson's edition. Overall, whilst this text asks for empathy, we should not be railroaded by the 1960s and 1980s framings. Instead, we might think carefully on Roy Porter's aforementioned comments (also in the 1980s, but with a keen social historian's eye) that the religious aspects of Perceval's *Narrative* (describing a fall from grace) might give us a better sense of the type of experience it represents, rather than anything to do with the authenticity of being mad in the twentieth-century sense. Again, multiple kinds of experience might usefully be kept separate here.

Ambivalent Experiences: Qualifications, Insider Knowledge and the Literary

Accounts that emerge after Perceval's similarly contain multiple justifications, whether or not they fit into the continuing tradition of "wrongful confinement" narratives. There remains in many a desire to expose the asylum conditions to the wider world (which links clearly to this tradition). This is sometimes couched in terms that might look similar to experience, but this is much more in the sense of witnessing and veracity than the value of the experience as authentic. However, there is also

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[50] Hunter and Macalpine. John Thomas Perceval, 392.

[51] Peterson *Mad People's History*, 93.

a defensive sense of the lack of qualification, or education, part of which does chime with experiential expertise as a powerful paradox. Two accounts published five years apart in 1855 and 1860 explicitly mention both qualifications or education and this desire to publicise conditions in the asylum.

Phebe Davis wrote a very short Preface to her book *Two Years and Three Months in the New York Lunatic Asylum at Utica* (1855) and confessed that "I do not feel myself qualified to write an interesting work upon the subject, but I design to give as correct information as possible… This is a duty I owe to the world".[52] A similar self-conscious honesty about expertise is found in James Frame's account *The Philosophy of Insanity* published five years later in 1860, and drawing upon his time in Glasgow Royal Asylum, Gartnavel: "my claim to be heard is not founded upon education or position, but solely upon what I have seen, and upon what I have suffered". He also justifies writing the account as it arose from "a strong feeling that I ought to do so for the benefit of others".[53] In some ways, this is a very straightforward rendering of experience, thinking about correct information and what I have seen, alongside fairly unspecific ideas of general benefit. These framings of experience as witnessing and a desire to help others also characterise Cruden, Bruckshaw and Belcher (who strenuously denied they were mad). However, the defensiveness about "lack of qualification" opens up a space where something authentic might sit. There is more in both accounts. Phebe Davis writes early in her text that

> as far as my experience is worth anything… there always have been mental sufferers in the world who suffer from causes that physicians in general do not comprehend, because it is not in their natures to suffer in the same way, or from similar causes; and my experience has told me that no one can know what to do for or to say to a person whose feelings are affected, except one of a similar nature.[54]

[52] Davis, Phebe B. 1855. *Two Years and Three Months in the New York State Lunatic Asylum at Utica* Published by the Author: Syracuse: [unnumbered page].

[53] [Frame, James.] 1860. *The Philosophy of Insanity*. Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart: [Preface].

[54] Davis. *Two Years and Three Months,* 14.

So here is something that does look like that particular late twentieth-century articulation of "expertise by experience"—valuable understanding that can only be accessed by patients and not physicians. This is remarkably similar to something written by Frame, who seeks to tell "things which no mere looker on could ever know—things which none but a sufferer could ever tell".[55] Both Davis and Frame acknowledge that they were mad, and this experience is useful. Jonathan Andrews and Chris Philo say of Frame's account (in 2017) that it is "plentiful in autobiographical authenticity" even whilst being "more substantially devoted to a wide-ranging overview of insanity".[56]

Later in the nineteenth century, these ideas of witnessing, exposing abuses and provoking reform are increasingly augmented with these mobilisations of the value of experience in itself. Charles Merrivale's account of his time in Ticehurst private asylum is published "first in serial format in the magazine *The World* in 1878 (a year after his discharge), and as a book in 1879".[57] The book, *My Experiences in a Lunatic Asylum,* is pseudonymously attributed to "A Sane Patient". Merrivale repeatedly asserts his sanity, and so his experience is not like Frame's or Davis', but he argues that "every contribution of personal experience is valuable. It is not for me to suggest schemes of reform, as it is the fashion to ask critics to do, but for those who are paid to do that".[58] So he backs away from reform but also writes that the "evil" of wrongful confinement "wants cautery to the very core and I believe that every story of the kind should be told".[59] This idea of experiences being valuable in and of themselves is a crucial part of Clifford Beers' justifications for writing his account *A Mind that Found Itself* (1908), one of the most famous accounts. The power of experience is forcefully (and rather pompously) expressed first in the dedication ("THIS BOOK IS WRITTEN BY ONE WHOSE RARE EXPERIENCES IMPEL HIM TO PLEAD FOR THOSE AFFLICTED THOUSANDS LEAST ABLE TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES") but

[55] [Frame.] *Philosophy of Insanity*. [Preface.].

[56] Andrews, Jonathan and Philo, Chris. 2017. James Frame's *The Philosophy of Insanity* 1860. *History of Psychiatry* 28: 130.

[57] Berkenkotter & Hanganu Bresch Narrative survival, 13.

[58] A Sane Patient [Herman Charles Merrivale]. 1879. *My Experiences in a Lunatic Asylum*. London: Chatto & Windus, 5–6.

[59] [Merrivale]. *My experiences*, 11.

also in the first lines of the first chapter: "This story is derived from as human a document as ever existed; and, because of its uncommon nature, perhaps no one thing contributes so much to its value as its authenticity".[60] It is difficult to parse exactly what this means, drawing upon "rare experiences", being an extremely "human" document and arguing for much "authenticity". But this is clearly the same kind of justification as late-twentieth-century "expertise by experience", with its humanity and authenticity that denotes immediacy, truth and/or the essence of insight. These are not the only reasons—Beers was a prominent campaigner for reform and adds further justification later: "I am not telling the story of my life just to write a book. I tell it because it seems my plain duty to do so… Until someone tells just such a story as mine and tells it sanely, needless abuse of helpless thousands will continue".[61] All of these justifications and types of experience coexist.

The increased prominence of authenticity in experiential expertise continues to characterise some asylum narratives further into the twentieth century. This remains more complicated position than a bare witnessing of factual truths. The authors of these accounts are often aware of this. This immediacy and explicit focus on experience is partially achieved through a negotiation of the literary, which is cast as artificial and inauthentic. Marcia Hamilcar, an English schoolteacher committed to a private asylum for 14 weeks in Winter 1907–1908, rather defensively states that: "This book does not claim to be in any sense of the term a literary production. To give the actual experiences, and to describe the unnecessary sufferings… is its raison d'être".[62] Here the experiential ("actual experiences") is positioned as opposed to any kind of "literary production". Journalist Marle Woodson was admitted (voluntarily) to Eastern State Hospital in Oklahoma for serious alcoholism (dipsomania) in the late 1920s. Writing under the pseudonym "Inmate, Ward 8" he publishes an account entitled *Behind the Door of Delusion* in 1932. Perhaps because of his profession, the book begins apologetically that it: "contains no tense situations, no harrowing suspenses, no smashing climaxes. It is innocent of literary nonsense. It is too conscientiously

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[60] Beers, Clifford, W. 1908. *A Mind that Found Itself: an AutAniography* London: Longmans, unnumbered page, 1.

[61] Ibid. 1–2.

[62] Hamilcar, Marcia. 1910. *Legally Dead: Experiences During Seventeen Weeks' Detention in a Private Asylum*. London: J. Ouseley, [unnumbered page].

true for that".[63] Thus in both these cases, the disavowal of some self-consciously "literary production" or "literary nonsense" is central to the politics of authenticity. However, the choice to let go of "the literary" is just as much effort and contains just as much self-presentation.

This disavowal—of "the literary" and previously of adequate qualification or education—makes up part of the structure of authenticity that persists in "expertise by experience". But writing in a deliberately non-literary way is not actually anything less to do with literature or any less a literary strategy. Similarly, the disavowal of qualification or education actually clears a space for something (ac)credited as powerful. In this way, the accounts of Hamilcar and Woodson chime with those of Davis and Frame in the mid-nineteenth century—backing away from formal expertise and education and focusing on the power of "actual experiences".[64] This is despite the fact that the majority of the patients who wrote accounts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are uncommonly educated for people committed to asylum during this period.

Elsa Krauch (an insurance copywriter from Minnesota, involved in local mental hospital reform) interviewed a man named Jim Curran, admitted to a State Hospital voluntarily in the 1930s. She writes up his experiences in the 1937 text *A Mind Restored*. In her foreword, she argues that "he hopes the story of his recovery may carry a message of encouragement to those afflicted as he was".[65] There is an explicit negotiation with ideas of authority and the literary here. On the former, Krauch says: "He has something to say; he tells of his subjective experiences… He does not speak with authority; he does not pretend to do so. He merely says: This is how it was with me".[66] However, she goes on to say that "this history is not sensational; for it is real life, whose drab pattern reveals subtle nuances of shimmering iridescence only upon close and sympathetic examination".

[63] Inmate-Ward 8 [Marion Marle Woodson]. 1932. *Behind the Door of Delusion*. Macmillan: New York, xi.

[64] Woodson does sometimes seem to view his time in the hospital from a more anthropological perspective, observing the patients and becoming part of their world—which exists in tension with other ideas of his experience, but chimes with Spinelli's comment about being a "tour guide" in the asylum underworld—a strangely detached—but potentially expert—visitor. Woodson *Door of Delusion*: x; Spinelli Sound the Alarm, 60.

[65] Krauch, Elsa. 1937. *A Mind Restored: The Story of Jim Curran*. New York: New York, v.

[66] Ibid.

Not content with this defensive juxtaposition of "drab patterns" with "shimmering iridescence" she continues: "this history is not sensational; unless, perhaps, considering the subject-matter, it may lay claim to that quality on the basis of this very deficiency".[67] This is the same kind of paradox that structures "expertise by experience" although it is not quite the same—focusing instead on the excitement level of the revelations, rather than lack of qualification or literary stylings. Similarly, the "this is how it was with me" is redolent of the uniquely personal value of personal experience.

Conclusion

This conclusion is tentative: it is not certain that the general shifts described here will survive further sustained scrutiny. However, ideas of experience in historical Mad Studies and the roots of "expertise by experience" in mental healthcare remain substantially channelled through these accounts. They hold several sometimes overlapping but meaningfully distinct kinds of experiences and justifications, which buttress different activist projects. Protest experiences aiming at legal redress and reform contrast with authentic experiences that have a more flexible, ambivalent sense of value. This volume's commitment to pluralising welfare into more precise and responsive ideas of "faring well" sits well with the analytical project pursued here. This is the attempt at differentiating and disentangling the various kinds of experiences, justifications and hopes for reform contained in these documents. They have been repackaged and collected in different circumstances and for different reasons. Those from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are howls of protest by people who never accept they are mad but seek to expose (and to reform) the asylum system (especially the private madhouses).

John Perceval seems to herald a shift, with focus more on experience and its value—and this is certainly a dominant part of how he is read from the 1960s onwards. We should be very careful to situate these readings in their *context* of the 1960s and also attend to the tradition of religious apologia that might better explain or contextualise Perceval's text. However, from then on, various kinds of experience become more prominent in asylum accounts. Sometimes this is a bare witnessing, a

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[67] Ibid. vi.

testament to truthfulness, allied to reformist efforts. From the later nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, we begin to see more of a focus on something ineffable, something authentic, inaccessible to physicians or "mere lookers on", which is contrasted with ideas of education or literary merit. This negotiation seems a much surer foundation for experiential expertise. Contemporary theorising about the epistemological status of mad people's experiences is extensive and sophisticated, especially in the work of Diana Rose, Peter Beresford, Jijian Voronka, Ameil Joseph and Jaysaree Kalathil.[68]

This chapter is a contribution to the contextualisation and history of this kind of knowledge. It describes a shift in the published accounts from a tradition that sought to expose a system wrongfully confining people as mad, to one that began to see special, ambiguous value in the experiences of those who accepted that they were in some sense ill (sometimes only years later), by the mid-twentieth century. This is not a neat shift; justifications still abound, persist and coexist uneasily throughout the whole period. Methodologically, I have described this shift by analysing paratextual elements such as forewords and prefaces as part of this move towards authenticity. The study of accounts written by those deemed mad and the concept of "expertise by experience" both have important and long histories. These might be more responsibly characterised by ambivalence and difference rather than sweeping (or uncritical) continuity. We must pay attention to different kinds of expertise and the different aims that they are used to pursue.

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[68] Rose, Epistemological Possibilities; Beresford, User involvement; Voronka, Politics of people with lived experience; Joseph, Ameil J. 2019. Constituting "lived experience" discourses in mental health: The Ethics of Racialized Identification/Representation and the Erasure of Intergeneration Colonial Violence. *Journal of Ethics in Mental Health,* 10: 1–23; Kalathil, Jayasree. 2013. "Hard to reach"? Racialised groups and mental health service user involvement. *Mental Health Service Users in Research*, 121–134.

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Qualified by Virtue of Experience? Professional Youth Work in Britain 1960–1989

Charlotte Clements

Introduction

In 1960, applicants to a new youth worker post in Liverpool were to be considered qualified by virtue of experience if they had five years experience of working in a youth club. This recognised the shortage of trained youth workers but it also hints at the value placed on experiential expertise in youth work. Qualified status mattered, as even in the largely voluntary youth service it attracted a salary premium, but the expertise gained via experience were recognised too. Grant aid was available for 90% of a qualified worker's salary, up to £1100 a year but only 75% of £750 annually for an unqualified leader to take the same post.[1] The gap in salary did not change the job in hand, but it suggests that in 1960 it was a job with two,

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[1] Liverpool Union of Girls Clubs and Mixed Clubs Executive Committee Minutes, 25th March 1960, Merseyside Youth Association Archives, M367 MYA/G/1/1/5, Liverpool Record Office (LRO), Liverpool.

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quite different, types of applicants expected. One of these pools of applicants was expected to be drawing on reserves of experience in face-to-face work with young people to meet the demands of the job. This administrative snippet from the archives of Liverpool Union of Girls' Clubs and Mixed Clubs (later Merseyside Youth Association) poses some interesting questions for historians of experience and professions and has been the starting point for this chapter from the outset.

In contrast to other contributions to this book, youth work was a setting in which the value of experience was recognised, explicit and indeed as the chapter later shows, built into the foundations of professional practice in the second half of the twentieth century. The history of youth work is a fascinating context in which to consider the way historians understand experiential expertise. Youth organisations originated as voluntary endeavours which coalesced around specific social and cultural concerns about young people, such as the origin of the Scouts in the anxiety about the physical condition of young army recruits in 1906.[2] In most cases, those concerned were not from the same part of society as the urban working-class youth who attracted so much attention. In these contexts, what young people "faring well" meant was decided by others, and this changes in the post-1960 youth worker cohort that form the focus of this chapter. It is also interesting to consider whether this cohort and the young people they worked with could be considered a "community of experience" or to share experiential bonds based on a shared background and the events they lived through together.[3]

This chapter argues that it was the experience of growing up working-class in local communities where youth workers were embedded after 1960 that forms as important a part of the expertise of youth work as the professional training which formed the focus of the time. What follows looks at the ways in which more working-class entrants took up youth work in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The circumstances that facilitated this, as well as the impacts this had on youth work, are explored. A dozen oral history interviews conducted for my PhD in 2014 explored the experiences of people who grew up visiting youth clubs and who went on to become involved with youth work in South London and

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[2] Springhall, John. 1977. *Youth, Empire and Society*. London: Croom Helm.

[3] Kivimäki, Ville, Malinen, Antti and Vuolanto Ville. 2023. 'Communities of Experience', *HEX Handbook*. https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/communities-of-experience/. Accessed 12 October 2023.

Liverpool.[4] Interviewees were largely male, but Katherine's interview in particular provided a specific insight into the intersection of class, gender and youth work.[5] Following archival research in local archives in London, Liverpool and informal youth club archives, it was clear that the voice of the youth worker was heavily mediated in documents such as meeting minutes. These voices were few and far between in official documents too. Episodic official reports set the policies and course of youth work in these decades, but often failed to fully capture the uniqueness of the welfare culture of youth work. Oral histories allowed the lived experience of youth work to be discovered and allowed the experiential expertise of the youth workers in these local contexts to be explored more fully. This means uncovering agency and practice in local communities, rather than relying on idealised policy pronouncements.

This chapter demonstrates how post-war youth workers' experience and expertise challenged and reshaped the nature and purpose of youth work. The chapter focuses on recruitment, training and practice as three areas in which the experiential expertise of post-*Albemarle* youth workers can be most clearly seen.[6]

EXPERIENTIAL EXPERTISE AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE POST-WAR YOUTH WORKER COHORT

It is important to consider the ways in which the potential youth work cohort of the 1960s onwards were shaped by the wider social and historical context and the ways in which their professional lives were in turn different from the youth workers that went before them. Given the way that experiential expertise draws on the idea of lived experience, it is useful to spend a little time thinking about this. The editors of this collection use the term "experiential bonds", and this is a useful way to think about

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[4] Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms to protect confidentiality which will be used again here. Clements, Charlotte. 2016. *Youth Cultures in the Mixed Economy of Welfare: Youth Clubs and Voluntary Associations in South London and Liverpool, 1958–1985.* Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Kent Academic Repository.

[5] Katherine, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

[6] The *Albemarle Report* was published in 1960.

the experiences youth workers (former young people themselves) shared with the people they worked with.[7]

An important part of this is the background of an expanding field of education, social and welfare professionals because of expanding state welfare after the Second World War.[8] Formal schooling was the precursor, the foundation to the professional training that youth workers would later undertake. The school leaving age became 15 years in 1947 and 16 years in 1972. The 1943 Norwood Report and ensuing 1944 Education Act (Butler Act) delivered reforms that gave more opportunities for working-class children to attend secondary schools and then higher education. The tripartite system was introduced and operated until Circular 10/65 in 1965 requested local authorities to prepare to convert schools into comprehensives.

The secondary moderns and comprehensive schools all gave opportunities for those with basic school leaving qualifications to progress into youth work. The Robbins Report in 1963 acted as a catalyst for expanding higher education at this time, especially for those from backgrounds that may not have traditionally attended university, for example working-class students.[9] Funding was available for expanded higher education and Carol Dyhouse has written about how the number of women entering higher education rose sharply in the 1970s.[10]

Taken together, changes in education and welfare after 1945 also coincided with an unusually large post-war birth rate, todays "Babyboomers". This created the pool from which youth workers after 1960 would be drawn. Working-class young people from 1960 onwards had more access to opportunities for professional training and employment in expanding welfare and educational service. They were also the cohort with some of the best access to youth services after the investments of the 1960s. This

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[7] See Introduction to this collection.

[8] On which see the work of Perkin, Harold. 1996. *The Third Revolution: Professional Elites in the Modern World*. London: Routledge; Crowson, Nick et al. 2013. *The Politics of Expertise: How NGOs Shaped Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[9] Robbins, Lionel. 1963. *Higher Education: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister Under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins*, 1961–63. London: HMSO. See also chapter 'Student Voices, Expertise, and Welfare Within British Universities' in this collection.

[10] Dyhouse, Carol. 2005. *Students: A Gendered History*. London: Routledge, 99.

is important when we consider the practice of recruiting leadership from within the ranks of youth clubs themselves.

Prior to 1960, the five years experience needed to apply for the post above were likely to have been gained via volunteering and part-time paid work, which still formed the bulk of youth work at this point. This reflected the pool of possible youth workers at this time: teachers doing additional youth work, local middle-class professionals and church members, retired people. These people were thought to have the skills to navigate local authority bureaucracy and were seen as natural leaders for young people, a continuity from a time when youth work emphasised youth workers as men of high calibre who could be role models to young people. This also reflected the longer history of youth work, where it was often viewed as a form of social service rather than a career.[11]

The landmark review of the youth service published in 1960 as the *Albemarle Report* was motivated by concern over a rise in juvenile delinquency and the perennial concern to make sure young people spent their leisure time "faring well".[12] A service neglected since the Second World War was seen to be in need of a kick start, and while there is debate over whether the promise of the *Albemarle Report* was ever realised, there is reasonable consensus that it marked a turning point for the youth service.[13] It was a statement of intent to professionalise a largely voluntary service and bring it more clearly into alignment with post-war welfare cultures at a time when young people were thought to be in particular need of such a universal service.

The Report sought to address both the shortage of and the expectations for professionalism in workers by recruiting 600 people and providing places on an emergency one-year training scheme at the

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[11] This is particularly clear in the youth work undertaken at University Settlements, on which see Bradley, Kate. 2009. *Poverty, Philanthropy and the State: The University Settlements and the Urban Working Classes, 1918–1979*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[12] Ministry of Education. 1960. *Report of the Committee Appointed by the Minister of Education on The Youth Service in England and Wales*. Cmnd. 929. London: HMSO (known commonly as *The Albemarle Report*).

[13] Davies, Bernard. 1999. *A History of the Youth Service in England*. Leicester: National Youth Agency: Jeffs, Tony, Gilchrist, Ruth, Spence, Jean, Stanton, Naomi, Cowell, Aylssa, Walker, Joyce and Wylie, Tom. eds. 2013. *Reappraisals: Essays in the History of Youth and Community Work*. Dorset: Russell House Publishing; Jeffs, Tony. 1979. *Young People and the Youth Service*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

national college in Leicester. This provided a route for committed volunteers or part-time paid staff to become youth workers. The new trainees promised by the *Albemarle Report* were to study "adolescent psychology, problems of personal relationships, the transition from school to work, the youth employment service, adolescent physiology and health and sex education" and could have specialisms such as "behaviour of groups and principles of group work".[14] In so doing they took training for youth work beyond the functional aspects of running clubs and attempted to develop a theoretical, academic and methodological underpinning equipping youth workers to respond to the changing circumstances of youth and to better understand the lives of their young charges. This reflected the training social workers were also receiving.[15] The idea of the professional youth worker has been written about by Sarah Mills, Simon Bradford, Jean Spence and myself, but within this literature, the history of experiential expertise is yet to be thoroughly interrogated.[16]

A final factor in considering the lived experience of this important group of youth workers is locality. Only two oral history interviewees spent their professional careers outside of the local area they grew up in, and all, including the two who moved, still lived in these areas when interviewed decades later. While they were a self-selecting sample, these workers showed a notable loyalty to and empathy with their communities amid troubled times that deserves scrutiny. This will be examined more later.

[14] *The Albemarle Report*. 75.

[15] This training had similarities to developments in the training of social workers and probation officers. See Burnam, David. 2012. *The Social Worker Speaks: A History of Social Workers Through the Twentieth Century*. Surrey: Ashgate.

[16] Bradford, Simon. 2007. Practices, Policies and Professionals: Emerging Discourses of Expertise in English Youth Work, 1939–1951. *Youth and Policy,* 97/98: 13–28; Bradford, Simon. 2007. The 'Good Youth Leader': Constructions of Professionalism in English Youth Work, 1939–45. *Ethics and Social Welfare,* 1, 3: 293–309; Spence, Jean. 2014. Feminism and Informal Education in Youth Work with Girls and Young Women, 1975–85. In *Informal Education, Childhood and Youth—Geographies, Histories, Practices,* eds. Mills, Sarah and Kraftl Peter, 197–215. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Clements, Charlotte. 2019. Lady Albemarle's Youth Workers: Contested Professional Identities in English Youth Work, 1958–1985. *History of Education,* 48, 6: 819–836.

RECRUITING THE EXPERIENTIAL EXPERT

Some recruitment to youth worker training was fed by other social and educational roles, an important piece of the context of the post-war growth of the number of such professions. Teaching and social work, for example, drew people to work with young people, who then could choose the youth work setting. Particularly important in this regard is teaching. Optional youth work modules could be taken during teacher training, indicating that some youth work was seen as an add-on to school teaching, something conceptualised by the village and community colleges which provided a central community hub for both formal and informal education.[17] Michael, who took this route, was very critical of the type of training offered. He described it as "skimpy" and "rudimental" saying "it really wasn't good preparation" and that consequently he found his first full-time post a shock particularly in terms of managing staff, volunteers and the building.[18] Katherine, who also came from teacher training and had worked in a village college in Cambridgeshire, did not go straight into youth work and found the gaps in training less of an issue.[19] She is an important example in this chapter, not only because she exemplifies Dyhouse's argument about women gaining access to higher education, but also because she brought feminist activism to her professional practice in her chosen community.

Secondly, one of the most significant recruitment channels for thinking about working-class entrants to youth work in the post-war period is recruiting from the ranks of youth club members. In 1964, the Liverpool Union of Girls Clubs and Mixed Clubs reported that "few clubs had an adequate supply of leaders and helpers" and that "[L]eaders are anxious for senior club members to maintain their interest in club life

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[17] Saint, Andrew. 1987. *Towards a Social Architecture: The Role of School Building in Post-War England*. Yale: Yale University Press; Rée, Harry. 1973. *Educator Extraordinary—The Life and Achievement of Henry Morris, 1889–1961*. London: Longman.

[18] Michael, South London and Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 22 September 2014.

[19] Katherine, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

by progressing to leadership".[20] The same was noted by the London Federation of Boys' Clubs in 1962.[21]

In 1969, the Liverpool Union of Youth Clubs stressed "the need to seek and nourish leadership potential amongst the club membership".[22] They drew on the feedback from their Members' Council that it was "apparent that quite a number of senior members were undertaking some form of responsibility for children's [junior] groups…with adult help".[23] The idea of recruiting leaders from among the members can be traced back to the early days of the club movement, but it remains interesting as a method by which local working-class youth were swelling the ranks of professional social and welfare workers. Every oral history interviewee who had volunteered or been a paid youth worker had also been a youth group member at some point. How did the experience of growing up in these local communities and going to youth groups shape the choices and experience of the youth workers these people then became? Experiential bonds and communities of experience may provide part of the answer to this question, but the rest remains unclear.

Steve had been a very active member of his youth club in South London, playing in sports leagues and competitions, getting his name on the honours board and attending many trips with his large multi-activity club.[24] He continued to play football with an adult team at the club after he started working elsewhere and was asked if he would be willing to help out. He was later invited to apply for a role as an assistant youth worker. Even though he was young and untrained, he was a known quantity and, in his opinion, someone the current club leaders thought they could shape into the kind of youth worker they needed and they later sponsored his training on a day release basis.[25] Several interviewees identified mentors from their clubs who marked them out as having leadership potential,

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[20] Liverpool Union of Girls and Mixed Clubs Annual Report 1963–64, M367/MYA/G/3/44, Merseyside Youth Association Archives, LRO, Liverpool.

[21] London Federation of Boys' Clubs Annual Report 1962, LMA/4283/A/2/5, London Youth Archives, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), London.

[22] Liverpool Union of Youth Clubs Annual Report, M367/MYA/G/3/49, Merseyside Youth Association Archives, LRO, Liverpool.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Steve, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 9 September 2014.

[25] Ibid.

and supported them to take their next steps. Tony, who had attended the Florence Institute for Boys in Liverpool, and later a local church club, was recruited and mentored by a youth worker to volunteer in the church club, then work part-time and then train.[26]

Dennis became a volunteer at his local church-based youth club in Lewisham in 1976.[27] Like Steve, his volunteering and part-time work overlapped with paid work elsewhere. He went on very quickly to do paid part-time work on the nearby Aylesbury Estate in Southwark near Elephant and Castle before entering formal training. Dennis himself took the role of mentor and recruiter, recalling vividly in his own words how he asked his members "why don't you stop pissing about here and help us run the place?"[28] In leaders hand-picking members for leadership we can see that this conferred a sense of authenticity and authority, valuing the experience that a member could bring to local youth leadership with the addition of formal training to complement it. Specifically, here, being a local young person was considered vital experience for potential youth leaders. In the way that statutory and voluntary youth services valued those who had been members, we can see that experiential expertise was acknowledged as an asset to local youth clubs.

Integrating the Formal and Experiential through Youth Work Training

People recruited from the membership were often sponsored to complete internal or initial leadership certificates before entering formal training. For 2/6d. (an affordable amount for an average worker and often covered by their host club), new volunteers to youth work in Liverpool in 1961 could attend an introductory course over four evenings covering "The Youth Club Movement, the Youth Club Method, Finding Your Feet and a Visit to a Club".[29] To indicate the perceived importance of offering some training to such staff and older members, Annual Reports from youth

[26] Tony, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 23 September 2014.

[27] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[28] Ibid.

[29] This is noted as a repeat of a popular course, Liverpool Union of Girls Clubs and Mixed Clubs Circular Letters, March 1961, M367/MYA/G/4/15, LRO, Liverpool.

associations frequently record the numbers attending and passing primary leadership courses. This often bridged the gap to the new training for a formal qualification with its emphasis on expertise and professionalism.

For Steve, Dennis and Tony moving on to full-time training for youth work marked an important watershed in their career trajectories as it marked an intention to move into youth work full-time as a career and what they felt was necessary to do that.[30] Dennis and Tony both went on the full-time course in Leicester set up after the *Albemarle Report*, but Dennis unusually took the two-year option over the one-year course Tony took.[31] Steve trained in London at Avery Hill teacher training college, while he was in-service on a day release basis.[32] The ability to train one day a week while inwork, and often sponsored by the local authority or youth club association, is vital here. It allowed people to remain embedded in local communities while they trained, and crucially enabled working-class students to remain financially independent while they completed training. An amount of this new training was to be delivered in a classroom setting. However, youth work training, like other social and educational professions at the time, also valued on-the-job training, which can be seen as the development of a specific set of experiential expertise. Trainees in a range of settings spent time in youth clubs as part of their qualification, tasked with reflecting on their experiences, linking their theoretical and analytical work in the classroom with the practices in the youth club.

Training can be credited with helping these workers think critically about young people and develop a multi-layered type of expertise to take into practice. An example that brings out the role of placement experience in shaping youth workers is Tony who worked in clubs and as a detached worker (roving worker not attached to a club, but rather a locality) in Liverpool. He spoke about his time at the training college at length. He says the course gave him a "rounded, political interest in

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[30] Tony, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 23 September 2014; Steve, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 9 September 2014.; Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[31] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014; interview with Tony, 23 September 2014.

[32] Steve, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 9 September 2014.

young people" and thinks it was responsible for "bringing me out as an individual—big time".[33] He felt that training gave him what he needed to do the job. He spent time recollecting the reflective practice framework he used. He remembers the layout of the columns in his log book where he recorded his reflections after the club closed each night; "fact (incident/occurrence), plan of action, action taken, and reflection".[34] He concludes that "[T]hey [*trainers*] gave me confidence and ideas, insight, analysis".[35] This training and reflective practice gave him a professional framework within which he could challenge and develop his skills as a youth worker. What he already had was an in-depth understanding of growing up in a working-class area of Liverpool and the local youth scene in which he had been immersed his whole life.

At its heart, youth work training after 1960 sought to create a model in which the formal and theoretical were intertwined with the experiences trainees had, past and present. There was a deliberate attempt to train people to recognise and reflect on their experience and turn it into expertise to further develop their practice. While the youth service still relied on volunteers, this cadre of worker, with this kind of training, became a recognised asset to be developed as part of wider attempts to professionalise this particular welfare culture.[36]

YOUTH WORK PRACTICE: LOCAL EXPERTISE AND COMMUNITIES OF EXPERIENCE

Finally, this chapter considers the role of the "expertise of experience" in youth work practice. Here, formal and informal archives of log books and field reports are illuminating for recording the reflections of workers adjacent to their practice, though with caveats about the mediated nature of such semi-official documents. Oral histories have provided an especially rich seam of evidence, as youth workers reflect back on their experience over decades of practice and their entry into the profession through

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[33] Tony, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 23 September 2014.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] It is hard to know what the mix of voluntary and professional youth work was, but for some indication, see Clements, *Youth Cultures*.

loosely structured interview prompts. Valuably, for this collection, that has meant a subtle reflection too, on their own experiential expertise as they explore the nature and purpose of youth work with the interviewer. In bringing together these rich sources, it became clear how experiences were shaped around intersecting elements of workers' identities: class, gender, race, locality, as well as the historical context of events in South London and Liverpool at the time. These were contexts such as racism, decline in state support for young people, unemployment and the unrest in both areas in 1981.

Several of the youth workers interviewed demonstrated a strong commitment to their local areas, and in some cases even a specific club. One was the third generation of his family to work at his club and most others stayed very local to a particular area of the city: a London borough, a housing estate, or in one case, a two-mile radius centred on Anfield stadium called "the patch" where the retired workers still lived in 2023.[37] For Dennis, it was important to stay in his local area and contribute, but also he believes that having a local and working-class accent helped give him credibility with young people.[38] In his interview, he was dismissive of a perceived trend to come to the area to make a high-profile intervention and then leave. He says "a lot of people made careers out of spending two minutes in Deptford".[39] Katherine was not local to Liverpool. She arrived to take up a youth work post in the late 1970s after work in Cambridgeshire and Northern Ireland when she left school teaching. She spent the rest of her life in Liverpool, marrying a fellow youth worker and committing to local feminist and class-based activism, encompassing feminist youth work, trade union activity and community activism.[40]

Youth workers in Lewisham in the 1970s and 1980s show the value of having experienced events alongside the young people they worked with. Dennis and Lee both worked in Lewisham at a tumultuous time, shaped by racism, the activities of the National Front, the "Battle of Lewisham" in 1977, the New Cross Fire and rioting in nearby Brixton

[37] Tony, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 23 September 2014.

[38] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Katherine, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

in 1981.[41] Lee, who is white, initially volunteered in an "almost exclusively black" youth club. He recalls how hanging out with young black people in Lewisham taught him about the everyday racism in the borough

> They would say 'watch what happens' and if it was a young black guy and a white woman coming past, it didn't matter what age they were, or if there was a white guy there…[pause] the handbag thing. I saw it, like 30 times. You watch as we go towards them, that woman will put her handbag tighter under her arm, and she'll close up, and walk fast. It happened all the time.[42]

Everyday racism had other elements; "so many people being stopped and searched all the time…it was ugly".[43] Lee remembers, "there was one case of a dog being dropped into an area, a fighting dog, where children were playing".[44] He continues:

> There was really heavy-duty racism and division. For example 'the ghetto' as it was referred to, Milton Court Estate, was a very mixed place, a very diverse place but Pepys Estate which was less than a mile away was certainly not.[45]

He puts this down at least in part to "racism in the housing allocation structure. There was racism on the streets. There was the police".[46] He experienced these events alongside the young people he worked with and

[41] Andrews, Aaron. 2021. Truth, Justice, and Expertise in 1980s Britain: The Cultural Politics of the New Cross Massacre. In *History Workshop Journal*, 91, 1: 182–209; Remembering the Battle of Lewisham, https://www.gold.ac.uk/history/research/battle-of-lewisham/. Accessed 15 September 2023. For further discussion of experiential expertise and the New Cross massacre see chapter 'Placing Experiential Expertise: The 1981 New Cross Massacre Campaign' in this collection.

[42] Lee, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 14 September 2014.

[43] Ibid. Don Letts autobiography details his experiences of stop and search, with photographs. Letts, Don. 2007. *Culture Clash—Dread Meets Punk Rockers*. London: SAF Publishing Ltd., 77–79.

[44] Lee, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 14 September 2014.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

saw that black youth in the borough were not faring well. Dennis too saw heavy handed policing:

> I knew we were a boisterous bunch of puppies…21 of your mates get nicked for nothing…You would have to be really silly not to see that there was something wrong with how the state tried to manage us. There wasn't anything in my mind that can tell me that riding police horses into a crowd down Coldharbour Lane is a reasonable thing to do.[47]

In the above quote, Dennis refers to the Lewisham 21 (the number of young black people arrested in a series of raids over a spate of muggings). Another key event for Lewisham youth workers was the Battle of Lewisham in 1977. Dennis says events like these meant that they "came to our senses" over race and started looking at ways to tackle the racism in the local area.[48] Relationships with the police and stop and search came under scrutiny with local activists seeking to challenge the use of "sus" laws in Lewisham.[49] This is a good example of the way in which experiential expertise and lived experience shaped the activism these youth workers became involved in. Dennis contextualised this with "endemic black unemployment" and youth unemployment (which had gender as well as racial dimensions in South London) for which youth clubs could do little, especially with the closure of the News Corporation plant in Deptford which "devastated" the local economy.[50]

For Lee as well as many other local residents, the New Cross Fire was also a huge presence in local ideas of race and racism.[51] It was feared that the fire was a deliberate and racially-motivated attack on the young black partygoers, though the exact cause of the fire has never been discovered. Residents felt that the police and fire brigade were lax in their investigations and that this too had a racist motivation. It stoked tension in the area at a time when the National Front was particularly active in

[47] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Solomos, John. 1988. *Black Youth, Racism and The State—The Politics of Ideology and Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[50] Lee, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 14 September 2014.

[51] Ibid.

Lewisham. The New Cross Fire was and still is "an open wound" in the area according to Lee.[52] Riots in 1981 also followed a "period of intense policing and tremendous anger" where there was "tremendous harassment and surveillance going on" of the local black population.[53]

In Liverpool, youth workers were also sharing the experiences of their young counterparts. Toxteth had its own outbreak of unrest in 1981. However, unemployment and economic decline were forefront of the minds of youth workers writing in 1977, "We hear our young people preach a message of despair——if all your early years are geared towards getting a job and you cannot find a job then you regard yourself as a failure".[54] Merseyside Youth Association were stark in their assessment of the situation in 1981 saying, "[U]nemployment is a dark cloud which hangs relentlessly over Merseyside. There can hardly be a family that has not been affected by now".[55] The same year, following the events in Toxteth, Michael Heseltine was sent to Liverpool. Two interviewees doing detached youth work at the time independently recall the same incident when the Minister for Merseyside met young people in the back of their minibus and was told by a local youth, "no one asks you what you want to be when you grow up now. There's no jobs".[56] This particular example is a bold attempt to give agency to young people to decide what it means to "fare well" in 1980s Liverpool.

How did these experiences manifest themselves in the practice of youth workers? In what ways did standing beside young people through these events develop an expertise of experience? One answer is that youth workers offered an expert and impassioned defence of young people at

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Education and Work: The Consumers Viewpoint. *Report of the SHARE Conference March 1977,* M367/MYA/M/6/1/4, Merseyside Youth Association Archives, LRO, Liverpool.

[55] Merseyside Youth Association Annual Report—1980–1981, M367/MYA/M/4/12, Merseyside Youth Association Archive, LRO, Liverpool.

[56] Tony, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 23 September 2014. In her interview Katherine used different words but the message was the same, "years ago people asked you what you wanted to be when you grow up. Nobody asks you that now", Katherine, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

a time that they could often be painted as "folk devils".[57] Youth workers felt the need to speak up for the teenagers they worked with, and many felt young people had an undeservedly negative image, on issues such as the moral panic around mugging (street crime). In 1969, the President of the London Federation of Boys Clubs prefaced the Annual Report with "It is our job to convince those who have lost faith in youth to keep a fair perspective".[58] Instead, they sought to emphasise the positive relationships they built with young people and all the ways in which young people failed to live up to negative perceptions about them.

One interviewee became quite emotional when saying "I can't stand injustice and unfairness and so many were treated unfairly".[59] Tony said "all sorts of labels were put on them but young people are always going to be young people".[60] Lee said he felt there was "a culture of tremendous amnesia" when it came to moral panics about young people and that there was and is a "profound social deafness" about young people.[61] In the face of negative perceptions of young people, youth workers were people who trusted, liked and championed young people and saw this as an essential part of their job. "I don't think you can teach empathy…They can't teach you to like young people", one South London youth worker remarked, adding that he felt it was "the most important thing" about being a good youth worker.[62]

While it is reasonable to assume that liking young people might be why they chose to be youth workers in the first place, this vested interest in young people appears to come from a deep understanding of the challenges they faced: one informed by living and working alongside them in contemporary society while equipped with the theoretical tools and

[57] Cohen, Stanley. 2002. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.

[58] London Federation of Boys' Clubs Annual Report 1968–19, LMA/4283/A/2/7, London Youth Archives, LMA, London.

[59] Katherine (Liverpool Youth Worker), Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

[60] Tony, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 23 September 2014.

[61] Lee, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 14 September 2014.

[62] Steve, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 9 September 2014.

critical thinking provided by their training. This was a form of experiential expertise, and one which allowed youth workers to advocate for new ways of understanding what welfare meant for young people. Moreover for some youth workers their practice was a form of activism.

However, the influence of the challenging settings of youth work at this time goes further than a defence of young people. It was part of a wider praxis of some youth workers to involve themselves, and young people in politics and activism. The racism in Lewisham in the later 1970s and 1980s is a good example here. Youth workers like Dennis and Lee brought these experiences into their practice. Lee felt that youth work had not "really developed the kind of intellectual and interpretive tools that were required to deal with this incredibly difficult, damaged situation" and instead it was local activism and community organisations that supported him at this time.[63] One of the reasons Lee left youth work was its inability to respond to the situation on the ground as he saw it.

Dennis was a trade unionist and activist who spent a year mobilising around the Miners' Strike (1984). He recalled, "I was very, very strongly involved in the union locally. I was very strongly involved in organising the voluntary sector. I was very strongly involved in anti-cuts stuff".[64] He believed that "keeping powder dry" was neither helpful nor successful.[65] He and his colleagues "were interested in building up solidarity".[66] In Liverpool, detached youth workers were involved in the Youth and Community Workers Trade Union and Katherine was active in a feminist workers group. She "spent a lot of time politicking I suppose" and "was strong in the union at one stage".[67]

These political and activist youth workers did not stop at being a voice for young people. They wanted to amplify the voices of young people themselves and get their experiences shared, such as the earlier example in Liverpool in the back of a youth work minibus when Michael Heseltine met with some unemployed young people. These youth workers wanted

[63] Lee, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 14 September 2014.

[64] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Katherine, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

to see young people becoming politically active. However, when youth workers talked about the political education of the young, they did so with "a small 'p'—a very small 'p'".[68] Most wanted the politicisation of the young to mean they engaged with and participated in the social and political processes which were having such an impact on their lives rather than any particular ideology or stance. Dennis was incredibly critical of other approaches to youth work saying, "I know of no educational or developmental approach that is predicated on getting the best out of people by making them feel shit...solidarity and collectivity were the only way you would get anything".[69] Instead he framed youth work in terms of resistance and saw his role as being to "help young people to work out what they think about the world and what they want to do about it".[70] His role therefore was essentially one of facilitator, challenger and occasional agitator.

Detached youth workers in Liverpool also approached their work believing that young people should be politicised. They were chronically aware of the lack of opportunity that many of their young people faced but wanted them to understand the forces and structures which created those situations. Again Katherine put emphasis in youth work as being "for them [*young people*] to participate in it, in a democratic society".[71] Katherine also "did an awful lot of listening" saying that youth work centred on "dialogue and discussion...small talk is important...use every opportunity to widen their experience, make them think".[72] Here Katherine is framing listening to young people and spending time with them as an act of activism built on her expertise and experience. In considering the repertoires of activism facilitated by experiential expertise, youth work at this time offers the opportunity to see variation and nuance, responding to local needs and communities of young people.

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[68] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[69] Ibid. On the idea of the earlier approaches of which Dennis was so dismissive see, Clements, Lady Albemarle's youth workers.

[70] Dennis, South London Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, South London, 19 September 2014.

[71] Katherine, Liverpool Youth Worker, Oral History Interview with the author, Liverpool, 24 September 2014.

[72] Ibid.

Conclusion

Experiential expertise was a vital facet in the professionalisation of youth work after 1960. Experience was recognised in lieu of qualifications in some cases. Where youth workers did train for formal qualification experiential expertise was vital too. Reflective practice, placement work and log books were incorporated alongside theoretical approaches which were perceived as having varying use in practice. Being a professional youth worker required frequent consideration of the experiences they had with and alongside young people.

The youth workers whose stories have been included in this chapter tell us that professionalisation, while important, is only part of the picture of working-class entrants to youth work in the post-war period. The experience of growing up within clubs and communities was also crucial. Not only did it provide a form of expertise that simply could not be gained in the classroom, but it also provided a strong sense of identification with these workers' young charges and the local area. This "expertise of experience" is also the experience of empathy. Empathy, combined with an educational experience allowed youth workers to see the injustice of lives shaped by class, gender, race and poverty. This in turn created a vital pool of activists made up of local, working-class professionals who fundamentally challenged notions of the nature and purpose of youth work. This would not have been possible without the "expertise of experience".

A final reflection on the role of experiential expertise in youth work between 1960 and 1989 is to consider the view from outside youth work. Despite the longer-term aims of the *Albemarle Report* the youth work qualification did not sit at undergraduate degree level (or above), unlike teaching and social work. Youth workers did professionalise and gain status but struggled to find equal professional standing with other social and educational roles, and sat uneasily between them. Katherine proudly recalled being let into a house that would not admit a social worker.[73] For her, this uncertain status was a distinct advantage when pitched against the state, and why she left formal teaching. Given that youth work fully integrated experiential expertise into its model of training and practice at this time, it seems working from this basis was perhaps more valued within the profession than outside it.

[73] Ibid.

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"Let Me Tell You How I See It…": White Women, Race, and Welfare on Two Birmingham Council Estates in the 1980s

Jessica White

INTRODUCTION

"How many coloureds do you get in high rise flats [sic]. Not very many because they bloody wouldn't take them", joked Mrs Llewyn from Chelmsley Wood.[1] Her quote highlights the themes developed in this chapter, which examines how White women spoke about their relationship with their neighbours of African and Asian descent in the early 1980s and how this experience was articulated through racialised concerns around welfare and "faring well". Based on 48 interviews carried out between 1983 and 1984 with White working-class women in two housing estates in Birmingham, this chapter demonstrates how these women deployed their personal experiences of welfare as the grounds for their expertise. This was then used to make claims about their rights to welfare provisions, legitimate their racist beliefs, and posit new ways of "doing

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[1] Int035. Ethnic Relations on West Midland Housing Estates [herein ERWM]. 1983–1984. UK Data Service. http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-4846-1. Accessed 4 February 2019, 2. All interviewee names have been anonymised by the author.

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welfare". I argue that White women's experiential expertise—the use of knowledge gained from lived experience as the basis to assert one's "expert" status—culminated in a cultural script within which the right to "fare well" was mediated through notions of race and racial difference.[2] In voicing their shared experiences of living in competition with their neighbours of colour, these women constructed a "community of experience", which was defined as being both "White" and British, and having exclusive, and deserving, access to British welfare provisions.[3] By arguing that experiences of welfare underpinned women's understanding of British nationhood as "White", this chapter contributes to ongoing research on the "lived welfare state" and how everyday experiences of welfare are connected to social issues, particularly inequality.[4]

To extrapolate these ideas, this study follows the robust historical tradition of revisiting raw social research data from the post-war decades.[5] It focuses on the open-ended notes and transcripts taken from interviews carried out with White women for a project supported by the Social Science Research Unit on Ethnic Relations (SSRC) at the University of Aston in Birmingham, founded in 1971. The SSRC was known for its research output on issues related to Black and South Asian communities, and whose faculty included notable "race relations" sociologists

[2] See Borkman, Thomasina. 1976. Experiential Knowledge: A New Concept for the Analysis of Self-Help Groups. *Social Service Review,* 50: 445–456.

[3] Kivimäki, Ville, Antti Malinen and Ville Vuolanto. 2023. "Communities of Experience". *HEX Digital Handbook.* https://sites.tuni.fi/hexhandbook/theory/communities-of-experience. Accessed 4 September 2023; See also Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo. 2022. Introduction: Religion as Historical also Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo. 2022. Introduction: Religion as Historical Experience. In *Histories of Experience in the World of Lived Religion,* eds. Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo, 1–36. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[4] Haapala, Pertti, Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko. 2023. Introduction. In *Experiencing Society and the Lived Welfare State*, eds. Pertti Haapala, Minna Harjula and Heikki Kokko, 1–13. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[5] For example, see Lawrence, Jon. 2016. Inventing the "Traditional Working Class": A Re-Analysis of Interview Notes from Young and Willmott's "Family and Kinship in East London". *The Historical Journal,* 59: 567–593; Beebee, Matt. 2021. Navigating Deindustrialization in 1970s Britain: The Closure of Bilston Steel Works and the Politics of Work, Place, and Belonging. *Labour History Review,* 85: 253–283.

such as Michael Banton and John Rex.[6] The project was headed by Ernest Cashmore, who was also part of the canon of "race relations" experts who made up the SSRC during the 1970s and 1980s, and who had written sociological works including *Rastaman* (1979) and *Black Sportsmen* (1982). Previously taking an interest in the disenfranchisement of second-generation Black youth in Birmingham, Cashmore focused his new project on understanding the "logic of racism", which then became the title of his published book on the project, and to "see modern Britain through the eyes of Whites, Blacks and Asians".[7] For the project, Cashmore and his assistant Christopher Bagley interviewed residents of four estates across the city, as well as holding focus groups with school students, teachers, and local welfare officers. The result is a rich body of testimony that sheds light on how people, especially women, made sense of the everyday issues that surrounded them.

This chapter reveals how important welfare was to White working-class women in Birmingham, and therefore makes crucial headway into new histories of welfare in post-war Britain.[8] Within this scholarship, an interest in what Robert Pinker has termed "states of welfare"—people's feelings about welfare and the activities by which they enhance their well-being—has enabled scholars to understand the agency of "ordinary" people in shaping welfare in Britain.[9] In particular, as noted in this collection's introduction, scholars have highlighted women's role in bringing about improvements in welfare provision through activism, creating positive change for themselves, their family, and their community.[10] This

[6] Amos, Valerie, Paul Gilroy and Errol Lawrence. 1982. White Sociology, Black Struggle. In *Rethinking Social Inequality*, ed. by David Robbins et al., 18. Milton: Taylor & Francis Group.

[7] Cashmore, Ellis. 1986. WHO ARE THE REAL RACISTS? *New Society,* 76: 7–9; Cashmore, Ellis. [1987] 2012. *The Logic of Racism*. London: Taylor & Francis Group.

[8] Kivimäki, Ville, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari. 2021. Lived Nation: Histories of Experience and Emotion in Understanding Nationalism. In *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000*, eds. Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki and Tanja Vahtikari, 1–28. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

[9] Offer, John. 2017. Robert Pinker, the Idea of Welfare and the Study of Social Policy: On Unitarism and Pluralism. *Journal of Social Policy,* 41: 615–634, 618; See also Offer, John, ed. 2017. *Social Policy and Welfare Pluralism: Selected Writings of Robert Pinker*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

[10] Beaumont, Caitríona. 2013. *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928–64.* Manchester: Manchester University Press; White, Jessica.

scholarship has intersected with the broader literature on women's experiential expertise in post-war Britain, which has illustrated women's ability to draw on personal experience to help others in society.[11] And yet, despite the importance of this scholarship, one should be cautious of focusing exclusively on the positive consequences of women's experiential expertise. Here I outline how White women used their experiential expertise both to make false claims about their neighbours of colour, for instance, that they were "cheating the system", and to offer reasons and solutions for these "problems". By extrapolating these discourses, this chapter offers a significant contribution to "optimistic" histories of experiences of welfare by demonstrating that while experiential expertise in post-war Britain enabled "ordinary" people, especially working-class women, to make changes in welfare, it also opened up channels that facilitated the flow of racist discourses.

The term experience here is considered the subjective observation of facts, events, and phenomena; experience is taken as what is deemed true according to the individual.[12] Crucially for this study, what the women perceive and observe to be a truth—for instance that their West Indian next-door neighbours received more supplementary income—is not taken as an incontestable experience, but a discourse that needs to be deconstructed. This view of experience ties with the work of Joan Scott who has argued that experience is not self-evident, but rather is political and rooted in social structures.[13] In this chapter, experiences are closely tied to race, and particularly the discursive production of whiteness. Here I am building on the scholarship by Ruth Frankenberg and David Roediger, among others, whose work on the subject of whiteness has deepened our

2022. Child-Centred Matriarch or Mother Among Other Things? Race and the Construction of Working-Class Motherhood in Late Twentieth-Century Britain. *Twentieth Century British History,* 33: 498–521. See also Introduction to this collection.

[11] Loughran, Tracey. 2020. "The Most Helpful Friends in the World": Letters Pages, Expertise and Emotion in British Women's Magazines, c. 1960–80. In *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1940s-2000s*, eds. Laurel Forster and Joanne Hollows, 133–149. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; See also Crane, Jennifer. 2018. *Child Protection in England, 1960–2000: Expertise, Experience, and Emotion.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, Chap. 6.

[12] For various understandings of "experience", see Katajala-Peltomaa and Toivo. Introduction: Religion as Historical Experience, 10–15.

[13] Scott, Joan W. 1991. The Evidence of Experience. *Critical Inquiry,* 17: 773–797.

understanding of how racism operates through discourse.[14] Grounding the work of these scholars is the notion that White people are not simply recipients of racist ideas, but that they are complicit in the reproduction of racism. For instance, the first section of this chapter demonstrates not only how women used their experiences to assert their expert status in their interviews with Cashmore and Bagley, but also how this expertise was informed through the women's discursive production of a distinct White "community of experience". This "community of experience" was united by their shared antagonistic relationship towards their Black and Asian neighbours.

By viewing experience as the product, and producer, of broader social structures, in particular race and class, this chapter builds on the work of scholars such as Satnam Virdee and Robbie Shilliam who have historicised the link between class, whiteness, and the British Welfare State.[15] As Shilliam has argued, access to welfare in the post-war decades was understood through archaic beliefs in the distinction between the "deserving" and "underserving" poor, with the majority of the White working-class associated with the former, and racialised minorities associated with the latter.[16] Members of the White working-classes—with the exception of groups still deemed "undeserving" by welfare officers such as lone mothers or the long-term unemployed—greatly benefited from the universalist principles of the new provisions in welfare services, from council housing to national insurance.[17] Meanwhile, migrant workers were not only often excluded from council housing on account of their

[14] Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Dyer, Richard. 2017. *White*, 2nd edn. London: Routledge; Roediger, David R. 2007. *The Wages of Whiteness, Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London: Verso.

[15] Virdee, Satnam. 2014. *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Shilliam, Robbie. 2018. *Race and the Undeserving Poor: From Abolition to Brexit*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing; See also, Bonnett, Alastair. 1998. How the British Working Class Became White: The Symbolic (Re)Formation of Racialized Capitalism. *Journal of Historical Sociology,* 11: 316–340; Schwarz, Bill. 1996. "The Only White Man in There": The Re-Racialisation of England, 1956–1968. *Race & Class,* 38: 65–78.

[16] Virdee. *Racism, Class*; Kyriakides, Christopher and Satnam Virdee. 2003. Migrant Labour, Racism and the British National Health Service. *Ethnicity & Health,* 8: 283–305; Shilliam. *Race*. Chap. 5.

[17] Michael, Hill. 1969. The Exercise of Discretion in the National Assistance Board. *Public Administration,* 47: 75–90, 85–87.

shorter length of residency in Britain, but their involvement in precarious work and unskilled labour meant they were painted by welfare officers, as well as politicians, as the undeserving recipients of welfare.[18]

The cuts to welfare services under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s resulted in racialised competition over limited welfare resources. The steep rise in unemployment, accompanied by cuts in benefits and the selling off of council housing, pushed the White working-class into precarious work and a culture of poverty. The second and third sections of this chapter examine how White women experienced these changes to welfare. Pulling out the recurring motifs in these women's experiences, I demonstrate that they blamed the issues they faced on their local neighbours of colour, rather than policy. Moreover, I will show how their racism was articulated through a "jealously guarded welfare system", whereby non-White families were viewed as "undeserving" of the right to "fare well".[19] By honing in on these often-troubling experiences and feelings, the chapter offers important new insights into the role of race in shaping states of welfare in post-war Britain.

Researcher and Subject: Acquiring Experiential Expertise

Cashmore's interviews took place in four locations across Birmingham, but only two locations were labelled "working-class" by the researcher. These were Newtown, an inner-city district in the north of the city, and Chelmsley Wood, a suburb in the east of the city. Location is important here. Over the post-war period, the West Midlands region of the UK was at the centre of heated debates around race. This included the 1963 Smethwick election, which saw Peter Griffiths using anti-immigration rhetoric as part of his election campaign, and Enoch Powell's "Rivers of

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[18] Shilliam, *Race*, 81–85.

[19] Redhead, Grace. 2021. "A British Problem Affecting British People": Sickle Cell Anaemia, Medical Activism and Race in the National Health Service, 1975–1993. *Twentieth Century British History,* 32: 189–211, 192.

Blood" speech in 1968, which was both a diatribe against immigration and the Race Relations Bill of the same year.[20]

From the mid-1960s, Birmingham in the West Midlands also became the subject of numerous canonical sociological studies on race and immigration, including John Rex and Robert Moore's study of Sparkbrook and Rex and Sally Tomlinson's oft-cited study *Colonial Immigrants in a British City*.[21] While it was the inner-city area of Handsworth that attracted researchers' interest the most, Cashmore focused on the neighbouring inner-city ward of Newtown, where 13.4% of the population was from the New Commonwealth or Pakistan. Moreover, the unemployment rate was hovering above 16.3% (7% higher than the rest of the city).[22] He also interviewed residents living in Chelmsley Wood, situated just outside of the city centre, where 2.1% of residents were born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan.[23] Unless otherwise stated, all the women in this chapter lived in Newtown.

In *The Logic of Racism*, Cashmore demonstrated how class, age, sex, and place determined how White people felt about, and experienced, living near Black and South Asian residents. While invoking the structure of racist feelings among some of Birmingham's inhabitants, he focused more on the perceptions of Black and Asian residents, rather than the identities of the White residents themselves. This ethnocentrism of Cashmore was similar to a critique levelled at White sociologists at the time, with scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies arguing that scholars of the SSRC tended to "study black people

[20] Yemm, Rachel. 2019. Immigration, Race and Local Media: Smethwick and the 1964 General Election. *Contemporary British History,* 33: 98–122; Schofield, Camilla. 2013. *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chap. 4.

[21] Palmer, Lisa Amanda. 2020. "Each One Teach One" Visualising Black Intellectual Life in Handsworth beyond the Epistemology of "White Sociology". *Identities,* 27: 91–113, 92; See also, Connell, Kieran. 2019. *Black Handsworth: Race in 1980s Britain*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

[22] In the words of Amos et al., Handsworth, with its conflict between Black youth, the police, as well as the district's high rates of unemployment and a large number of Rastafarians, made it the "pulse" of the Black community in the eyes of those at the SSRC. Amos, Gilroy, and Lawrence, White Sociology, 19; Cashmore, WHO ARE THE REAL RACISTS, 9.

[23] User Guide 1. ERWM, 1–6.

rather than White racism".[24] Indeed, while Cashmore sought to understand racism through the experiences of White people, the themes listed on his questionnaire sheet, such as "repatriation", "immigration control", "education", "housing", "mixed marriage", "positive discrimination", and "sympathies", all directed attention away from the White interviewees and towards the Black and Asian subjects. The identity of the White speakers is largely taken for granted, or as Hazel Carby has put it, the whiteness is made "invisible".[25] This "invisibility" is made even more obvious within the files available through the UKDS. Within the interview transcripts and the hand-written notes, we are only given the participants' responses. Any questions or input from the interviewer are missing, with only a few exceptions. A sense of dialogue or human interaction—or any indication about the interviewers themselves—is masked by the overwhelming silence of the interviewer's voice.

Despite these silences, there are some ways of gauging the interview dynamic. For instance, some shared traits of Cashmore and his assistant Bagley may have affected the interview, including their gender, their academic profession, and, importantly, their racialisation as White. This latter fact was an especially important component in shaping the interviews. While the White identity that the researchers and the interviewees shared was never discussed, it undoubtedly led to far more open and confessional disclosures. The White women were notably frank in vocalising a wide range of racist discourses, from presumptions about the superior intelligence of South Asian children to fantasies about repatriating their Jamaican neighbours to the Caribbean.[26]

One woman claimed that, "I would never talk to my friend and say things that the coloured person could overhear, like say, 'they hadn't ought to be here'".[27] The woman indicated that being White played a crucial role in determining what could or could not be said in conversation about people of colour. The fact she then revealed several negative experiences about living next door to a Black woman before proclaiming that "they're not of our race, and in my opinion, I don't think coloured people should live in the White man's country", suggests that she felt

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[24] Amos, Gilroy, and Lawrence. White Sociology, 20–21.

[25] Quoted in Dyer. *White*, 3.

[26] See Int046. ERWM, 7.

[27] Int059. ERWM, 6.

comfortable disclosing prejudiced beliefs to the interviewer owing to his White identity. And yet, despite the shared ethnic identity of the researchers, there seemed to be a subtle tension between the professional expertise of Cashmore and Bagley, and the experiential expertise of the women.

In *The Logic of Racism*, Cashmore does not account for the fact that his identity as a White male sociologist, who was also an outsider to the area, may have yielded certain responses from the subjects. While the White women were not vocally suspicious of the researchers (as indicated above, they are particularly candid in their interviews), they adopt several discursive techniques that worked to assert their expertise within the interview. For instance, the district of Newtown had seen a drastic change over the previous decade owing to the impact of migration and changes in housing. Consequently, some of the older women in the study used their long-term experiences gained from witnessing these changes to gain authority in their interviews. For instance, Mrs Aspal, who was 50 years old, commented, "let me tell you how I see it; during the 40s and 50s this area…was all old back to back housing, it was a slum but people had pride in the area…then the Blacks started moving in".[28] Another 48-year-old woman also attributed urban deterioration to immigration: "a few years ago, you could walk along the street and feel safe, but you can't now. You can go back 20-odd years ago, things have changed a lot in 20 years. We hadn't got all the immigrants that we've got now".[29] These means of asserting experiential knowledge are important in understanding how the White women's expertise was grounded in racism. Both women used their long-term residency to not only rationalise the environmental decline in the area but reproduce racialised discourses by associating this decline with immigration, particularly Caribbean immigration.

Jane Darlington used her cartographic knowledge of her estate and its inhabitants to demonstrate her experiential expertise in the interview. For example she opined

> We've got a block of maisonettes and the stairs are a disgrace, disgusting; plus the veranda, and—let me see—no, there's no coloured up on that block…we've got four coloured families now, up the back, and you can't say they're the problems… What we're finding the troubles coming from

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[28] Int077. ERWM, 2.

[29] Int044. ERWM, 2.

are these young—17 and 18 year olds—they're the ones who're causing all the problems, because they're coming in the flat, they're bringing all their mates in, and that's where it's coming from.[30]

In her statement, Darlington adopted a quasi-researcher status to heighten her expertise, which in turn set her up as the local "expert", although she never actually uses the term. Her comment "what we're finding is…" suggests a potential one-upmanship of expertise within the context of the interview, while she used meticulous attention to detail, in particular where residents of colour lived, to ground her statements with legitimacy, therefore elevating her expertise. Her use of first-person plural also curated a "community of experience", albeit one unmarked by race, that was grounded in the shared negative experiences of living next door to loud youths, rather than people of colour.[31]

The women also asserted their expertise when discussing their experiences of interacting with state infrastructures—an expertise that rested on the discursive production of racialised communities. For instance, Darlington's experiences of interacting with the Department for Health and Social Security (DHSS), who were responsible for issuing social security grants, were considered in relation to the comparative financial support given to her Black and Asian neighbours. She began detailing one experience she had by saying, "I think some of them [White people] are frightened of them. Have you ever sat in a DHSS office? You go and sit in one today—it'd open your eyes". She then followed with an account of a grant being offered to a "coloured woman" but withheld from her daughter.[32]

Similarly, Mrs Jenkins stated, "if you want to see what Newtown is like, you go down to the housing place, and you see how many White people are sitting in there, compared to coloured people. Those who're going for accommodation—it's all coloured people in there".[33] Another noted, "you go down to DHSS and it's full of col [sic]. You can count on the fingers of one hand how many White people [sic]".[34] The women used

[30] Int072. ERWM, 1.

[31] Kivimäki, Malinen, and Vuolanto, Communities of Experience.

[32] Int072. ERWM, 3.

[33] Int044. ERWM, 6.

[34] Int051. ERWM, 2.

their everyday experiences at the local DHSS office to demonstrate their expert knowledge about welfare in the interview. However, this expertise depended on simultaneous allegations that local neighbours of colour were exploiting the welfare services. Crucially, in these testimonies, the power of this expertise was reinforced by the women's ability to place their personal experiences within a much larger collective experience that local White people shared: that they did not "fare well" in comparison with their neighbours of colour.

The way that women asserted authority in their interviews indicates that behind the absent interviewer voice in the transcripts lay a social environment whereby Darlington and others felt the need to saturate their interview responses with experiential knowledge that grounded their expertise. While it is reasonable to assume that the researchers already saw the women's testimony of value, owing to their status as research subjects, the women still felt the need to continuously emphasise their authority in the interview by drawing on their experiences as residents in the area, or as recipients of welfare services. However, as demonstrated, this experiential expertise relied on shoring up a racial divide between Black and South Asian residents—who were blamed for deteriorating welfare provisions—and the local White community. Furthermore, while personal experience mattered to their expert status, women's experiential expertise was also bolstered by their ability to show their experiences as part of a much broader White community of experience. It can be argued therefore that the women's experiential expertise was acquired not through their experience as women, but as White women.

Welfare, "Faring Well", and The White Working-Class Victim

When it came to discussing their opinions on welfare and "faring well", nothing seemed to irritate the women more than the subject of housing, which women took to be an example of their neighbours of colour "faring well", at their expense. In Newtown, racialised competition over welfare was particularly fraught, especially on the subject of council housing. In the ward, around 94% of the population lived in council housing, but the amount of good quality housing available was small. This was a result of Margaret Thatcher's Right-to-Buy scheme introduced in 1980, which drastically reduced the number of council housing stock. However, the White women in Newtown considered a shortage of suitable housing a

result of Black and South Asian migration, rather than a roll-back in state funding. Mrs McLennan stated

> I think with the coloureds, they think they own us they think they own this country now, they really think they're it. A lot of them, they come from Jamaica, they come over here and they get a house like that [snaps fingers].[35]

Mrs Jenkins also commented, "they come to this country and not only do they get places, but they get what they want".[36] In both statements, there was an assumption grounded in personal observation that local Black and Asian residents "fared well" much more effectively than their White working-class neighbours.

Embedded in the women's observation that their neighbours fared better than them was the fear that Britain as a country was being "invaded". This discourse was not a particularly novel one during the period. In 1978, Margaret Thatcher, as part of her election campaign, made her now famous statement about immigration in a television interview for *World in Action*

> If we went on as we are, then by the end of the century there would be 4 million people of the New Commonwealth and Pakistan here. Now that is an awful lot and I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people of a different culture.[37]

As Sara Ahmed has argued, the sense of being swamped (or overwhelmed or flooded) not only brings up collective affective associations with fear, anxiety, and a loss of control, but also constitutes an image of the nation as if it were a victimised subject and the Other as the invader.[38] Through her use of the term "swamped", Margaret Thatcher built on the same anti-immigration rhetoric used by Powell in his "Rivers of Blood"

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[35] Int046. ERWM, 3.

[36] Int044. ERWM, 6.

[37] Cited in Kyriakides, Christopher and Satnam Virdee. Migrant Labour, 295.

[38] Ahmed, Sara. 2004. Affective Economies. *Social Text*, 22: 117–139, 122.

speech ten years prior in the West Midlands, which framed Britain as a nation under siege by immigration.[39]

In the interviews, the women never mention fears of being "swamped", suggesting they were not necessarily informed by Thatcherite rhetoric. But they did consider Britain as a nation under siege. One woman in Chelmsley Wood, referring to someone cheating on social security, commented, "when people try to catch them out such as the tax man—they don't understand English…they are taking over".[40] "When the coloureds started taking over then we started having trouble", noted another woman.[41] The statements are all indicative of a broader theme in the interviews: the fear or underlying belief that Black and South Asian residents were carrying out a racialised coup via accessing welfare services. This fear is illustrative of the "lived nation" as told through the history of experience, whereby the experience of not "faring well" led the women to imagine Britain as a nation, albeit one under attack.[42] The racialised identity of the so-called assailants was also rarely mentioned in the statements, with the use of "col." or "coloured" being used to homogenise the White women's neighbours. This homogenisation bolstered the discursive racial boundaries the White women were setting and further inferred onto them a White identity.

The White women in the Aston study also believed themselves to be individual victims. For instance, Mrs McLennan's feeling of Britain being "owned" developed out of having a poor relationship with a Black family that was housed near her in Newtown. She stated, "I've got nothing against them, but I have now, they're turning me right against them now…you can get on with them and then the next minute they turn on you, they gang up on you".[43] McLennan later went on to comment, "I think everybody would be pleased round here if there weren't any coloureds here…It's just that one family over there that's doing all the trouble".[44] McLennan's use of the term "ganged up on" not only served

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[39] Schofield. *Enoch Powell*. 5; Hirsch, Shirin. 2018. *In the Shadow of Enoch Powell: Race, Locality and Resistance*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 23.

[40] Int035. EWRM, 1.

[41] Int074. EWRM, 2.

[42] Kivimäki, Suodenjoki, and Vahtikari, eds. *Lived Nation*.

[43] Int046. ERWM, 3.

[44] Int046. ERWM, 4.

to define her Black neighbours as her opponents, but it excluded them from the White "community of experience", despite all individuals living in the same working-class communities. McLennan's racialised accusations levelled at her Black neighbours were fundamentally grounded in her individual and personal experiences of negative allocation procedures. This individualised victimhood was also demonstrated by Mrs Jenkins, who stated in her interview that "the ones [homes] that I've been offered up to now have been a flat, a maisonette—and no house", indicating that her experience of not "faring well" was being used as expertise to make racist comments about her neighbours.[45] Thus, while welfare cuts affected all those in need of council housing, White women mediated their expertise on this policy through a discourse levelled against their Black and South Asian neighbours.

The women also used their experiential expertise to suggest ways of resolving the housing problem. In particular, many women felt housing allocation ought to be segregated. One woman reflected, "I do think they could put them all together. I don't know if you know Newtown shopping precinct, but there's a great massive block of flats there, now, they could put everybody in there, and they could have their stereo on all the time".[46] Another woman thought that "coloured should stay with coloureds, White stay with Whites, Pakistanis with—like them, like that, because no-body's getting on".[47] Ms Riley stated firmly, "well, I think they should keep them in their community, keep the blacks with the blacks, the Whites with the Whites and the Indians with the Indians".[48] In these statements, the White women's experiences of noise or conflict were used as grounds for their expert status, which they used to create "solutions" to problems in council housing allocations. These solutions served as channels for the women to promulgate their racism and abject revulsion they had towards their Black and South Asian residents.

The women also adopted personal methods to resist the "takeover" that they perceived to be taking place. For example, one woman commented: "all the shops round here are being taken over by Pakistanis. We've only got one shop around here now and that's the co-op [sic]. You

[45] Int044. ERWM, 6.
[46] Int040. ERWM, 5.
[47] Int046. ERWM, 4.
[48] Int045. ERWM, 3.

don't always fancy going into Pakistani shops, I never use them. I think they are dirty".[49] Mrs Philips' statement is revelatory here. Starting her sentence with an assumption of a localised takeover, she then concluded with a more explicitly racist and stereotypical assumption about the cleanliness of her Pakistani neighbours. Thus, Philips' assumption of a takeover was used as a gloss to cover a bias held about Pakistani residents.

This boycotting also extended to educational activities, with one woman recalling a time she walked out of her daughter's Christmas school play "on that stage there wasn't a single White child, it was all Indians, blacks, and half-castes. I think they should have had some White children doing something as well".[50] The mother's concern was not isolated. Local news articles at the time regularly featured stories of parents who were outraged at attempts to diversify the school curriculum. Cashmore's UKDS notes include a news clipping of a story involving a group of White parents who pulled their children out of the Christmas play which focused on the Hindu gods Rama and Sita, rather than the Nativity.[51] These two instances of White women "resisting" a perceived takeover indicate how White women believed that for them to "fare well" in their community, their South Asian neighbours of colour could not.

The White women in Newtown saw themselves as the White victims of a racialised takeover, executed by a homogenous group of neighbours of African and South Asian descent, who they believed were faring better than they were. They used their experiences of precarity, a product of allocation procedures and diminished welfare subsidies, to produce a White "community of experience". Here whiteness was always made invisible, only made known through the labelling of Black and South Asian residents as the fearful enemy. This discourse did mimic broader political discourses of "swamping". However, the women produced this discourse on their terms, using personal anecdotes of victimisation, and boycotting attempts, to produce the whiteness they wished to protect.

[49] Int083. ERWM, 2.

[50] Int045. ERWM, 4.

[51] Anon. 1984. School condemns "racialist" parents. *Sandwell Evening Mail*. 7 December, 9.

"I Don't Think It's Fair": The New "Deserving" and "Undeserving" of Welfare

For the White women in Newtown and Chelmsley Wood, embedded into their understanding of themselves as the victim was the notion that their neighbours of colour were "invaders". This resulted in a racialised battle over welfare and who had the right to "fare well" and who were the "undeserving" recipients of welfare services. This self-identification was articulated through their discussions of fairness, particularly through housing allocation policies, which regularly flared up the White women's sense of injustice. Mrs Jenkins stated bluntly: "when they want to move can they get out?—Yes. But can I get out when I want to?—No".[52] Meanwhile, another woman commented that "a lot of the people on this estate are elderly and as these people die it isn't the White people who get the flats it's the coloureds".[53] In the statements was a blurry logic that housing should be offered on the basis of fairness: both women seem to think that a fair distribution of resources should be central to (their) receipt of housing.

In some respects, these vernaculars of fairness and justice suggest that women saw their ability to "fare well" through the lens of equality, rather than necessarily through the lens of racial difference. Indeed, this was not an unusual assumption at the time. For example, implemented in the post-war period as part of a social democratic consensus, the National Assistance Act of 1948 rescinded previous poor law distinctions between who was deserving and underserving. In its place, a universalistic system whereby maintenance benefits were intended to assure an adequate level of subsistence to those in need of assistance was implemented.[54] British welfare has since, as Shilliam has noted, been viewed by scholars as a "national compact" between labour, business, and the state, therefore considered as a way to mitigate class conflict.[55] As Alastair Bonnett has argued, for the White working-class, welfare became representative of their membership of the national community, and any exploitation of the

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[52] Int044. ERWM, 6.

[53] Int051. ERWM, 2.

[54] Shilliam. *Race*, 83.

[55] Ibid. 84.

welfare system represented an infringement on the national body. As he noted: "welfare came wrapped in the Union Jack".[56]

While the White women in the Aston study rarely used the terms "democracy" and "justice", they constantly linked their feelings of victimisation to themes of equality and what they deemed "fair". For example, when discussing housing allocation, Mrs Jenkins again noted

> I don't think it's fair, because people who've been born here and lived in a country all their lives, and our parents lived here, their parents and everything - I don't think it's right that other people, who haven't been in the country so very long, they're given choice.[57]

Thus, the women believed that their right to "fare well" was to be prioritised over the right of any other non-White citizen, and this feeling spread to other areas of welfare provision as well. One resident from Chelmsley Wood recalled: "I know of one col who worked full time and signed on the dole and now he's got his own shop. It's not fair when we are suffering".[58] In education, women viewed unevenly mixed classrooms as inhibiting equality, as Mrs Jenkins commented, "in some of these schools, there's more West Indian children then there are White children, I think it's unfair, I think 50–50 would be better you know, for the children".[59] The irony of these discussions is that by setting the standard for what they deemed "fair", the women implicitly suggested that White people were the more deserving recipient of welfare services. Rooted in the statements was not merely the understanding that Black people in Britain received preferential treatment in the welfare system, but that whiteness conferred onto women traits that instead made them more deserving of this treatment.

Discussions of parity were most acute in the women's discussion of social security grants. Once again, personal experience underpinned women's sense of inequality within the provision of grants, which they also tied with ideas of respectability

56 Bonnett. How the British Working Class, 328.

57 Int044. ERWM, 6.

58 Int035. ERWM, 1.

59 Int044. ERWM, 3.

I think they get on better, because they're so damned cheeky. For instance, I was in there about an hour to an hour and a half, and you could hear the conversations of some of the coloureds, "I can't live on this kind of money, this is no good to me, I want more money", all this kind of thing—you don't hear White people talk like that. This is the sort of thing they're up to all the time.[60]

What amazes me is how they are always dressed. I've not seen a scruffy one yet. I don't know how they do it on soc sec [social security]... even the children are well dressed [sic]. I always wonder how they manage it. I think they must get more money out of the gov. than we do, that can be the only answer [sic].[61]

In both cases, the White women used their observations as experiential expertise that legitimised their racism. The first statement reinforced stereotypical tropes of Black deviancy, while the second woman's interaction with the well-turned-out families challenged her underlying assumption that Black families were unkempt. For these women appearances were closely bound up with respectability and being able to "fare well". As Beverly Skeggs argued in her study of White working-class women in the 1990s, the desire to disavow the label "working-class" prompted White working-class women in her study to care about their appearance of themselves, as well as that of others.[62] The women thus synthesised the complex links between gender, class, and race by labelling Black families as "undeserving", pushing them outside of the implicitly White group of "deserving" welfare recipients.

While the welfare system of the post-war years was offered on a universal basis, women still internalised distinctions between the "deserving" and "undeserving" sections of the working-class, which they linked to "faring well". While politicians such as Margaret Thatcher framed Britain's links to democracy through agitation for immigration reform, women's sense of justice operated on the everyday level, where experiences of welfare provision were based on comparisons that were spotted in the housing office or on the estate. Women situated these discussions within the language of "fairness", but in doing so they demonstrated the

[60] Int043. ERWM, 2.

[61] Int052. ERWM, 1–2.

[62] Skeggs, Beverley. 1997. *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: SAGE Publications, 83–85.

belief that they, as White people, were more entitled to "fare well" than people of colour. These discourses preserved both the sanctity of a White welfare system and British identity more broadly.

Conclusion

This chapter has contributed to "new" histories of welfare in Britain by demonstrating how White working-class women's "state of welfare" was often grounded in a racist logic that posited their neighbours of colour outside of a White and British community of experience. The chapter has highlighted how race and racism formed the basis of White women's experiential expertise of welfare, and how their expertise was only acquired through the discursive production of separate "White" and "coloured" communities. White women used their expertise to make specific claims about their Black and South Asian residents taking over the welfare system, and that they were unfairly claiming access to better housing or social security. By painting people of colour as enemies and outsiders of Britain as a nation, the women designated welfare as the domain of White people. These motifs also reflected the women's beliefs about "faring well". For the White women, Black and South Asian residents did not deserve to "fare well". Or more particularly, they did not deserve to fare better, demonstrating the sense of racialised entitlement that women attached to their "state of welfare". As such, this chapter has contributed to the literature on experiential expertise in post-war Britain by highlighting the negative, and perhaps dangerous, consequences of this social phenomenon.

In exploring these experiences, this chapter has also tied in with broader histories of experience and the "lived welfare state". The measures instigated by Conservative governments that resulted in limited state spending on welfare created an acute sense of precarity among White women. They projected this precarity outwards through a racist diatribe against their neighbours, rather than the state. Women's rationalisation of who "deserved" to "fare well" demonstrated how top-down archaic beliefs from the nineteenth century concerning the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor trickled down to ordinary people and were reformulated by White women into a racialised discourse. Unfortunately, the reasons why they felt the state to be less blameworthy are beyond the scope of this chapter, but what is clear is that when the state made welfare a finite commodity, women experienced this through the prism of race.

This chapter also makes important contributions to the history of whiteness in Britain. In *The Logic of Racism*, Cashmore overlooked the obvious common denominator linking his subjects: their White identity. Whiteness was so ubiquitous to the interviewers that it was not worthy of mention in relation to how racism operated in these West Midlands estates. And yet, as this study has shown, whiteness meant something to the women in Newtown and Chelmsley Wood, although it is rarely commented upon or vocalised. Whiteness was an identity that came with authority, whereby women were able to leverage their identities as White insiders to gain experiential expertise of the system. But whiteness was also under threat via the welfare system. The women's thoughts and feelings about welfare provision were shaped by an understanding of themselves as possessing a racialised identity different to that of some of their neighbours, and that this identity conferred unto them priority access to better quality welfare provisions. Coupled with the construction of the "undeserving" outsider was their self-identification as the "deserving" White resident. By shifting the analytical lens onto the "White" in White women's experiences of welfare provision, this chapter has highlighted the importance of race and racism to the lived experience of the British Welfare State.

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Communities

Student Voices, Expertise, and Welfare Within British Universities in the Mid-Twentieth-Century

Sarah Crook

INTRODUCTION

In 1963 Eric Ashby, then Master of Clare College, Cambridge, rued the lack of knowledge about higher education. Academics, "although dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge", had "until recently resolutely declined to pursue knowledge about themselves".[1] Ashby's concern would soon be addressed, for research about higher education flourished in the 1960s. Some of this work, as I argue here, turned to students as sources of experiential knowledge about their environments. Ashby might have noted, though, that the National Union of Students (NUS) had been investigating and generating knowledge about higher education—via reports aimed at improving provision—since the 1930s. These reports tackled a range of areas of student life, with the first area of investigation being student health facilities. The NUS, I suggest, was one of the "new forums

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[1] Ashby, Eric. 1963. Introduction: Decision-Making in The Academic World. In *The Sociological Review, Monograph no. 7: Sociological Studies in British University Education,* ed. Paul Halmos, 5–11. Keele: University of Keele, 6.

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and spaces" that, as the editors of this volume set out, sought to "expand the scope, inclusivity and applicability of welfare services", and that used its proximity to student life alongside other forms of expertise to develop ideas about how the student community could be best served.[2]

Between the 1930s and the 1970s students' experiential expertise and knowledge were recognised, leveraged, and applied in ways that would have important implications for universities and higher education institutions. This chapter looks at health and welfare as an area in which students' experiential expertise was particularly influential and in which the authority of the "student voice" gained early acceptance. It argues that experiential expertise—derived from temporal proximity to studenthood—was valued by student representatives, and that experiential knowledge was fixed upon the wider student community by social science researchers. As the editors of this volume set out, one way of considering holders of experiential expertise is as "individuals whose action and activism has been catalysed and underpinned by their personal experiences and knowledge".[3]

Within this chapter, I look at some of the products of expertise and one of the mechanisms of the production of this experiential knowledge. The chapter therefore has two strands. Its first strand explores NUS interventions about student health through a series of reports: *Student Health* (1937); *Health and the Student* (1944); *Report on Student Health* (1948); *Survey of Student Health Facilities* (1953). Its second strand looks to sociological investigations of student life as a means by which students were recognised as authorities on their experiences of institutions. This sociological research material played a role in generating experiential knowledge—laying the groundwork for later institutional attempts to gather and curate the "student voice". I am far from the first to recognise that surveys "create" as well as "measure" reality, and in agreement with these scholars, my argument is that the student surveys developed in the 1960s and 1970s ascribed experiential knowledge to the student body and reflected ideas about this experiential knowledge's

[2] See Introduction to this collection.

[3] Ibid.

value.[4] Thus this chapter examines one route to authority and visibility mobilised by and within the student community, and the other mechanism developed outside the student community.

Students' experiential knowledge differs from some of the other communities discussed in this volume. Students constitute a small percentage of the population at any one time but do not in and of themselves constitute a marginalised group. Put another way, while individual students might be members of oppressed groups—via class, sexual identity, or race (and might be within multiple, overlapping marginalised communities), for example—it is not their status as students that is the vector for this oppression. Instead, experiential knowledge is assumed to flow from students' position within an educational institution. Their experiential knowledge is not just relational but also time-bounded: the perceived bearing of their experience to the academy diminishes as time progresses forward. Generations of students become not experiential experts on student life, but on their moment of student life. Students' experiential knowledge is distinctively temporal. Experiential expertise, then, is tied to a transitory experience of an institution and to the habitus of a highly mutable culture with manifold internal variations.

The groups discussed within this chapter might be seen to hold different types of experiential expertise and knowledge. In 1976 Thomasina Borkman distinguished between experiential knowledge ("truth learned from personal experience"), experiential expertise ("competence or skill in handling or resolving a problem through the use of one's own experience"), and professional knowledge ("developed, applied, and transmitted by an established specialized occupation"). These concepts, Borkman stressed, were not mutually exclusive.[5] Indeed, we can see that NUS reports transgress these boundaries (NUS reports' authors held temporal proximity to student life and the reports were oriented towards addressing problems, but were also grounded in systematic research that moved beyond their authors' experiences—and, of course, leaders of the NUS claimed democratic legitimacy as well as temporal proximity to student life) whereas the surveying of the wider

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[4] Armstrong, David. 1983. *Political Anatomy of the Body.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43.

[5] Borkman, Thomasina. 1976. Experiential Knowledge: A New Concept for the Analysis of Self-Help Groups. *Social Service Review,* 50, 3: 445–456. See also the Introduction to this collection.

student body about their ability to "fare well" might be seen to be a process of curating experiential knowledge. Whereas the NUS reports on student welfare aimed to establish the national landscape and directly addressed potential reforms, sociological surveys of student views had a more removed relationship with institutional change: they might provide evidence for its need, but it was not necessarily an aim of the research.

Student agency and student life have recently drawn increased scholarly attention.[6] Such a literature takes up Jodi Burkett's appeal to

> reposition students as legitimate historical, and current, actors, as people, not a homogeneous group, who make clear and informed choices about their activities and who are a part of the world in which they inhabit, not just the institution where they study.[7]

The institutions in which students studied and, indeed, students themselves proliferated across this period. In 1946–1947 there were 68,000 full-time university students in Britain; by 1968–1969 there were around 200,000; yet more students were in higher education in non-university institutions. In 1945 there were 21 universities, including five university colleges, whereas by 1970 there were 44. The development of the new universities of the 1960s has been a rich area for scholarly research, as have the campus protests of this period.[8]

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[6] Brewis, Georgina. 2014. *A Social History of Student Volunteering: Britain and Beyond, 1880–1980*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1; See Sharp, Emily. 2022. Research perspectives on students in Great Britain and Ireland, 1800–1945, *CIAN-Magazine of History of Universities*, 25: 122–155; See also Burkett, Jodi. ed. 2018. *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–14; Day, Mike. 2012. Dubious Causes of No Interest to Students? The Development of National Union of Students in the United Kingdom. *European Journal of Higher Education,* 2, 1: 32–46; Brewis, *A Social History of Student Volunteering*; Laqua, Daniel. 2017. Activism in the Students' League of Nations': International Student Politics and the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants, 1919–1939. *The English Historical Review,* 132, 556: 605–637.

[7] Burkett, Jodi. 2018. Introduction: Universities and Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland, in *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 1–14, 6–7.

[8] See, for example, Thomas, Nick. 2002. Challenging Myths of the 1960s: The Case of Student Protest in Britain. *Twentieth Century British History,* 13, 3: 277–297; Nehring, Holger. 2020. Challenging the Myths of the Scottish Sixties: Student Protests in the Wake of "1968" at the University of Stirling. *Moving the Social,* 64: 53–80; Pellew, Jill. & Taylor, Miles. eds. 2020. *Utopian Universities: a Global History of the New Campuses of the 1960s.* London: Bloomsbury.

The students of the 1960s—the cohort who were increasingly surveyed about their experiences, as I discuss later in this chapter—were raised in an era in which expectations and structures around "faring well" became more ambitious and far-reaching. In 1948 the World Health Organization defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".[9] At a tangible level, British healthcare structures were transformed by the birth of the National Health Service in 1948: the "cradle to grave" welfare state was born. Young people were agents within as well as beneficiaries of the welfare state. Indeed, Siân Pooley and Jonathan Taylor have recently argued for the centrality of young people to the development and trajectory of welfare services in Britain.[10] Such an argument should be extended to universities, where young people intervened in discussions about institutions' approaches to their ability to "fare well".

Keith Vernon has forged important understandings about the rising interest in the health and moral growth of British university students in the decades preceding the Second World War.[11] However, he notes that it is difficult to discern the extent to which students actively solicited health resources, and he concludes that the interest in facilities was top-down rather than student-led.[12] Vernon is right; student voices were just one lever for change. Nonetheless, even if the student voice merely contributed to changes in health provision already in motion, the assertion of their experiential knowledge and expertise foreshadowed some important ways of claims-making that would become increasingly prominent within universities. This chapter looks at student interventions around health and makes two key arguments: that the NUS investigations

[9] WHO Interim Commission, *Official Records of the World Health Organization No. 2: Summary Report on Proceedings, Minutes and Final Acts of the International Health Conference Held in New York From 19 June to 22 July 1946*. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1948.

[10] Pooley, Siân, and Taylor, Jonathan. 2021, Introduction. In *Children's Experiences of Welfare in Modern Britain*, eds. Pooley, Siân, and Taylor, Jonathan, 1–26. London: University of London Press.

[11] Vernon, Keith. 2000. A Healthy Society for Future Intellectuals: Developing Student Life at Civic Universities. In *Regenerating England: Science, Medicine and Culture in Inter-War Britain*, eds. Christopher Lawrence and Anna-K. Mayer, 179–202. Amsterdam: Rodopi; Vernon, Keith. 2008. The Health and Welfare of University Students in Britain, 1920–1939, *History of Education*, 37: 227–52.

[12] Vernon, Health and Welfare, 250.

into student health provision across this period drew on the authority of representation grounded, in part, in proximity to the experience of student life; and that the sociological surveys of students which flourished in the 1960s and 1970s participated in, and contributed to, a process of knowledge curation that emphasised the value of student views.

The National Union of Students and Student Health

The first student unions in the UK developed in Scotland in the late nineteenth century, with England and Wales following soon after. As Mike Day has shown, these early student unions both represented student views and facilitated recreational activities.[13] Before the First World War student organisations met at the annual British Universities Congress, but no formal representative organisation emerged from these meetings.[14] The NUS, founded in 1922, initially brought together 27 universities and colleges and sought to encourage international understanding as well as to represent students. Two years after its foundation every university student union from England and Wales had signed up to the NUS, though it was only in 1937 that membership was opened up to non-university institutions.[15] Its early leaders were predominantly ex-servicemen, reflecting much of the student body in the interwar period.[16] Elected officials were either current students or recent graduates, and it was only in 1949 that the Presidency became a full-time, paid sabbatical position.[17] This

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[13] Day, Dubious Causes.

[14] Day, Mike. 2012. *National Union of Students, 1922–1912.* London: Regal Press, 13.

[15] Day, Mike. 2017. The National Union of Students and Devolution. In *Students in Twentieth-Century Britain and Ireland* ed. Burkett, Jodi, 129–154. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 131–132. For more on the NUS and international connections, see Burkett, Jodi. 2014. The National Union of Students and Transnational Solidarity, 1958–1968. *European Review of History,* 21, 4: 539–555; Day, Dubious Causes, 34; Day, *National Union of Students,* 18. Scotland had a Pre-Existing Body, so the NUS Represented England and Wales.

[16] Brewis, Georgina, Hellawell, Sarah and Laqua, Daniel. 2020. Rebuilding the Universities after the Great War: Ex-Service Students, Scholarships and the Reconstruction of Student Life in England, *History,* 105: 82–106, 83.

[17] Major Stanley Jenkins, student leader—obituary, *The Telegraph*, 26 April 2016 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2016/04/26/major-stanley-jenkins-student-leader--obituary/. Accessed 10 July 2024.

proximity to student life implied a value placed on recent experience of student life, even while leaders drew on authority drawn from the democratic process of election. This emphasis on proximity continued across the twentieth century; in 1968, for example, the NUS introduced itself to its new members as a "democratic organisation run *by students for students*".[18] Its leaders did indeed retain recent links with institutions, and NUS executive teams have tended to be dominated by people in their 20s.[19] The authority of the NUS leadership was, then, conferred by the democratic process of election and by their temporal proximity to studenthood itself.

In the early years of the NUS the organisation saw itself as having a remit that was largely practical.[20] In the 1930s, however, the organisation gained an augmented political consciousness against the background of the depressed economy.[21] It is perhaps not coincidental that the NUS's first report emerged at this moment of increased politicisation. In 1933 the NUS began work on *Student Health*, its first research report, the results of which were circulated in 1934 before the final report was published by the NUS in December 1937.[22] It began as an investigation into the potential introduction of student health services and health insurance schemes but soon became interested in preventative interventions.[23] The NUS placed significant emphasis on international comparisons. These international comparisons, the report suggested, suggested that universities in Britain were outliers in their relative lack of responsibility for students' physical and intellectual health.[24] This situation, it acknowledged, was changing as university leaders—although not unanimously—were acknowledging the broader remit of institutional

[18] NUS, *NUS Handbook: Introducing the National Union of Students,* 1968, 3. Emphasis added.

[19] See for example, Beckett, Francis, 1974. *NUS is your Union: an Introduction to the National Union of Students, 1974–1975.* London: NUS, 5–6.

[20] Day, Dubious Causes, 34.

[21] Halsey and Marks, British Student Politics, 120–121; Simon, Brian. 1987. The Student Movement in England and Wales during the 1930s. *History of Education,* 16, 3: 189–203.

[22] Day, *National Union of Students,* 21.

[23] NUS, *Student Health: The Report of an Enquiry into University Health Services by the National Union of Students.* London: NUS, 1937.

[24] Ibid. 6.

responsibilities beyond the provision of games equipment and playing fields.[25]

The report was interested primarily in the physical health of students and was particularly engaged with the provision of physical education resources, although it also explored the availability of university sanatoria and, in the absence of the NHS, insurance schemes.[26] The NUS emphasised the need for plans to be "practicable, economical and efficient".[27] *Student Health* articulated a "minimum policy" proposal for British universities: a medical examination conducted by qualified medical officers for male and female students; the appointment of a Director of Physical Education at each university; that no university should consider itself "properly equipped" without a gymnasium, a swimming pool, administrative offices for the Director of Physical Education, or private consulting rooms; the extension and maintenance of athletic facilities; and that all universities should provide their students with insurance in case of accident or illness.[28] "Faring well" for students meant facilities to support their physical well-being. Later, the NUS argued that the investigation had been "widely welcomed and saw a great advance in the field of student health".[29] However, the report's significance was largely as a means of establishing a baseline of expectations. Six years later the NUS once again formally considered the matter of student health care.

At the start of the 1940s the NUS was becoming more vocal about the need for students to contribute to the administration and decision making within universities. In 1940 it published a *Charter of Student Rights and Responsibilities* that sought to establish this, drawing criticism from commentators sceptical about students' maturity and therefore aptitude to take up such a role.[30] The issue of representation would gather steam two decades later, though in the intervening years the NUS again turned to health and welfare. In 1943 the NUS, the British

[25] Ibid. 6–7.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid. 9–10.

[28] Ibid. 90–96.

[29] NUS: The First Forty Years, 1922–1962, 1962, n/p. MS 280/144/7, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Library.

[30] Day, Mike, and Dickinson, Jim. 2018. David Versus Goliath: The Past, Present and Future of Students' Unions in the UK, Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) no. 111 Oxford: HEPI, 19.

Dental Students' Association, the British Medical Students' Association, and the Scottish National Union of Students came together on the Student Health Committee to attend, once again, to the problems of student health. *Health and the Student* was published in 1944.[31] The pamphlet noted that the available medical inspection regimes and medical insurance schemes did not cover people between 17 and 25 years old and argued that this cohort should "receive more benefit from health services". The health provision that the student organisations suggested in 1944 was formulated around the issues that impinged most pressingly on student health: tuberculosis, eyesight, immunisation, and mental and dental health.[32] These areas notwithstanding, though, the committee recommended that "The ideal health scheme for university students is one which does not interfere with university activity nor impinge unduly on their private lives".[33] The authors were cognisant of the wartime context of the report's publication. The war meant that recreational facilities could not be enhanced; that there was an onus on medical staff to be engaged in "more vital fields" than the "examination and welfare of university students".

The evacuation of some universities rendered this implementation impossible, and, perhaps most significantly, the publication of William Beveridge's report, *Social Insurance and Allied Services* (1942) proposed a significant change to the national healthcare infrastructure. These limitations noted, the student organisations suggested a general direction that the "Student Health Campaign" should take. These included encouraging students to make use of recreational facilities, the provision of a health insurance scheme for students, the medical examination of some students, the identification of students experiencing economic hardship which had deleterious consequences for their health, and the facilitation of health education.[34]

This report of 1944 was perceptive in its acknowledgement that while its recommendations would gain little traction in wartime conditions, post-war Britain would be more amenable to its suggestions. In 1948

[31] BMSA, NUS, BDSA, SNUS. 1944. *Health and the Student* London: 1. PAM 61:378.9. Royal College of Physicians of London. London.

[32] *Health and the Student*, 2–4.

[33] *Health and the Student*, 2.

[34] *Health and the Student*, 6–7.

the NUS Student Health Committee issued the *Report on Student Health* that drew upon the results of a circular sent to all the Vice Chancellors and Principals of the colleges within the NUS and that put forward recommendations for the future development of health services and provision.[35] In this report the student representatives were assertive about the challenges facing the student body. "The health of the student is far more undermined by the conditions under which he works—the long hours in buses and trains, the snatched meals, the continuous book work with its attendant eyestrain, and so forth", they argued. "These conditions tend to produce a sub-normal state of health rather than actual disease, and it is with this… a student health service should deal". The resulting service should be one that, "looks after every aspect of a student's life".[36] Indeed, the recommendations extended beyond the remit of the establishment of a health service. In keeping with the report's emphasis on the development of "positive health" it suggested provisions relating to catering ("*food* is always a burning question"); lodgings; athletic facilities; and halls of residence.[37] Health and welfare, then, were seen in expansive terms.

In the early 1950s student representatives again turned to health, reflecting that such an investigation was overdue in the light of the changes brought about by the NHS. A questionnaire was sent to all the member colleges. The Grants & Welfare Committee of the Students' Union at University College Hull—located in a city in the north of England—assessed the replies before submitting a report to the NUS Health Committee.[38] The survey aimed to establish the scale and style of current health provision across different types of institution. The Hull Committee made a series of recommendations around pre-enrolment health checks, the communication between medical officers and student members, positive health education, and the longer-term goal of establishing a health service in all larger institutions. The report, Hull hoped,

[35] This report was initially published in *Focus* in the summer of 1948 and was subsequently reprinted under the title *Report on Student Health: Prepared by the NUS Health Committee and Adopted by the Council of the NUS.*

[36] National Union of Students. 1948. *Report on Student Health.* London: NUS: 3. 7393.aaa.44. British Library, London.

[37] NUS. *Report on Student Health*, 3–5.

[38] National Union of Students. Survey of Student Health Facilities, 1951–1952. 18 June, 1953: 1. NSU/24/95. MSS. 280/91/8, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick Library.

would encourage students' unions to assess their own health provision. Knowledge about localised provision, then, was being drawn from individual institutions, interpreted at a national level, and then returned to the grassroots, creating a flow of expertise about health services between student representative bodies.[39]

While the impetus for the proliferation of student health services following the Second World War came from a variety of sources, some students considered themselves to have played a role in services' development. In May 1948 the *Palatinate,* the student newspaper at Durham, argued that "action by students" had led to greater interest in student health.[40] The article was not optimistic, however, about the timeliness of the response. Here it was noted that various obstructions meant that it was likely that "we can only… be comforted in our declining years that our grandchildren are well cared for in the bacteria-ridden strife of the academic world".[41] Others shared their sense that students had shaped provision. In Leeds, *Union News* wrote that the student health service (established in 1949) was set up "in large part through the efforts of students themselves".[42]

There is evidence that NUS reports gained a readership among influential student health professionals and an audience within the medical community. *Health and the Student* was considered by the Social and Preventative Medicine Committee of the Royal College of Physicians of London in 1945, and representatives of student bodies were consulted as the Committee put together its Third Interim Report of 1946.[43] The *British Medical Journal* commented in 1951 that since the war "special health services have grown up rapidly in British universities, and student organisations have shown themselves in favour of making physical and radiological examination compulsory for all students".[44] In the 1950s, St Andrews' medical officer claimed that *Health and the Student*

[39] Ibid. 6.

[40] Student Health. 1948. *Palatinate* 2, 12 May: 2.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Health and the Student, *Union News,* 26 September, 1962, 6.

[43] Gibson, Hector James. 1953. Indices of Health and Sickness in University Students: a Study Based on the Work of the Student Health Service of St. Andrews University (in Dundee) During the Years, 1948–1952. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 5.

[44] Anon. 1951. Annotations: Student Health. *British Medical Journal*, 2, 4729: 458.

"did a great deal to make known the student point of view".[45] The NUS's proposals around mental health were discussed by institutions and supported by organisations that represented educational staff.[46] The NUS did a considerable amount to draw attention to student welfare in its early decades.

Health and welfare remained in view even while the organisation increasingly sought input into student discipline, planning, and academic matters during the febrile 1960s.[47] The NUS explained that student services and welfare continued to be "of major importance" as the organisation took on a more overtly campaigning role.[48] In 1968 the joint statement issued by the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals and the NUS agreed that student welfare was one of the key areas for student participation.[49] That students should have an input into health and welfare developments attained greater consensus than other areas in which students battled for representation. However, as has been documented elsewhere, student demands for representation were met with mixed responses. Digby Jacks, President of the NUS from 1971 to 1972, warned that students should not be fobbed off with tokenistic representation.[50]

Medical professionals within universities affirmed the value of conferring with students. Writing about student health services in 1967, Alex Mair, Professor in the Department of Social and Occupational Medicine at the University of Dundee, Scotland, argued that "there is a very real need in British universities to delegate greater responsibility for student affairs to the students themselves". Universities should, he said, "treat

[45] Gibson, Indices, 4.

[46] Institute of Education, Mental health services for students. UCE/A/3/7. University College London Special Collections. London.

[47] Ashby, Eric and Anderson, Mary. 1970. *The Rise of the Student Estate in Britain*. London: Macmillan, 115–117.

[48] Randall, John. NUS is your Union, in Beckett, *NUS is your Union*, 3.

[49] Student Participation in Higher Education, HL Deb 23 April 1969 vol 301 cc438-542, 451; Joint Statement from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the National Union of Students, 1968, 3. X.519/40157, British Library, London. The Scottish Union of Students Conducted Separate Discussions with The Leaders Of Scottish Institutions.

[50] Jacks, Digby. 1973. *Student Politics & Higher Education*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 63.

students as serious, sensible and rational adult beings".[51] Mair was not alone in arguing for the recognition of students as adults. By the end of the 1960s the *in loco parentis* ("in the place of a parent") role of universities was increasingly impracticable. The NUS raised students' concerns with the Latey Committee, which later recommended lowering the age of majority.[52] In the 1960s, then, students were seeking more robust and extensive representation within their institutions and greater recognition of their status.

For prominent educationalist W. Roy Niblett the upheavals of the 1960s had encouraged students to turn to their own experiences as a source of knowledge

> 'What can we trust? Whom can we trust?' These are basic questions for the young in a fluid and permissive society, which changes its standards with the flow of time and as the whirlpools of fashion revolve. 'We can trust our own experiences', seems to many the best answer.[53]

Given the emotional, structural, and social changes that were taking place within universities across the 1960s, it should be little surprise that the social sciences—a subject area experiencing significant growth—turned to analyse students.

Surveys, Social Science Studies, and Sociology

In the 1960s social surveys became another way that the experience of university welfare provision was discerned. Jon Lawrence has argued for the use of historical anthropological and sociological materials to historians, saying their use "makes it possible to write a new type of social history: one in which ordinary people's thoughts and feelings *at the time*

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[51] Mair, Alex. 1967. *Student Health Services in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.* Oxford: Pergamon Press, 169.

[52] Malcolm, David. 2018. "As Much Freedom as is Good for them"—Looking Back at in Loco Parentis. Wonkhe. 7 March. https://wonkhe.com/blogs/much-freedom-good-looking-back-loco-parentis/. Accessed 1 February 2023; Report of the Committee on the Age of Majority. Cmnd 3342 London: HMRC, 1967.

[53] Niblett, W. Roy. 1974. *Universities Between Two Worlds.* London: University of London Press, 9.

take centre stage—where they become the experts on their own lives".[54] I argue here that social science played a role in attaching experiential expertise—the expertise on their own lives within the university—to the student. Interest in student views was therefore productive—it helped to produce and to affirm the value of students' experiential knowledge.

Sociology assumed an increased prominence in the 1960s.[55] As Olive Banks argued, "the sociology of education shared in this boom".[56] Upon publication the Robbins Report of 1963 (famous for recommending the expansion of university provision) encouraged the collection and analysis of data and information about higher education.[57] However, the founding of the Committee itself served as an important prompt for research. Sociologist Peter Marris's 1960s study of student experiences was at first conceived of as evidence for the committee, aiming to complement statistics with more discursive, qualitative interviews that allowed students to express their views more freely.[58] Marris underlined the importance of students' aims, desires, and experiences to understanding higher education, arguing that the "pattern of higher education cannot be decided only by the aspirations of its institutions. It must also take account of the needs which students recognise as personally relevant". It was, he suggested, "as important to know what the student wants, or can be led to want of his education, as to determine what the institutions of education require of him".[59] The assumptions, feelings, experiences, and hopes and dreams that students carried with them into institutions came to carry weight. Joan Abbott's study of social class and student life at the University of Edinburgh began as an undergraduate thesis for an MA Honours Degree in Social Anthropology. This thesis was, she later wrote, developed in response to her own interests as an undergraduate. The book that expanded this early study

[54] Lawrence, Jon. 2019. *Me, Me, Me: The Search for Community in Post-War England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6. Emphasis in original.

[55] Savage, Mike. 2010. *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940: The Politics of Method*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[56] Banks, Olive. 1982. The Sociology of Education, 1952–1982, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 30, 1: 20.

[57] Robbins, Lionel. 1963. *Higher Education: Report of the Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins*, 1961–1963 London: HMSO.

[58] Marris, Peter. 1964. *The Experience of Higher Education*. London: Routledge, 2.

[59] Ibid. 13–14.

represents a rather particular viewpoint of one who is herself a product of the system which she investigates and whose approach is structured accordingly. The questions asked are of immediate interest to those now passing through the universities, for they are the questions which they are themselves asking. The usual time-lag which takes place between research and changes which have been effected is eliminated, for the changes are taking place now. It is for this very reason that the author undertook her comparative survey immediately after graduating—so that her "student" perspective should not be lost.[60]

For Abbott, temporal proximity to her own experience of studenthood was an advantage to the development of her sociological expertise.

Other social science studies set out to understand students' emotional and psychological states. Ferdynand Zweig's 1963 study of students at Manchester and Oxford considered it

essential to probe into the students' minds and lives, to combine an attitude study with a sociological survey which was aimed not only at the opinions and views of the students but also at their personal and social relations and their community life at large.[61] Zweig called for more research into students' lives and work, "of which we know practically nothing at present". He rued The strains and stresses of university life, the emotional problems of university education, the teacher-student and student-student relationships, the health problem of university education, the problem of the social adjustment of students, the personal problems of the students and the influence of parental attitudes, the impact of various systems of examination the optimum work-load—all these subjects are crying out for systematic research.[62]

Zweig's emphasis on the subjective, the personal, and the individual pushed student experiences to the fore: university planning required not just "new architecture" but also "new sociology".[63] Others shared his conviction that more research was needed. Ashby, with whom this chapter

[60] Abbott, Joan. 1971. *Student Life in a Class Society*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, xvii.

[61] Zweig, Ferdynand. 1963. *The Student in the Age of Anxiety*. London: Heinemann, xi.

[62] Ibid. 210.

[63] Ibid.

opened, lamented in the early 1960s that to "make decisions in the British academic world is still to travel largely without maps".[64]

Zweig and Ashby's pleas for more research into higher education were soon taken up.[65] Indeed, in 1971 researchers Joan Brothers and Stephen Hatch observed that across the preceding decade

> the professional interest of social scientists in various aspects of higher education has developed rapidly. There is wide recognition that the scientific study of the systems of higher education is an essential preliminary to more effective and realistic decision-making, as well as a new awareness of that the college or university environment offers a particularly rich field for the researcher.

Higher education institutions, the authors suggested, provided an ideal location for social scientists to study the interaction between social systems and individuals.[66] This shift towards studying interactions was a part of a broader trend with important implications for the methods that were adopted by researchers. As Olive Banks explained, the emergent sociology

> preached an interactionist perspective in which man creates and defines his own social reality. The central task of the sociology of education, therefore, was seen as an examination of the participants in the educational process through an exploration of their perceptions and assumptions as well as their interaction with each other. There was a change in method, most significantly, in the exchange of observation for the social survey, and a change in what were seen as problem areas.[67]

This had significant implications for the locations of expertise. The way to access students' perceptions and assumptions was to study them,

[64] Ashby, Introduction: Decision-Making in the Academic World, 13.

[65] Carter, M.P. 1968. Report on a Survey of Sociological Research in Britain. *The Sociological Review*, 16, 1: 5–40.

[66] Brothers, Joan and Hatch, Stephen. 1971. A Sociological Approach to Residence. In *Residence and Student Life: a Sociological Inquiry into Residence in Higher Education,* eds. Brothers, Joan and Hatch, Stephen, 7. London: Tavistock Publications. Not all sociological work was welcomed, however, and Brothers and Hatch's volume was condemned by one reviewer as containing a "poverty of thought on the matter that is common to most educational research". Kamens, David H. 1974. Review of *Residence and Student Life: a Sociological Inquiry into Residence in Higher Education, Social Forces,* 52: 4, 569.

[67] Banks, The sociology of education, 20.

positioning students as experts on their own experience of institutions. Research into students was also prompted by a desire to measure universities' non-academic objectives. One such study was conducted by Marie Oxtoby and Brian M. Smith, who emphasised the need to use social scientific measures to capture information. In 1970 they argued that the nostalgic reflections of alumni were insufficient evidence of the claims made by universities to be agents of change; more rigorous data were needed.[68]

The deepening of research into higher education was enabled by the expansion of scholarly infrastructures: the Society for Research into Higher Education was founded in 1965; research units, chairs, and research fellowships that focused on higher education were established; further dedicated journals were launched.[69] Indeed, the editorial statement that accompanied the first issue of *Research in Education*, published in May 1969, acknowledged the rapid promulgation of sites for research dissemination.[70] These infrastructures communicated, encouraged, and connected social scientific research into higher education. Some of these published works were social surveys that explored students' views and experiences, and in so doing located them as holders of experiential knowledge.

One such social survey into the perception, role, and experience of welfare services among students and staff was conducted at the University of Hull in the early 1970s. This survey draws light towards one of the tasks for this volume. This was to consider "how people *live with* welfare, how they negotiate or reject it", by revealing how students lived with university services.[71] One full-time Medical Officer was appointed in 1960 at Hull, growing by 1974 to three full-time Medical Officers who worked within a purpose-built health centre alongside nurses, a consultant

[68] Oxtoby, Marie, and Smith, Brian M. 1970. Students Entering Sussex and Essex Universities in 1966: Some Similarities and Differences, II, *Research in Education*, 3, 1: 87–100, 87.

[69] Ashby, Introduction, 6; Aldrich, Richard and Woodin, Tom. 2021. *The UCL Institute of Education: From Training College to Global Institution*, 2nd ed. London: UCL Press, 178.

[70] Anon. 1969. Editorial notes. *Research in Education*, 1, 1: vii.

[71] See Introduction to this collection.

psychiatrist, and other staff.[72] The university also had a separate Student Counselling Service. It appointed its first full-time counsellor in 1967, in recognition that non-medical problems could endanger academic success and emotional stability.[73]

Indeed, in 1975 the studies' authors, Barry Pashley and Angela Shepherd, noted the consensus among university medical professionals that "a student health unit is not simply an adjunct, but an integral part of the whole educational enterprise".[74] The project distributed postal questionnaires to undergraduate students and academic staff in spring 1974. The questionnaire was sent to one in eight undergraduate students, achieving a 68% response rate, a total of 273 returns. The survey reached 36 pages and was, it apologised, "rather lengthy and bulky", but was predominantly organised in tick boxes, with optional blank spaces to be completed "whenever you consider that your 'ticked' answers require elaboration or qualification".[75] Capturing student views was too important for brevity.

The survey had statements about their level of experience with the student services—including the Student Counselling Services and the university's health service—and respondents were asked to comment on both how important each statement should be and how important it seemed to be. The survey found high levels of awareness of the services among undergraduates. Over 90% of students were aware of the university's health, counselling, careers, and accommodation services. Although there was more variable uptake of these services 67% had used the health service, 9% the counselling services, 40% the careers and 36% the accommodation service.[76] The majority of undergraduates were "very satisfied" (35%) or "fairly satisfied" (39%) with opportunities to access medical advice. However, 52% of students did not know how satisfied they were

[72] Pashley, Barry W. and Shepherd, Angela. 1975. Staff and Student Perceptions of a Student Health Service, *The Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners,* 25, 160: 845–851, 845.

[73] Pashley, Barry W. and Shepherd, Angela. 1977. Student Health Services: How Educational? *Health Education Journal,* 36, 3: 70–76.

[74] Pashley and Shepherd, Staff and Student Perceptions, 845.

[75] Pashley, Barry W. 1974. Study of Student Personnel and Counselling Services in an English University, Students [computer file]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive[distributor], January 1976. SN: 165, http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-165-1.

[76] Pashley and Shepherd, Staff and student perceptions, 846.

with opportunities to discuss personal problems (39% were either very or fairly satisfied). Health and counselling services were both seen to be of high importance.[77]

Students were asked about the various tasks for services, showing that undergraduates thought that the provision of psychiatric services should be of at least considerable interest. Respondents also thought students should be offered a general practitioner service, and that services should influence "the University and Departments to modify such arrangements as seem to cause health and emotional problems for students".[78] It is important that the authors quoted students verbatim, including comments on the purpose of services and how they should shape the whole institution. Such as "I think the doctors should make known to the university authorities the tremendous collective neurosis that afflicts the student body at examination time, and not just accept it as a necessary evil".[79]

Publications from this research emerged intermittently years after the study concluded, to the concern of the head of the student counselling service at the university.[80] Readers of the *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling* were reassured that the service endured, for "we survive because the students willed us to live".[81] Student welfare needs and student views—such as those articulated by the NUS earlier in the century—not only laid the ground for provision, but helped to ensure the survival of some of these facilities. In order to make these assertions students needed to have their experiential knowledge recognised.

[77] Ibid. 847.

[78] Ibid. 848.

[79] Ibid. 849.

[80] Pashley, Barry W. and Shepherd, Angela. 1978. How University Members See the Pastoral Role of the Academic. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 6, 1: 1–18; Pashley, Barry W. and Shepherd, A.M. 1975. Student Welfare And Guidance: The Pastoral Role of the Academic. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 3, 1: 31–44; Pashley, Barry W. and Angela Shepherd. 1977. Student Health Services: How Educational? *Health Education Journal*, 36, 3: 70–76.

[81] Friend, Carol. 1978. Correspondence, *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 6, 2: 234.

Conclusion

Health and welfare have been an area of interest for student representative organisations since the 1930s. The importance of student welfare activism was highlighted by the NUS in its celebration of the creation of the Vice President Welfare post, a position first held in 1975–1977.[82] The development of the NUS Welfare post was thus an extension of decades of work on student health and well-being.[83] By the mid-1960s research on how students were faring—and if they were "faring well"—was also being generated, shared, and mobilised by university doctors, social researchers, and sociologists. In this chapter I have considered the expansion of social scientific interest in student health as a mechanism that not just made student views visible, but that cultivated a recognition of students' experiential knowledge of welfare systems. Discussions about welfare provision were consistently bound up with questions about the broader purposes of higher education, its civic mission, and its role in cultivating the citizens of the future.[84] The NUS reports, and the subsequent turn to broader surveys, highlight students' stake in these conversations. As I have argued elsewhere, increased anxiety about student mental health in the wake of the Second World War acted as a lightning rod for discussions about students as future leaders and bearers of the promise of the nation.[85]

In the 1970s W. Roy Niblett detected a change of emphasis within higher education. He wrote that the idea that "personal experiences and social values are not as real or in the last resort as important as physical entities, hard facts and verifiable laws" was being challenged.[86] There was a case for knowledge drawn from the experiential and the subjective. As Niblett argued

> We can observe and study our experiences; we can detach ourselves from
> them for particular purposes. But we are dependent upon them as men

[82] NUS, *Winning on Welfare: a Short History Of Welfare Work in the NUS and the Student Movement* NUS, 2012.

[83] Day, Dubious Causes, 34.

[84] Vernon, a Healthy Society; Crook, Sarah. 2020. Historicising the Crisis in Undergraduate Mental Health: British Universities and Student Mental Illness, 1944–1968. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 75, 2: 193–22.

[85] Crook, Historicising the Crisis.

[86] Niblett, *Universities Between Two Worlds*, 64–66.

for interest, feeling, perception, individuality. It is impossible to live a life from the outside; to sense, to love, to value, to understand, depend upon capacity at least sometimes to be inside.[87]

Across the 1960s and 1970s the social sciences turned to students' experiences as a means of understanding the changing nature of institutions, and, indeed, young peoples' values. Students came to be acknowledged as holders of experiential knowledge of their environments. This understanding would have significant implications for their institutions. As this chapter has noted, though, student experiential knowledge is distinctively relational and temporal. Looking at the development of student experiential knowledge and expertise helps to complicate our understandings of how expertise is conferred and recognised, and how students have come to be such an intensively surveyed community.

Some academics, however, worried that surveys displaced human relationships. In 1965 sociologist Bryan Wilson ruminated that students "have never been listened to as much as they are today, but the use of elaborate questionnaires and market research techniques may be little more than a publicity gimmick for universities which feel the need to demonstrate their 'progressive' approach". Put another way, treating students as experts by experience had become a performative promotional exercise enabled by the tools of social science. These tools were used to "buy students off": to only superficially engage with them. Instead, he argued that students should be meaningfully consulted on the issues that affected them. Moreover, this should be a "sustained and natural process, reflecting joint concerns, and in the context of shared values; it must itself be an educative process".[88] As we look to our present moment, the challenge to produce sustainable, humane, and deep-rooted relationships within higher education endures.

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[87] Ibid.

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Connecting the Disconnected: Telephones, Activism, and "Faring Well" in Britain, 1950–2000

Kate Bradley

Introduction

This chapter examines how telephone technology was embraced by innovative, radical groups from the 1950s as a means of meeting welfare needs that were overlooked or deemed problematic by mainstream services. Despite the ready availability in the 2010s and 2020s of access to websites, telephone hotlines, and apps that can put people in touch with an enormous range of services, historians of welfare have only recently begun to turn their attention to the emergence of the telephone as a tool to support

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citizens "faring well" in the UK and elsewhere.[1] Eve Colpus's chapter in this volume is an important and timely examination of how children and young people interacted with hotlines designed and provided by adults.[2] This chapter makes a significant contribution to our understanding of telephone technology being used in welfare contexts by tracing its roots as a tool used by experiential experts to help others in their community of experience, and the wider adoption of this by mainstream services. For the radical groups, telephones were a means of enabling people to access support and information and thereby to increase the chances of their "faring well" with a hostile state, as was the case with Defence and Release. Experiential expertise designed services that were accessible when and how people needed them, with support provided by people from that community of experience or trusted professionals. Some of the work was political, with evidence generated by Release, for example, used to challenge police practice and lobby for legal reform.

Although the people whose work is explored in this chapter did not use the term "faring well", the concept was central to their activity. Faring originally meant to travel or journey, as well as good or bad fortunes one experienced in life.[3] For some of the people in this chapter, their journeys involved a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, before making a life in post-war London. For others, having the resources to deal with the vagaries of life was by no means a given. Some of the initiatives in this chapter provided welfare services, but they were arguably more "faring well" services. The experiential experts in this context take various forms. As will be seen, the Reverend (Revd) Chad Varah moved beyond his calling as a priest to develop, through experience and experiment, expertise in supporting those in crisis. Frank Crichlow and Michael X used their experiences of harassment and arrest by the police to support others in the same situation. Caroline Coon actively built her expertise in the law by learning what she needed to help a friend appeal a prison sentence, and then through her work with Release. These experiential experts also

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[1] McKinney, Cait. 2020. *Information Activism. A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies*. Durham NC: Duke University Press; Zeavin, Hannah. 2021. *The Distance Cure: A History of Teletherapy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[2] See chapter 'Claiming and Curating Experiential Expertise at the Children's Telephone Helpline, ChildLine UK, 1986–2006' in this collection.

[3] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. fare, v.1, July 2023. https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8491176010. Accessed 4 November 2023.

sought out professional experts who respected experience when they needed to, such as lawyers who were interested in improving access to justice. To make their services available, these experiential experts used a technology that was a readily accessible element of their lives and their wider communities of experience, the telephone.

Anthropologists and historians of consumption have understood the home telephone as being a middle-class technology, rather than a working-class one. Douglas and Isherwood explored the take-up of different technologies in homes by different classes over the twentieth century. Whilst most homes had at least one television set by the 1960s, domestic telephone lines did not reach such levels of market saturation before the 1980s.[4] This does not mean, however, that telephones had no place in working-class communities in the post-war period: on the contrary, there was a vast network of public telephone boxes. Access to a private telephone reflected the inequalities in post-war Britain, but the telephone network offered great potential for use in ensuring people could "fare well" in life.

The History of the Telephone

Public call offices, as they were first known, emerged from the 1880s, as businesses allowed people to use their phones to make calls for a small fee. As Linge and Sutton note, these offices were in areas with high footfall, such as train stations or shops. To ensure privacy, telephone equipment was housed within cabinets or cubicles that the caller stepped into, which later developed into the phone box or kiosk. With the consolidation of telephone services under the General Post Office (GPO) in the early twentieth century, phone boxes spread across the country. 20,000 kiosks were installed by 1935. At their peak in the 1990s, 132,000 kiosks run by British Telecom were in use.[5] Although ownership of a domestic telephone line was strongly associated with greater affluence, market research undertaken by the GPO in the early 1970s showed that the growth in new, first-time installations was amongst younger urban dwellers, of all

[4] Douglas, Mary and Isherwood, Baron. 1996. *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*. London: Routledge.

[5] Linge, Nigel, and Sutton, Andy. 2017. *The British Telephone Box*. Stroud: Amberley, 7–10, 71.

social backgrounds.[6] The domestic landline and the phone box were effectively supplanted by mobile phones, and then by smart phones, both of which arguably combined the best of both worlds: ready access to a phone line without having to negotiate with other people, and not being tied to one place. The role and importance of the telephone was not unconnected to other forms of mobility. As Simon Gunn notes, public transport experienced a crisis in the 1960s, with major reductions in both bus and rail services. This had a significant impact on those living in rural areas, or the outer suburbs. Yet, those who lived in the more central areas of towns and cities could still face poor public transport or obstacles caused by road, rail, and canals. Not everyone could afford a car or a car for more than one member of the household.[7] In this context, though someone might need to leave their home to find the nearest phone box, making a telephone call was still going to be easier, quicker, and cheaper than trying to get into town and enabled people to engage with a community of experience wherever they were.

From the 1880s, public phone boxes could be used to contact the operator to summon help from the local fire brigade, whilst the police in major towns and cities had a network of police boxes for this purpose. In this way, the telephone was being used to connect people to essential public services, at this very local or municipal level. Likewise, telephone arrangements for contacting the fire brigade were determined at a local level. 999 was introduced in 1937 as a nationwide number for emergency calls that was memorable, and which could be dialled easily on a rotary phone in poor lighting.[8] As much as this was a step to try to prevent future tragedy, it was also part of rethinking and re-organising local government in the 1920s and 1930s, which included the restructuring of the emergency services, as Shane Ewen has shown.[9] On the other hand, as Eloise Moss demonstrates, 999 also offered middle- and

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[6] Our Telephone Customers. A Report on the Residential Research Sample, Post Office Central Headquarters, Statistics and Business Research Department. Marketing Research Information System. Residential Research Sample. Current supply April 1972—March 1973. Report 3/74, 3. TCC 249/26, British Telecom (BT) Archives, London.

[7] Gunn, Simon. 2021. Spatial mobility in Later Twentieth-Century Britain, *Contemporary British History,* 36: 9–13.

[8] Linge and Sutton. *Telephone Box*, 58–70.

[9] Ewen, Shane. 2023. Central Government and the Modernization of the British Fire Service, 1900–38, *Twentieth-Century British History,* 14: 317–338.

upper-class householders in London who had domestic telephones the ability to summon help far faster than their working-class households, who would still have had to run to find a patrolling police officer, police call box, or phone box.[10]

Experimenting with the Telephone

A major gap in welfare provision was obtaining help whilst experiencing a mental health crisis, as the Revd. Chad Varah found in 1953. Varah was an East London clergyman, and, from the 1930s, he went beyond his vocational training by building up experience with counselling people on sexual problems through the Parish Youth Club. Much of this involved advising young people who were planning to marry on sexual matters, but he was deeply affected by a girl who took her own life. In Varah's account, the girl was upset, confused, and ashamed by starting her period, and she did not know what was happening to her. Dealing with the powerful shame and stigma that could accompany sex led to Varah moving over time into suicide prevention. By the early 1950s, Varah was contemplating the rise in suicides in London, and wondering what could be done to help people in crisis, when they needed help. Varah was inspired by the notice fixed on his phone giving the 999 number for emergencies.

> What was needed was a sort of 999 for potential suicides, an easily remembered number despairing people could ring at any hour of the day or night. No life-saving service could be part-time to be really effective. One of the weaknesses of the Welfare State was the paucity of people giving other than medical help outside office hours.[11]

Varah's telephone initiative became known as the Samaritans, offering those in crisis an opportunity to talk anonymously, without fear of judgement.

The earliest Samaritans group was run by Varah and a group of volunteers. He offered very little detail about their experiences and motivations,

[10] Moss, Eloise. 2018. "Dial 999 for Help!" The Three-Digit Emergency Number and the Transnational Politics of Welfare Activism, 1937–1979, *Journal of Social History,* 52: 468–500.

[11] Varah, Chad. 1985. *The Samaritans: Befriending the Suicidal.* London: Constable, 17–19.

but described two groups: the professionals, who "could be held in reserve", and "ordinary" people. The "ordinary" people volunteered to help Varah with running the new phone line, and initially kept callers company whilst waiting to speak to him. However, Varah realised that the volunteers brought something valuable: listening without judgement to the callers. This led to the calling being done entirely by volunteers in 1954. With his secretary Vivian Prosser and a growing team, Varah had a selection process that was initially subjective, based on whether Varah felt that he could tell the potential volunteer that he had done something awful. Actively listening to callers developed into formal practice and training, supported by weekly briefings and training, and one of the core features of Samaritans group as they were established elsewhere. By 1963, there were 14 Samaritans groups in the UK, all of whom had, like Varah's original group, a specially selected number to call.[12]

Another personal crisis that did not fit into office hours was being arrested by the police. As police forces were established and grew during the nineteenth century, becoming the main prosecutors of crimes, so did a need for standardisation of their practices. As Charles Wegg-Prosser shows, from the 1880s, judges expressed their concern about inconsistencies with how people were treated following arrest. In 1906, the Lord Chief Justice wrote to the Chief Constable of Birmingham police further raising how this was jeopardising fair trials, which led in 1912 to the publication of first set of the Judges' Rules. Police forces were not legally bound by the Rules, but the expectations were clear.[13] The Rules underwent various amendments over time, and getting a final overhaul in 1964, along with seven administrative procedures. Procedure 7 explicitly stated that.

> a person in custody should be allowed to speak on the telephone to his [*sic*] solicitor or to his friends provided that no hindrance is likely to be caused to the processes of investigation, or the administration of justice by his doing so.[14]

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[12] Ibid. 24–28.

[13] Wegg-Prosser, Charles. 1973. *The Police and the Law*. London: Oyez, 91.

[14] St. Johnston, T.E. 1966. Judges' Rules and Police Interrogation in England Today. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology,* 57: 91.

Whilst making a telephone call was not yet a right of the arrested person, the procedure allowed for it. It offered an opportunity to push back against the force of the police, by allowing the individual to obtain their own legal advice and support, rather than being pushed into a decision that was not in their best interests by the police. This ability to summon help following arrest would prove to be important for the development of telephone hotlines in the 1960s, as a means of mitigating the impact of aggressive policing first of the African Caribbean community and second of the counterculture.

EXPERIENCE: THE AFRICAN CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY AND THE POLICE IN WEST LONDON

The African Caribbean community in West London grew from the 1940s, following calls for workers to help rebuild Britain after the Second World War. As James Mills notes, police forces in port cities like London had long monitored Lascar seamen, mainly from India, who used cannabis. Cannabis consumption at this point was effectively confined to the seamen and their close associates. With Black people largely excluded from pubs and clubs in London, a vibrant café culture grew up in Notting Hill. The Metropolitan Police observed the growing cannabis market in the clubs in this area from the 1950s, and by the early 1960s were aware of young white "Beatniks" beginning to frequent the clubs.[15] One popular café was El Rio, established by Frank Crichlow. Born in Trinidad in 1932, Crichlow travelled to Britain in 1953. He initially worked on the railways, then as a musician, setting up El Rio in 1959.[16]

El Rio was a project to bring people from the different Caribbean islands together following the 1958 Notting Hill race riots, and it was open 24 hours a day.[17] Crichlow ran a gambling club in the café basement that did not comply with the 1956 Gambling Act: but, unlike other illicit gambling club owners in the area, he refused to give bribes

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[15] Mills, James H. 2012. *Cannabis Nation: Control and Consumption in Britain, 1928–2008.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 117.

[16] Phillips, Mike. 2014. Crichlow, Frank Gilbert (1932–2010), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[17] Gould, Tony. 1993. *Inside Outsider: the Life and Times of Colin MacInnes*. London: Allison and Busby, 194.

to the local police to overlook it.[18] This marked Crichlow and his café out for significant police harassment, which would continue with his next venture, the Mangrove Restaurant.[19] These experiences led to Crichlow's personal activism, which included launching the Notting Hill Carnival and the Mangrove Community Association, but also to him using both venues as resources for the community of experience.[20] Both cafés were places where people could find legal advice, with the Mangrove having a Black barrister on hand for people to speak to as well as to go to the local police stations.[21] Before that, however, El Rio offered people the opportunity to connect with those who could help them "fare well" with the police and the state, as well as to get initiatives off the ground.

The Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS) was founded in February 1965 by Michael X, Roy Sawh, Jan Carew, and Abdullah Patel as a grassroots activist association open only to Black people.[22] Michael X was born Michael de Freitas in Trinidad in 1933, and settled in London in the late 1950s, where he became an enforcer for Perec Rachman, the infamous slum landlord.[23] De Freitas was arrested during the Notting Hill riots of August 1958, and this experience drew him into activism.[24] Whilst sitting in a barber's shop in early 1965, de Freitas heard others talking about Malcolm X and the Black Power movement in the US.[25] This piqued de Freitas's interest, and he read as much as he could about Malcolm X before accompanying him on his visit to the UK in February that year. De Freitas converted to Islam, assuming the name Michael

[18] Howe, Darcus. 2020. *From Bobby to Babylon: Blacks and the British Police*. London: Bookmarks, 50.

[19] See also chapter 'Placing Experiential Expertise: The 1981 New Cross Massacre Campaign' in this collection.

[20] Phillips. Crichlow.

[21] Howe. *From Bobby*, 51.

[22] Humphry, Derek and Tindall, David. 1977. *False Messiah: The Story of Michael X*. London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 45–46, 51.

[23] See Abdul Malik, Michael. 1968. *From Michael de Freitas to Michael X*. London: Andre Deutsch; Williams, John L. 2008. *Michael X: A Life in Black and White*. London: Century.

[24] Malik. *From Michael*, 73–76.

[25] Ibid. 131.

Abdul Malik, though he also used Michael X.[26] Michael X and therefore RAAS had a high media profile from the outset. However, despite Michael X's claims of having 60,000 members, they barely had more than two hundred during the five years that they were active.[27] RAAS did, however, create an environment for a step change in the use of telephone hotlines to enable people to fare better in engagements with the police.

The white writer Colin MacInnes moved to the area in the 1940s and became a regular at El Rio.[28] MacInnes made himself useful by being someone who could be called upon to go and help anyone who had been arrested, at any time of day or night. Whilst not a lawyer, he would advise people as best he could and try to obtain bail for them.[29] MacInnes had experience of the police, having been arrested in a gambling club in East London in 1955 and charged with drugs offences, though he was later acquitted.[30] In November 1966, the African Caribbean community raised funds to support a man who was on trial for living on immoral earnings.[31] His supporters contacted RAAS, and this, in addition to awareness of MacInnes' activity around the cafés as a sort of emergency legal aid service, led to the formation of Defence.[32] Crichlow hosted a meeting at El Rio, at which Defence and its initial committee was established. This included Michael X as the treasurer, Courtney Tulloch as the field worker, and MacInnes as press officer.[33] Defence had an office and a telephone line available 24 hours a day.[34] Tulloch did most of the work, answering the phone, arranging lawyers, and sorting out bail sureties.[35] Born in Jamaica, Tulloch moved to Britain to join his parents in the late 1950s in Nottingham. Here, Tulloch befriended Ray Gosling, then a detached youth worker, who encouraged Tulloch to explore writing and activism,

[26] Sharp, James. 1981. *The Life and Death of Michael X*. Waterford: Uni Books, 23.

[27] Humphry and Tindall. *False Messiah*, 49–50.

[28] Phillips. Crichlow.

[29] Malik. *From Michael*, 163.

[30] De-la-Noy, Michael. 2004. MacInnes, Colin (1914–1976). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[31] MacInnes, Colin, 1967. RAAStus: WI in W2, *Oz*, February, 14–17.

[32] Ibid. 15.

[33] Humphry and Tindall. *False Messiah*, 53–54.

[34] MacInnes. RAAStus, 15.

[35] Tulloch, Courtney. 1972. The Reading Collective, *Race Today*, 4: 95–97, 95.

which Tulloch did first in Brighton and then in Notting Hill.[36] The service was publicised through notices with the Defence phone number posted on message boards in cafés in the area.[37] With Defence, Tulloch too was drawing upon his own experience and building up expertise as he went along.

Experience: Release

Defence lasted seven months. There were tensions within the group around Michael X's engagement with the national press and this, along with Michael's arrest under the Race Relations Act (1965) following a speech he gave in Reading, effectively terminated the project.[38] However, before his arrest, Michael had become aware of another group attracting the attention of the police over drug consumption, the counterculture. Michael X thought that the counterculture needed to adopt the same strategies as the African Caribbean community in organising a legal aid service like Defence. This idea was taken up by Caroline Coon and Rufus Harris, who launched Release, with its distinctive bust card, at the Legalise Pot Rally in Hyde Park in the summer of 1967. Coon was studying for a fine art degree when a Black friend was arrested and then imprisoned for possession of marijuana, and she was horrified by the way he was treated. To try to help her friend, Coon learned the law as she went along and she tried to get an appeal launched for him. Coon knew that a 24-hour telephone line was possible, because of the Samaritans: Varah was one of her heroes.[39]

Release tackled the increasing problem of young people being arrested by the police, either following stops on the street or raids of their homes or nightclub queues, through the bust card. The bust card—a small piece of card, easily tucked into a pocket or a wallet—gave concise advice on one's rights on arrest and exhorted the arrestee to phone Release for help,

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[36] Phillips, Mike. 2006. Obituary: Courtney Tulloch. *The Guardian*. December 13. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/dec/13/guardianobituaries.obituaries1. Accessed 7 September 2023.

[37] Malik. *From Michael*, 165.

[38] Tulloch. Reading Collective, 97.

[39] Coon, Caroline. 2004. We were the Welfare Branch of the Alternative Society. In *The Unsung Sixties: Memoirs of Social Innovation*, ed. Helene Curtis and Mimi Sanderson, 186. London: Whiting and Birch.

using the provision under the Judges' Rules. Release would then provide suitable legal assistance and advice as soon as possible. They actively sought out lawyers willing to "act radically and change the social and legal *status quo*" around young people experiencing police corruption, but needed other forms of expertise, and built up a roster of professionals who they could call upon.[40]

The telephone hotline brought people into contact with Release when they were in crisis. It helped them get the aid they needed at the police station, but it was also a means of helping people to "fare well" in other ways. Coon was clear that it was essential to see the person in need as a person worthy of respect and support. This started with the police treating them fairly, but also meant ensuring that the person's needs were met in the round. Enabling someone to "fare well" could include helping them with arranging housing or benefits, getting them medical attention, and arranging psychological support.[41] It also, in the longer term, required using the evidence built up from Release's work to try to effect change within the system. Coon and Harris published *The Release Report on Drug Offenders and the Law* in 1969, reflecting Release's role as a support and a lobbying organisation.[42]

Writing in 1976, the radical Anglican priest, the Revd Kenneth Leech recognised the role of countercultural groups in providing community resources in the form of switchboards and free drop-in centres. Leech wrote the "young people in the Underground became very welfare-conscious, but the new groups which were beginning to emerge were used and trusted more than the well-established 'straight' social work bodies".[43] Leech's observation suggested that young people felt more comfortable using these services, certainly as the experts whose support they sought were either of the counterculture themselves or access to them was brokered by people from their community of experience. "Faring well" in this context, then, involved feeling that one was valued and respected by those with the knowledge and ability to help.

[40] Coon. Welfare branch, 185–186.

[41] Ibid. 188.

[42] Coon, Caroline and Harris, Rufus. 1969. *The Release Report on Drug Offenders and the Law*. London: Sphere.

[43] Leech, Kenneth. 1976. *Youthquake. Spirituality and the Growth of a Counter-Culture*. London: Sphere, 101.

Experience: The Wider Counterculture

The idea of connecting people at any time of day or night with the information they needed was central to the foundation of BIT, which emerged from the same countercultural networks in West London as Defence and Release.[44] BIT was launched by John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, as an off-shoot of the *International Times* (*IT*) underground newspaper of which he was the editor in 1968, funded in part by a grant made by the Gulbenkian Foundation. BIT offered advice and information on any topic the caller wished to know more about, and this could be obtained either by calling the BIT offices or dropping in at any time of day or night.[45] BIT offered a means of dealing with all the demands for information about the counterculture that came the paper's way.[46] BIT was run from a house in Notting Hill, where the telephone line was staffed by a combination of paid and voluntary workers from the counterculture on a 24-hour basis, alongside a drop-in information and advice service. Visitors could use free photocopying services, or help themselves to free food and clothing. BIT was popular. In 1973, they received an average of one thousand phone calls a week, along with three hundred visits, and around ninety letters a week.[47]

Nicholas Albery saw an advert for BIT, and he volunteered to do the night shift in 1968, when BIT was a few months old. Albery was the son of Sir Donald Albery, a theatre producer, and studied for a time at Oxford University, where he came across the counterculture and began using drugs. Albery experienced surveillance by his college and the police, before dropping out of university. He travelled to San Francisco to explore the counterculture, seeing at first-hand how others were experimenting

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[44] BIT Information service was an important part of the radical alternative movement in Britain between 1968 and 1979.

[45] Nelson, Elizabeth. 1989. *British Counter-Culture, 1966–1973, A Study of the Underground Press*. London: Macmillan, 77–78.

[46] Beam, Alan. 1976. *Rehearsal for the Year 2000 (Drugs, Religions, Madness, Crime, Communes, Love, Visions, Festivals, and Lunar Energy). The Rebirth of Albion Free State (Known in the Dark Ages as England). Memoirs of a Male Midwife (1966–1976)*. London: Revelation Press, 34.

[47] See Arundale, M. 1990. Budget rent-a-country, *The Guardian,* March 30: Atton, Chris. 1999. The infoshop: the alternative information centre of the 1990s, *New Library World,* 100: 24–29; Shipley, Peter. 1976. *Revolutionaries in Modern Britain*. London: Bodley Head, 206, 242.

with sharing information and supporting an alternative way of living. Returning to London, Albery looked for opportunities to build the counterculture there, and to share what he had learned.[48] Albery worked at BIT for six years, recording his experiences in a book published under the name of "Alan Beam". Through Albery's memoirs, we gain a sense of the diverse range of things that BIT did, though his first task was familiarising himself with BIT's library of information on the counterculture.[49] Whilst being an information portal—"an analogue precursor to Google", as Joe Boyd, record producer and collaborator of Hoppy's, put it—remained central to the work of BIT, they diversified into other means of trying to engage with the needs of the community.[50]

One need that emerged strongly was offering young people a place to stay. Albery recounted people "crashing" overnight at the BIT house, during his night shifts, who would have to leave before the day shift workers arrived.[51] Albery also prepared a booklet entitled *Project London Free* for *IT*. This was to be a London version of Abbie Hoffman's *Fuck the System* guide to New York, highlighting how one could get by in the city without spending any money. Albery asked homeless BIT users where one could find free accommodation, food, and clothing, using their expertise through experience in order to help others "fare well" if homeless. *Project London Free* contained many tips. These included how one could sleep on the third floor of the BBC's Bush House in an area with camp beds for the night newscasters and telephone operators, alongside a comprehensive list of welfare services in London. Some were part of the counterculture, such as Release, or adjacent to it—such as Kenneth Leech, or the New Horizon Youth Centre—others were mainstream, such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Catholic Housing Aid Society.[52]

A different example of this came through Albery and BIT's later work with the Ruff Tuff Kreem Puff Estate Agency, which collated lists of

[48] Beam. *Rehearsal*, 1–22; Schwarz, Walter. 2001. Obituary: Nicholas Albery, *The Guardian*, 8 June. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2001/jun/08/guardianobituaries.books. Accessed 7 September 2023.

[49] Beam. *Rehearsal*, 34.

[50] Boyd, Joe. 2019. Hopkins John Victor Lindsay [Hoppy] (1937–2015). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[51] Beam, *Rehearsal*, 43.

[52] Anon. 1969. *Project London Free*. London: Revelaction.

squats and buildings suitable for use as squats.[53] Albery was instrumental in developing BIT from a switchboard into an infoshop, and continued after BIT to be a social innovator, including establishing the Institute for Social Innovations in 1985.[54] Growing as a movement from the 1970s, infoshops are communities of experience built around alternative or underground presses, offering shops where people could browse or buy their publications, alongside community-run events or services.[55] BIT closed in 1979, when it could no longer financially sustain its activities.[56] Release and BIT were examples of experiential expertise being valued, and made accessible in different ways, through a telephone call, but also through creating community spaces for people to use.

Similar ventures followed. Richard Branson set up the Student Advisory Centre in London in 1968, after he and his then girlfriend struggled to find reliable information to support them with an unwanted pregnancy, again using the model of sharing experiential expertise within the community. The Advisory Centre used a telephone to connect students with guidance on issues that affected them but which were not always easy to get help with, from housing to sexual health.[57] In summer 1970, ADVISE: Immigrant Advice Centre opened in Islington, offering 24-hour access over the telephone to legal advice provided by Black lawyers and social workers.[58] Another service, Gentle Ghost, was set up as a film company to record the Bath Rock Festival of 1970, but they diversified to provide an alternative employment agency for finding musicians and artists through to building workers, providing a removal and storage service, running evening classes on such topics as yoga or electrics, and

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[53] Beam. *Rehearsal*, 153–155.

[54] Albery, Nicholas. 1996. The Institute for Social Inventions, London, in *New Thinking for a New Millennium*, ed. Richard A. Slaughter. London: Routledge.

[55] Examples at the time of publication include 56A Infoshop in South London https://56a.org.uk/ and the Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh https://autonomous.org.uk/info/info-shop/. Accessed 7 September 2023.

[56] BIT information service, Fellowship for Intentional Community, https://web.archive.org/web/20161120121455/https://www.ic.org/wiki/bit-information-service/. Accessed 7 September 2023.

[57] Branson, Richard. 1998. *Losing My Virginity: The Autobiography*. London: Virgin, 68–70.

[58] Blackhearted, Atticus. 1970. *Sunday Telegraph*. July 5. London Council of Social Services Legal Advice Services. ACC/1888/250/010, London Metropolitan Archives, London.

running an advice service. Although Gentle Ghost had a house that they used as a base for their activities, they also ran a telephone line for people to call in for advice six days a week. Gentle Ghost took a fifteen percent cut from funds raised by the employment agency to pay for people to staff the telephone line and to run the advice service. They also made use of *Time Out*, the London listings magazine, to advertise their services—and, in some cases, to reach people beyond the counterculture.[59]

Mainstreaming the Marginal?

The potential of telephone lines also appealed to organisations that were not part of the counterculture in West London. Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CAB) were founded in 1939 to offer free information and advice to the public. This followed the recommendations of the Betterton Report on Public Assistance in 1924, though its eventual implementation was fuelled by planning for another war. Until the 1970s, the CAB were run under the auspices of the National Council of Social Services, with a national umbrella group, the National Citizens' Advice Bureaux Council (NCABC) subsequently NCAB, offering a network for all the local branches. Individual CAB were run by a combination of paid staff and volunteers. Each individual CAB was technically a charity, and so the way in which they organised their services on the ground varied, reflecting the needs of their local welfare mix. All staff and volunteers were, however, trained to the same standards, and all had access to the CAB national information base.[60] As Oliver Blaiklock notes, CAB volunteers tended in the 1950s and 1960s to be retired professional people, or women who had worked before marriage as social workers, nurses, or teachers. There were also demands for the CAB to actively recruit younger volunteers to

[59] Hearn, Jackie. 1972. The Gentle Ghost, *Kensington Post*, April, 7, 14: Phillips, Barty. 1974. Welcome Ghosts, *The Guardian*, June, 16, 27: Neustatter, Angela. 1974. Like it or Lump it, *The Guardian*, November, 18, 9.

[60] National Citizens Advice Bureaux Council (NCABC). 1968. *Report of National Citizens Advice Bureaux Council to National Standing Conference of CABX, 1966–68*. London: NCABC Council, preliminary page and 3.

help meet the needs of young people.[61] NCAB held an annual conference, which was an opportunity for issues and ideas to emerge from the grassroots as a means of identifying potential gaps or holes in provision. By the late 1960s, suggestions that CAB offer their own 24-hour hotlines or switchboards were being made at the conference. Following the development of Release, the Student Advisory Centre and BIT, this theme was raised at the conference of 1967–1968. However, the idea was rejected: the NCAB felt that there was no need for people to have advice in the middle of the night, and pointed to the wealth of information that could be consulted during working hours in the branch, when the advisors and callers had access to the library each CAB had.[62] The NCAB were right to point to the benefits of a visit to the branch, with the dedicated time to deal with the problem and the ability to give the advice seeker literature to take away. However, this did not adequately deal with the issue of someone needing advice but being unable to get there during standard working hours or needing help in an emergency. The NCAB assumed that they knew what was best.

These issues about where advice could be found and the best way of organising it would occupy the advice movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It was a major impulse between the creation of the neighbourhood law centre movement. The first neighbourhood law centre in Notting Hill was a practical response to dealing with the issue of "legal deserts", or typically working-class areas of towns and cities either having no law firms located there or those that did not having the expertise in housing, family law, etc. that were needed by the community.[63] In 1979, the Royal Commission on Legal Services reported on the need to rationalise advice provision—legal or otherwise. This was to be done through government support of centralised CAB in each major area. It was soon evident that people's information and support needs were not best met through such a structure.[64] Telephones continued to offer another way

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[61] Blaiklock, Oliver. 2012. Advising the Citizen: Citizens Advice Bureaux, Voluntarism and the Welfare State in England, 1938–1965. Unpublished PhD thesis. King's College London, 226.

[62] NCABC. *Report*, 10–11.

[63] Byles, Anthea and Morris, Pauline. 1977. *Unmet Need—the Case of the Neighbourhood Law Centre*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

[64] Bradley, Kate. 2019. *Lawyers for the Poor: Legal Advice, Voluntary Action and Citizenship in England, 1890–1990*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 170–173.

of squaring this circle. In the early 1970s, the government was chairing discussions with consumer groups and local authorities to explore the possibilities afforded by mobile advice units for rural communities, along with telephone hotlines, as part of a common, national advice framework run by the CAB and local government.[65] This national advice framework did not come to fruition. If it had, the techniques and tools of the experiential experts would have been taken up by professionals and trained volunteers.

The National Innovations Centre (NIC) was established in 1968 by Michael Young and ran until 1974 when it ran out of funding.[66] It sought ideas from the public as to how to improve people's lives, and then ran pilot studies to test them and to offer a case for take-up by local or central government. Michael Young was a social entrepreneur who straddled political research for the Labour Party, academia, sociological research, and consumer activism. Michael Young's expertise was professional in its origins: he studied economics at the London School of Economics before training as a barrister in the 1930s and taking a PhD in sociology in the 1950s.[67] However, his consumer activism had at its heart listening to working-class women's experiences of shopping and getting value for money. Matthew Hilton and Lawrence Black have looked at the role of the Consumers' Association in promoting the "consumer citizen", a citizenship that supported rational, informed choice and was an alternative to statist, left-wing politics.[68] However, Lise Butler points to how Michael Young was using consumer politics as a means of avoiding either rampant individualism or a deeply impersonal state by bringing the family back into the political arena.[69] As Butler notes, this idea of the family as being integral to emotional and material comfort, and as central to how

[65] Raphael, Adam. 1973. Network of Advice Planned, *The Guardian*, November, 24, 5.

[66] Albery, Nicholas. ed. 1992. *The Book of Visions*. London: Virgin, 236.

[67] Halsey, A. H. 2006. Young, Michael Dunlop, Baron Young of Dartington (1915–2002). Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[68] Hilton, Matthew. 2003. Consumerism in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Search for a Historical Movement. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Black, Lawrence. 2010. *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism and Participation, 1954–70*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

[69] Butler, Lise. 2020. Michael Young, Social Science, and the British Left, 1945–1970.Oxford: Oxford University Press, 168–169.

modern British society should be understood, is key to understanding Michael Young's political views.[70] The NIC, then, was part of Young's wider activism that clustered around the concept of consumption in politics and welfare, but was also centred on using experiential expertise. The NIC's staff were concerned with how communications technology could be used to enable people to "fare well".[71]

An example of this was the Bath Telephone Advice Service, piloted in 1973. This was the idea of Elizabeth Ackroyd, the Director of the NIC. Ackroyd was a senior civil servant who was the first Director of the Consumer Council, established by the Conservative government in 1963. This work brought her into contact with Michael Young.[72] When the Council was abolished in 1971, Ackroyd joined the NIC.[73] Bath was Ackroyd's choice for this project. The NIC paid for a telephone line and answering machine, whilst the City of Bath paid for the advertising. On calling the Bath Telephone Advice Service number, advice seekers were put through to the relevant recorded message. The topics on offer included "homelessness, allowances, or a disturbed child", as well as "housing advice, information about the attendance allowance for [sic] handicapped children, illiteracy in adults, and an appeal from a group wanting to start a local branch of the Parkinson's Disease Society". Callers could also hear messages from the psychiatrists at the Bath Child and Family Guidance Service on a range of issues. Alfred Austin, of Bath Social Services, told a reporter.

> The benefit of this scheme […] is that the caller can retain anonymity and not have to face the challenge of responding to questions. He can simply sit back with the information and think it over. […] We are not sure are being hard-pressed by the right people. It might mean more 'right first time' inquiries—people knowing precisely where to go and what's available and so saving their time and ours.[74]

[70] Butler. Young, 185–186.

[71] Albery. *Visions*, 236.

[72] Jones, Margaret. 2004. Ackroyd, Dame (Dorothy) Elizabeth [Betty] (1910–1987). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[73] Fairhall, John. 1971. Shoppers Lose a Friend, *The Guardian*, February, 19, 1.

[74] Dewar, 1973. Aid on the line, *The Guardian*, October, 31, 11.

The phone service was not interactive, and in that way, allowed people to make calls at a time and in a place that suited them, to make repeat calls if they wished, and to digest the material in their own time, without being asked for their details or feeling rushed into acting. These messages contained information and advice that was packaged by the professional, rather than allowing the caller to outline their needs and have the person on the end of the phone respond to that, as was the case with BIT, for example.

State Use of the Telephone

The benefits of allowing the public to engage with them via a telephone call were also picked up on by the state from the mid-1970s. For example, in 1975, the Labour Government announced a scheme to try to limit wage increases for workers to try to head off high inflation. The Department of Employment offered phone lines for employers and employees with questions about how this would be implemented, which operated between 9am and 6pm on weekdays.[75] An example of a far more substantial version of making government available by phone was the Benefit Agency's Freeline. By the mid-1990s, the Freeline received more than three million calls a year.[76] It was run from eleven Department of Social Security (DSS) centres, and was critical for anyone who found travelling difficult, as well as those who needed information in languages—advice was available in Chinese, Urdu, Punjabi, and Welsh.[77] In order to making savings to social security budget, the Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, closed the line on 12 July 1996. The Benefits Agency argued that no-one would miss out, as they could phone a local DSS office. A CAB worker told the *Guardian* that they "[the agency] want to go to a public phone box and try to get through to a local office with a query on income support, seeing how long it takes, how much it costs and whether they get the right answer at the end of it".[78] Although the Freeline did not return, the concept of connecting people with public services through the

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[75] 1975. Hotline to Dispense Advice, *The Guardian*, July, 12, 7.

[76] Brindle, David. 1996. End of Benefit Help Line As Spending Cuts Bite, *The Guardian*, July, 12, 10.

[77] Wintour, Patrick. 1996. Lilley May Close Free Benefits Advice Line, *The Guardian*, April, 23, 6.

[78] Brindle. End of benefit help line.

telephone or internet became a central tenet of government in the 1990s and early 2000s, as Tony Blair's Labour government sought to catch up with other European nations in relation to e-government.[79]

Conclusion

From the 1960s, marginalised groups challenged the ways in which the state treated them, creating tools and resources that drew upon experiential expertise to help their community "fare well"—and to "fare well" on their own terms. The telephone hotline emerged as a response to the experience of being on the sharp end of policing, using the existing Judges' Rules to carve out a means of getting help in dealing with arrest. With countercultural interest in the democratisation of ideas and information came other ways of organising and accessing knowledge that could be helpful. Whilst some mainstream groups were slow to embrace the telephone hotline—such as the CAB—others were not. Social innovators with influence, like Michael Young and the NIC, were able to work with ideas for telephone-based help and run pilot projects. These ideas permeated government by the 1970s and 1980s, marking a shift away from citizens fitting in with their office opening hours, to offering the public the opportunity to sort out benefits or ask questions about policies at their convenience. Yet, these services could be vulnerable to austerity measures, whatever their value to the public, particularly those with obstacles to visiting in person. The motives of the different groups explored here varied considerably, often reflecting the differences in the types of experiential expertise they had. The telephone helpline was an essential means by which citizens could assert their right to "fare well" within the Welfare State, and to "fare well" on their own terms.

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[79] Left, Sarah. 2001. Blair Appoints E-Envoy, *The Guardian*, January 31. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2001/jan/31/internetnews1. Accessed 7 September 2023.

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Placing Experiential Expertise: The 1981 New Cross Massacre Campaign

Aaron Andrews

Introduction

In the early hours of Sunday 18 January 1981, a fire broke out at a house in the New Cross area of London where Yvonne Ruddock and her friend Angela Jackson had been celebrating their joint sixteenth and eighteenth birthdays. Throughout the night, dozens of well-wishers had been at the party, but by the time the fire started only a few remained, waiting for the first buses and trains to start running so that they could go home. Thirteen young Black men, women, and children died in the fire. Many

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more were injured. Two and a half years later, a fourteenth young man took his own life after experiencing significant psychological trauma.[1]

Within hours, cause of the New Cross massacre, as a group of community, cultural, and political activists named the disaster, became the focus of intense suspicion. The police explanation quickly changed from one which local residents understood and believed to be true—that the fire was the result of an arson attack perpetrated by members of the neo-fascist National Front—to one which pointed the finger of blame at the victims with little-to-no evidence. Two days after the fire, at a public meeting, local residents, community organisers, and political activists from a range of groups and backgrounds came together to raise money for those injured and bereaved by the fire and to demand truth and justice. It was the start of a decades-long campaign, though the cause of the fire officially remains unknown.[2]

This chapter centres on the deployment of experiential expertise in relation to what might be called the juridical state.[3] That is, those institutions responsible for the administration of the law including, but not limited to, the police, the judiciary, and the central and local government bodies which oversee them. I use this term rather than "carceral state" as the juridical state also encompasses the coroner's courts, an institution one step removed from the criminal justice system, at least in principle, to institute medico-legal expertise.[4] Nonetheless, these are institutions

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[1] Their names were: Rosaline Henry, Patricia Johnson, Humphrey Brown, Gerry Paul Francis, Owen Wesley Thomson, Andrew Gooding, Peter Campbell, Lloyd Hall, Patrick Cummings, Steve Collins, Yvonne Ruddock, Glenton Powell, Paul Ruddock, and Anthony Berbeck.

[2] Andrews, Aaron. 2021. Truth, Justice, and Expertise in 1980s Britain: The Cultural Politics of the New Cross Massacre. *History Workshop Journal*, 91: 182–209; Pierre, Carol. 2019. The New Cross Fire of 1981 and its Aftermath. In *Black British History: New Perspectives*, ed. Hakim Adi. London: Zeb Books: 162–175; and La Rose, John, Kwesi Johnson, Linton and John, Gus. 2011. *The New Cross Massacre Story: Interviews with John La* Rose. London: New Beacon Books. See also chapter 'Qualified by Virtue of Experience? Professional Youth Work in Britain 1960–1989' in this collection.

[3] See the Introductionto this collection for discussion of the concept of experiential expertise.

[4] The term "carceral state" typically refers to the development and practice of mass incarceration in the United States; see Gottschalk, Marie. 2006. *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. On the role of the coroner's courts, see Freckelton, Ian, and Ranson David. 2006. *Death Investigation and the Coroner's Inquest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

which significantly affected the ability of Black Britons to "fare well", from the everyday interactions of Black youths with the police to the exceptional (though unfortunately not unique) denial of justice following the fire.[5] Examining the use of experiential expertise within the New Cross massacre campaign provides an insight into issues of trust in state institutions and official truths.

The pursuit of justice for those killed in the fire, as well as the bereaved and survivors, provided a means through which communities could assert their voices within certain spaces. Within these spaces, groups were also campaigning, with varying degrees of radicalism, for fairer treatment and an improvement in welfare (or their ability to "fare well") more generally. Moreover, the disaster also demonstrated the impact of the national press on minoritised communities and especially on the welfare of Black Britons. Following the fire, many national newspapers published stories which supported state institutions and their version of events. In doing so, they denigrated the reputations and lived experiences of those killed and bereaved.

This chapter uses the archival records of the New Cross massacre campaign, which are predominantly located at the George Padmore Institute in London, to understand how the bereaved, survivors, campaigners, and their supporters sought to deploy their experiential expertise within three significant spaces. These spaces—the street, the courts, and the archive—are not particular to the New Cross massacre campaign, nor are they only significant for understanding the lived experiences of injustice. In fact, they are spaces with which social historians will be profoundly familiar. The street has long been a site of protest, whether because of the practicalities of being able to move large numbers of people or the symbolism of certain thoroughfares.[6] The courtroom is a complex space in which people in the dock, the witness stand, the public gallery, and the jury box could experience or observe the administration of (in)justice. This is also a space, and a system, through which fragments of ordinary people's lived experiences were recorded.[7] The archive, too, is a place in

[5] Elliott-Cooper, Adam. 2021. *Black Resistance to British Policing*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[6] Navickas, Katrina. 2017. *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789–1848*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[7] Hitchcock, Tim and Shoemaker, Robert. 2015 *London Lives: Poverty, Crime and the Making of a Modern City, 1690–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

which documents and other ephemera are kept (or not) and made publicly available (or not), in many cases replicating the power structures which shaped the experiences of those whose lives, in however fragmentary a way.[8]

This chapter shows how the New Cross massacre campaign intentionally used these spaces to mobilise their experiential expertise to challenge the formally recognised expertise deployed by juridical state institutions; to contest harmful stories published in the national press; to dispute charges levied by the police; and to ensure that their expertise was preserved and made available to public, disrupting the ability of state institutions to establish truth through public records. The experiences being mobilised were not singular, and the form in which this experiential expertise took varied over time and space. However, the inequalities and violence which Black Britons faced, especially those living in South London in the 1970s and 1980s, were at the fore. These are experiences which the New Cross massacre campaign meticulously documented, providing a wealth of material for historians, reflecting the activists' conviction that they were making history.[9]

POSITIONALITY, ETHICS, AND EXPERIENCE

When using archives of experience, especially when those experiences are among the most traumatic and violent, the ethics of their use becomes even more important. Here, ethics extends beyond normal university approval processes and requires the historian—or whomever else is seeking to access and understand these experiences—to consider their own positionality. In this case, not only can positionality affect the interpretation of the historical record, but it can also impact on the emotional wellbeing of the researcher. I began investigating the New Cross massacre as part of a larger Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project on the history of burn injuries in nineteenth and

[8] Bressey, Caroline. 2006. Invisible Presence: The Whitening of the Black Community in the Historical Imagination of British Archives. *Archivaria,* 61: 47–61; Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2015. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History.* Second ed. Boston, MA: Beacon Press; and Ford, Tanisha C. 2016. Finding Olive Morris in the Archive: Reflections on the Remembering Olive Collective and community history. *The Black Scholar,* 46: 5–18.

[9] Waters, Rob. 2019. "Time Come": Britain's Black Futures Past. *Historical Research,* 92, 258: 383–350.

twentieth-century Britain. My approach to the topic at the outset was inevitably different from someone whose interest in the topic arose from a more direct connection with the place, community, or event. Nevertheless, my greater focus on this event rather than other fatal fires was driven by an intention not to replicate the silence within our project which the bereaved, survivors, and community affected by the disaster experienced from state institutions and the media. This was not a project to recover a lost history because it was not lost but meticulously recorded and widely publicised.

How, then, can those who do not share certain experiences sufficiently interpret them in the historical record? This is a critical question for the contemporary historian as the experiences we study are often still being lived. As a White historian, my interaction with certain materials in the archive was inevitably different to someone with lived experience of racism. Following the fire, letters were sent to the parents of those killed under the name "Brian Bunting, White Man". The letters used racist language and celebrated the deaths.[10] Encountering these letters, which I had read about before visiting the archive, was upsetting but not traumatic. It did not bring up memories of being called "that word", which Bunting used, or other experiences of racism. There is a certain white privilege at work here, but also a need to acknowledge the additional emotional labour of historians who do share certain lived experiences with those they are researching.[11] This, of course, does not resolve or answer the question of how those who do not share certain experiences can sufficiently interpret them in the historical record but is a contribution to the discussion within this volume.

From this arises the issue of whether, when, where, and how academic historians might claim expertise over the lived experiences of their subjects. To take those questions sequentially, whether we claim expertise over lived experience will depend on a number of factors, but here the experiences of the researcher are important. Locating experiential expertise within the archive requires the researcher to position their academically recognised expertise in relation to that being studied; in

[10] Letter from Brian Bunting, White Man, c. 23 January 1981, NCM/2/1/1/4/1, New Cross Massacre Campaign (NCMC) collection, George Padmore Institute (GPI), London.

[11] Barclay, Katie. 2021. *Academic Emotions: Feeling the institution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

many ways, it requires the recognition that others hold knowledge to which academic historians may have limited access unless they too share those experiences. This means recognising the limitations of one's knowledge. Within this context, there will be times (when) and places (where) in which it would be inappropriate to lay claim to expertise over lived expertise rather than, say, historiography. Again, this question changes depending on the positionality of the researcher. As does the issue of how the claim to expertise over lived experience might be made. Once the notion of experiential expertise is acknowledged, historians must be acutely aware of not unduly contradicting that expertise. This is especially important in a case such as the New Cross massacre. The case, as outlined above, saw intense local suspicion over the cause of a fire because the police investigation, firstly, sought to blame the victims and, secondly, ignored the experiences of locals by almost immediately discounting the widely believed theory that it was a National Front arson attack. In such cases, more can be gained from working with the experiential expertise than explaining why it may have led to incorrect conclusions. If nothing else, this also helps us to understand how people continue to respond to such incidents.

The Street

In the hours and days following the fire, the streets around New Cross Road became the site of a nascent campaign for truth and justice. On 20 January, a public meeting was held at the soon-to-be reopened Moonshot Youth Club not far from the scene of the fire. Survivors, bereaved family and friends, local residents, members of British Black Power and Pan-Africanist organisations, and civic, community, and religious leaders from London and Rugby were present.[12] The people in the meeting represented a range of opinions and perspectives. For example, the committee included the Methodist preacher and youth club leader Sybil Phoenix who advocated a less radical approach than some Black Power activists. At the meeting, the New Cross Massacre Action Committee was established. Comprised of members of the various communities and organisations

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[12] Minutes of a meeting, 20 January 1981, 1, NCM/1/1/1/1, NCMC collection, GPI, London. Representatives from the Rugby West Indian Centre were present because one of those killed had lived in the town, as did a number of the Ruddocks' extended family.

present, it was headed by John La Rose to co-ordinate the forthcoming campaign.[13] La Rose was an author, publisher, educator, and activist who, along with Sarah White, co-founded in 1966 the first Black book-shop in Britain, New Beacon Books. He went on to lead a number of organisations including the Black Parents Movement.

During the first meeting, there was disagreement over how widely to open membership. Some contended that the campaign, though not the committee, should be open to anyone. Members of the Pan-African Congress Movement, on the other hand, argued that membership should be limited to people of African and African Caribbean heritage.[14] Disagreement over participation in the campaign points towards a funda-mental divergence over notions of experiential expertise. Limiting the membership to people of African and African Caribbean heritage would have focused the campaign on a particular experience of blackness. However, Armza Ruddock, Yvonne's mother in whose house the party had been, had Indian heritage. Race and ethnicity mattered because of how they were experienced. These discussions do not necessarily point to fractures within the movement but rather the ways in which experience and experiential expertise were negotiated.

At the same meeting, two more committees were established, further demonstrating the significance of different forms of experience in shaping the movement. A separate committee representing the parents and fami-lies of those killed in the fire was established as was a Fact-Finding Committee to gather witness statements and investigate the cause of the fire parallel to the official police investigation. At the public meeting, it became clear that witnesses and local residents did not believe the story which the Metropolitan Police had begun to advance that the fire was caused by the partygoers, some of whom died as a result. Witnesses instead reported seeing a number of white people acting suspiciously within the house, including a woman who came in asking to use the toilet, and on the street outside immediately before the fire took hold. Attendees also articulated their suspicion about the nature of the fire itself, with one recorded in the minutes as saying, a "normal petrol bomb could not burn everything up so quickly". To which another replied it "must have been a

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[13] There was also a New Cross Fire Fund established on the day of the disaster.

[14] Minutes of a meeting held on 21 January 1981, NCM/1/1/1/2, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

very inflammable spirit".[15] This brief exchange illustrates the wider experiential expertise which some people were bringing to the meeting, an experience of pervasive and normalised racist violence in South London. This was a form of expertise which could be gained from living amidst the violence and seeing it on the streets even if one had not themselves been the victim of an attack.

Locals' suspicions were fed by their lived experience as residents of Lewisham, a borough which throughout the 1970s had been the focus of significant white supremacist violence against Black and Asian people, their homes, and many places they frequented. In August 1977, members of the National Front marched through the area. A few months later, the Moonshot Youth Club had itself burned down in a suspected attack by members of the National Front. This was one of a spate of arson attacks perpetrated, or suspected to have been carried out, by the far right.[16] The New Cross massacre campaign for truth and justice was therefore born from the lived experience of white supremacist violence against Black and minoritised communities and the inability—or, some argued, unwillingness—of the Metropolitan Police to prosecute those responsible.

So, when witnesses reported seeing a White man get out of a white Austin Princess car and walk towards the house moments before the fire stated before getting back into his car, speeding off, and almost knocking down one of the party goers on his way home, many immediately assumed that the man was part of the National Front.[17] Police interviewed the man and found that after noticing the fire on his way home, he had driven to the police station to report the blaze, though without warning the occupants of the house first.[18] Nonetheless, locals remained suspicious of the police investigation and the New Cross massacre campaign continued its own investigations into the cause of the fire. Witnesses' suspicion of the man in the Austin Princess was symptomatic of the violence which had affected many people's everyday lives in Lewisham. This experience

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[15] Minutes of a meeting, 20 January 1981, 3, NCM/1/1/1/1, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

[16] Anim-Addo, Joan. 1995. *Longest Journey: A history of Black Lewisham.* London: Deptford Forum Publishing, 141–142.

[17] Preliminary report of the Fact Finding Committee, 25 January 1981, 1, NCM/2/1/1/1/7, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

[18] Transcript of the New Cross Inquest: tape 18 (side 2), May 1981, 1697–1698, Inner South London Coroner's Court (ISLCC), London.

became a form of expertise which they used to interpret eyewitness testimonies. Even when police discounted this individual, many still believed that the fire was caused by an arson attack. Other suspects were also considered including a White woman who wondered into the house at one point carrying a plastic carrier bag and suitcase.[19]

Experiential expertise gained on the streets of London was exercised on those same streets. On 2 March 1981, after weeks of planning, the New Cross Massacre Action Committee held a protest march which it called the Black People's Day of Action. Beginning in Fordham Park, adjacent to New Cross Road, thousands marched past the site of the fire, through South London, across the river, ending at Hyde Park. Along the twelve-mile route, up to 20,000 people from across England (figures vary) protested the multiple perceived injustices of a police investigation which blamed the victims. Moreover, the press coverage demonised them, and the silence of Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher over the deaths dehumanised them. As such, the route of the march was intentionally designed to pass those institutions (with the exception of the monarchy) which the New Cross massacre campaign held responsible for denying justice and ignoring or maligning the victims and bereaved. At the head of the march were the parents of those killed in the fire, walking in front of a coffin in a communal funeral procession.

The route of the Black People's Day of Action march began at Fordham Park, just around the corner from 439 New Cross Road. As they progressed through South London, more and more people joined. When the marchers arrived at Blackfriars Bridge, the second phase began. A delegation left to deliver letters to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner at Scotland Yard, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the Prime Minister's Office at 10 Downing Street. As the march was held on a day that Parliament was in session, in order that a group of Labour MPs could put forward an Early Day Motion in support, the Metropolitan Police had refused permission for the main body of people to demonstrate outside those locations. The use of petitioning and parliamentary action shows how the movement sought to deploy a repertoire of activism in their pursuit of justice. After the delegation left the march, the assembled protestors made their way across the bridge, with some minor confrontations with the police, before turning down Fleet Street where they were

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[19] The woman with the suitcase and bag, 21 January 1981, NCM/2/1/1/1/6, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

jeered from the windows above by journalists at several national daily newspapers. The route of the march, and the delegation, was intended as a spatial manifestation of the campaign's criticism of those institutions which had failed to acknowledge the victims. However, the national press reported the march as a faceless, violent mob. If the journalists and newspaper editors overlooking the march understood the message, they did not heed it.

By planning a route as a spatialised critique of state institutions and the press, the Black People's Day of Action processed the experiential expertise of Black Londoners in locations where that expertise had long been marginalised. The nature and form of the demonstration meant that this expertise was articulated most clearly, at least in terms of the archival record, on the placards held by marchers. As documented in the photographs taken by Vron Ware, who reported on the march for the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight*, the placards provide insight into the experience of living under the shadow of racist violence in 1970s and early 1980s Britain. One read "WHITE SPIRIT WAS A PETROL BOMB", clearly refuting the Metropolitan Police's forensic analysis because so many who lived in the area had witnessed homes in Lewisham which had been destroyed by arson. Experience therefore made arson the most likely or convincing explanation. Others, referring respectively to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and senior investigating officer for the fire, read "MCNEE NO BLACK SCAPEGOATS" and "COMMANDER STOCKWELL NO BLACK SCAPEGOATS".[20]

These placards were not just pleas for these two to avoid incriminating the victims of the fire, but also pointed to mistrust of the police and many Black Britons' experiences of discriminatory policing. Stockwell drew particular criticism because of his role in the investigation into the Confait murder in 1972 which led to a serious miscarriage of justice for the three young men and boys wrongfully convicted. Other proposed slogans therefore included: "Stockwell's past makes this a farce"; "Stockwell we are digging up are you giving up?"; and "Stockwell came too late and framed Confait".[21] This link between the history and experience of racist policing, past injustices, and suspicions over the Metropolitan

[20] Ware, Vron. 2020. *The Black People's Day of Action, 02.03.1981.* Southport: Café Royal Books.

[21] Minutes of a meeting of the NCMAC, 8 April 1981, 4, NCM/1/1/1/6, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

Police's investigation into the New Cross massacre was clearly expressed by the filmmaker Menelik Shabazz in his 1981 short film on the fire and early 1980s uprisings.[22] The street figured as a space where experiential expertise was attained, most significantly through encounters with racist violence and police discrimination. However, it was also a space where experiential expertise was re-lived, especially during clashes with police and beratement from the upper windows on Fleet Street.

The Courts

The Black People's Day of Action held great symbolic importance and helped, albeit not on the terms many had wished, to bring the fire back to the pages of the national press. However, the principal focus of the campaign, and especially of the families, was on the courts. Truth and justice were denied, first by a faulty police investigation and then by the coroner's inability to reach a verdict which explained how and why thirteen young people had died. The New Cross massacre campaign's interaction with the judicial system spanned more than two decades and highlighted significant issues, especially within the coroner's courts, in terms of the standard of proof and relative weight afforded to testimonies from officially recognised experts. The verdict of the first coroner's inquest, it was argued, was based solely on police witness statements despite claims that these had been taken under duress.

By ignoring counterclaims over the reliability of these statements, the coroner was explicitly ignoring the expertise of the families and campaigners who had either experienced, witnessed, or heard about discriminatory police practices within their extended community. Nevertheless, despite the significance of these claims, the New Cross massacre campaign was not able to effect significant change in terms of the juridical state's reliance on its own experts as the evidentiary basis of official truth. This is not a failure of the New Cross massacre campaign but a feature of the juridical state which continues to affect the welfare of minoritised

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[22] *Blood Ah Go Run*. 1981. Directed by Menelik Shabazz. London.

people who encounter the system.[23] Experiential expertise is limited by people's and institutions' unwillingness to engage with it.

The first inquest into the New Cross fire opened on 21 April 1981, almost two weeks after the Director of Public Prosecutions had announced that "there was not sufficient evidence to justify proceedings against any person in respect of the fire".[24] Consequently, the coroner's court became the space in which the cause of death, and from there the cause of the fire, would be officially established. The inquest lasted much longer than the coroner had envisaged as his courtroom became the site of a dispute over the fundamental principles of evidence. In particular, the New Cross massacre campaign and its legal team questioned the reliability of police witness statements and the judicial system's apparent confidence in them as a true record of events. Several statements were withdrawn on the witness stand, with that given by eleven-year-old Denise Gooding, who lost her brother Andrew in the fire, being particularly concerning. Gooding later recalled being "kept in the police station for hours and hours and hours one night, just being questioned and questioned".[25] She was accompanied by a local clergyperson, rather than a parent or other known individual. The treatment of Gooding echoed other instances of vulnerable young people being questioned by police and signing witness statements they later repudiated. In Gooding's case, the coroner decided to allow her original statement to stand.

Another witness, who also retracted their statement, reported feeling pressured to tell the police what they wanted to hear as they were under curfew the night of the fire and so liable to be punished.[26] The young witnesses clearly felt under pressure to accord with the police version of events. Whether this pressure was a result of their age, ethnicity, or previous encounters with the police, experiential expertise came into play within the interview room. This led to an understanding that if you tell

[23] Monteith, Keir, Quinn, Ethine, Dennis, Andrea, Joseph-Salisbury, Remi, Kane, Erica, Addo, Franklyn and McGourlay, Claire. 2022. *Racial Bias and the Bench: A Response to the Judicial Diversity and Inclusivity Strategy, 2020–2025*. Manchester: University of Manchester.

[24] Jones, I. M., Memorandum to Mr Boys-Smith: The Deptford fire, 8 April 1981, HO 287/2992, Home Office collection, The National Archives (TNA), London.

[25] Phillips, Mike and Phillips, Trevor. 1998. *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*. London: Harper Collins, 334.

[26] Transcript of the New Cross Inquest: tape 19, May 1981, 1723, ISLCC, London.

them what they want to hear, they will let you go. As the police station was a recognised site of state violence at this time, with a number of high profile deaths in state custody, the impetus will likely have increased. The knowledge that the police station was not safe—that many Black people had not "fared well" in their interactions there—appeared to have eclipsed Gooding's desire to tell the truth within the interview room as she understood it. This truth had to wait until the court hearing to be told.

The weight afforded to police witness statements and the professional expertise commissioned by the juridical state highlighted the impact of discriminatory police practices on the welfare of Black Britons. In contesting the coroner's reliance on such statements, the campaign was also condemning the treatment of Black Britons by the police.[27] Their critique of the use of police witness statements therefore rested on their experiential expertise. Some of this expertise was personal. Darcus Howe, one of the campaign's leaders, was one of nine protesters arrested and charged with incitement to riot after protesting police harassment of the Mangrove Restaurant in Notting Hill in 1970.[28] The trial, in which all nine were acquitted of the principal charge, found "evidence of racial hatred" within the Metropolitan Police, the first time this was officially acknowledged.[29]

The Black Parents Movement and Black Students Movement, two of the organisations which comprised the Black Alliance then leading the New Cross Massacre Action Committee, were established in response to the 1975 stop, search, alleged assault, and arrest of a Black school student in London.[30] The problem, of course, was much more widespread and so the experiential expertise was also drawn from Black British communities-at-large. Targeted harassment, the disproportionate use of stop and search

[27] Peplow, Simon. 2022. "Cause for Concern"? Policing Black Migrants in Post-War Britain. *Immigrants & Minorities,* 40, 1–2: 177–209.

[28] See also chapter 'Connecting the Disconnected: Telephones, Activism, and "Faring Well" in Britain, 1950–2000' in this collection.

[29] The judge cited "evidence of racial hatred on both sides". See Bunce, Robin and Field, Paul. 2013. *Darcus Howe: A Political Biography*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013, 134.

[30] Andrews, Kehinde. 2013. *Resisting Racism: Race, Inequality, and the Black Supplementary School Movement*. London: Institute of Education Press, 13; Francis, Hannah. 2023. The Black Parents' Movement. In *Many Struggles: New Histories of African and Caribbean People in Britain*, ed. Hakim Adi. London: Pluto Press. 215–231.

powers under "sus laws", and instances of physical violence and deaths in police custody are well-documented.[31] In their appeal to the High Court, the families argued that the coroner had effectively pre-judged the case and "failed to place similar emphasis" on the other theories for how the fire had started.[32] In effect, the reliance on police statements had disregarded the experiential expertise of Black communities. It was argued that the court privileged one form of expert knowledge—that attained through police investigations—over other forms of knowledge and evidence. While the High Court justices did not find that there was sufficient cause to overturn the verdict, the complaints became part of a wider erosion of trust in the coroner's system to adequately investigate suspicious deaths involving other state institutions.[33]

Unsatisfied by the coroner's verdict, the New Cross massacre campaign established its own International Commission of Inquiry, chaired by University of the West Indies sociologist Susan Craig. This included UK academics researching deaths in state custody, radical forensic scientists, and members drawn from other professions and walks of life who would specifically bring experiential rather than formal academic expertise.[34] By instituting the international commission, the campaign was mobilising alternative forms of expert knowledge to gather and interpret evidence and identify what they believed was a more just explanation. While its findings would not be officially recognised or enforceable, the International Commission of Inquiry nonetheless reflected the erosion of trust in British state institutions. Black communities had already established their own schools to better support the welfare and education of Black children, so the international commission was not without parallel.[35] The International Commission of Inquiry never met, but the attempted

[31] Jackson, Nicole M. 2015. "A nigger in the new England": "Sus", the Brixton Riot, and Citizenship. *African and Black Diaspora,* 8, 2: 158–170 and Peplow, Simon. 2019. *Race and Riots in Thatcher's Britain.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[32] Attorney General's Fiat with Judicial Review application, 13 May 1981–1914 February 1982, 4, NCM/2/3/1/1, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

[33] Scraton, Phil and Benn, Melissa. After the Fire—the inquest. May 1981, NCM/2/4/1, NCMC collection, GPI, London. Similar complaints were made following the deaths of Blair Peach (1979) and Colin Roach (1983).

[34] Minutes of the Fact Finding Commission. 23 September 1981. NCM/2/1/1/1, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

[35] Andrews. *Resisting Racism.*

recourse to extrajudicial investigation nonetheless marked a significant shift. This was especially the case as the chairperson was based in the Caribbean and the campaign was attempting to find other members, including a member of the French National Assembly and a representative from East Africa.[36] The planned membership of the international commission highlights the global, diasporic experiential expertise which the campaign believed was required to adequately investigate the New Cross massacre.[37]

More than twenty years after the original open verdict, a second inquest was held following sustained campaigning and a re-examination of Metropolitan Police cases after the 1993 racist murder of Stephen Lawrence and subsequent inquiry by William Macpherson. While the Macpherson Inquiry became the impetus for a re-examination of certain Metropolitan Police cases, it did not necessarily mark a turn towards the use of experiential expertise—beyond the facts which might be taken from witness statements—as evidence. In 2004, the coroner's court once again became the site in which the cause of the New Cross fire would be investigated and adjudicated. For a second time, the court returned an open verdict. However, the theory which had blamed the young victims for the fire was discounted. The forensic evidence, upon which the original police case and the theory blaming the victims had been built, had been misinterpreted.[38] While some of the parents continued to believe that the fire was an intentional act of arson, the coroner's court was not the same site of contestation over expertise. Nevertheless, justice, in the form of knowing, continues to evade the families and communities affected by the fire.

[36] Minutes of a meeting. Undated. NCM/1/1/1/16, NCMC collection, GPI, London.

[37] On diasporic connections and West Indian communities in London see Schwarz, Bill. 2003. Claudia Jones and the *West Indian Gazette*: Reflections on the Emergence of Post-Colonial Britain. *Twentieth Century British History,* 14, 3: 264–285.

[38] New Cross Fire Application for New Inquest. file 1. Letter from John Grieve (Metropolitan Police) to David Blunkett (Home Secretary). 13 June 2001, ISLCC, London.

The Archive

The New Cross massacre campaign recorded a significant amount of evidence on the disaster and the experiential expertise of those who witnessed it. While the campaign invoked this expertise on the streets and through the courts, it also preserved it in the archives. The main repository of this body of documentary evidence is the George Padmore Institute in Finsbury Park, London, where the records of the New Cross Massacre Action Committee are held. The George Padmore Institute, founded in 1991 and located on the floors above the New Beacon Books shop, holds a wide range of archival materials on the various political, social, and cultural campaigns in which its founders were involved. In addition to the New Cross Massacre collection, these include the Black Education Movement and Black Supplementary Schools Movement; Caribbean Arts Movement; and International Book Fair of Radical Black and Third World Books.[39]

Additional records are held at the London Metropolitan Archives (as part of the Huntley Collection) and Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, London.[40] The Huntley papers mostly relate to the work of Jessica Huntley, a publisher, bookshop-owner, and activist.[41] There is also a wealth of published and recorded material which also documents the fire and its aftermath.[42] This chapter was written 42 years following the fire meaning that survivors, witnesses, and the families and friends of those

[39] Moffat, Chris. 2018. Against "Cultures of Hiatus": History and the Archive in the Political Thought of John La Rose. *Small Axe,* 22, 1: 39–54.

[40] New Cross Massacre Action Committee. LMA/4463/B/08. Huntley Collection. London Metropolitan Archives, London; and New Cross Fire. 1981–1991. RC/RF/16/09/K. The Runneymede Collection, Black Cultural Archives, London.

[41] Tomlinson, Claudia. 2023. The British Guiana "Power Couples" Fighting Racial Injustices in Britain. *History Matters,* 3: 23–24.

[42] For example, La Rose, John, Johnson, Linton Kwesi and John, Gus. 1984. *The New Cross Massacre Story*. London. New Beacon Books; Ware, Vron. 1981. *The Black People's Day of Action*; Collins, Sir. 1981. *New Cross Fire Page One*. Sir Collins Music Wheel; Osbourne, 13 Dead (Nothing Said). Simba; Zephaniah, Benjamin. 1984. 13 Dead. *Rasta*. Upright Records; Linton Kwesi Johnson. 1984. New Craas Massakah. *Making History*, Island Records; and *Small Axe: Alex Wheatle*. 2020. Directed by Steve McQueen. BBC. See also, Waters. Time Come.

who died are also still telling their stories.[43] A number of files pertaining to the fire are available through the UK's National Archives, though the records of the Director of Public Prosecutions remain closed until 2087 and a Freedom of Information request submitted in 2019 was refused.[44] However, some of this closed material is in the public domain, with records accessible through the Inner South London Coroner's Court in Southwark and also held at the George Padmore Institute.

It is particularly notable that campaigners' papers have been made publicly available whereas many documents relating to the investigation held by the National Archives are closed. The efforts of leading members of the New Cross Massacre Action Committee to preserve documentary evidence of the campaign, and with it evidence of the lived experiences of Black Britons living in South London in the 1970s and 1980s, suggest a clear intention that this material be used. As Rob Waters has argued, this was closely bound to a sense, within or among certain groups of people, that Black political mobilisation was "making history" and so it needed to be recorded for posterity and as part of the ongoing political work of Black history education.[45] Moreover, Chris Moffat has suggested that the George Padmore Institute itself is a radical attempt to reconfigure the archive away from "an institution that is traditionally meant to *freeze* time" to something which generates political and cultural change going forward.[46] The process of making history, therefore, was a form of political activism by which experiential expertise—this time in the form of written documentary evidence—could be used to tell and re-tell stories about pivotal events. The archival collections relating to the New Cross massacre therefore take on a new political role.

The intentionality of creating, maintaining, and making publicly available an archive of the New Cross massacre campaign has shaped the way the history of the movement has been written. It also stands in

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[43] This has included the New Cross Fire 1981 exhibition at Rugby Art Gallery and Museum (January 2023) which was co-curated by survivors and members of the Ruddock family.

[44] The 19 files are listed as New Cross House Fire: charges considered for murder of Peter Campbell, Lloyd Hall, Humphrey Brown, Paul Ruddock, Andrew Gooding, and eight others on 18 January 1981 in London. No action case. With photographs, 1981–1986. DPP 2/7456–7474. Director of Public Prosecutions collection, TNA, London.

[45] Waters. Time Come.

[46] Moffat. Against "Cultures of Hiatus": 40. Emphasis in the Original.

marked contrast to the archives of other Black victims of state violence. In her work on Nigerian-born David Oluwale, who was murdered by two Leeds police officers in 1969, Kennetta Hammond Perry has examined the perspectives and possibilities of archives of state violence against Black Britons. The historical record of Oluwale's life and death was, she argued, "an archive of dispossession that largely provides an accounting of his alleged violations of the law and his seemingly undeserved dependency on public resources".[47] While Perry has used this archive to re-create a productive history of Black life in Britain, the reliance on archives created by people and institutions which represented Black Britons as a problem presents a particular challenge to historians.

The archival footprint of the New Cross massacre is different. While Perry had to search for evidence of Oluwale's emotive life, the archive of the New Cross massacre places these at the fore through the experiential expertise which was, this chapter has argued, so pivotal to the campaign. As well as being an archive of an event, and a record of meetings, it is an archive of experiences. The experience of state and far-right violence in South London; the experience of loss; and the experience of resistance. Reading the New Cross massacre archive with the idea that its creators were consciously making history therefore points towards an understanding of the archive as a conscious effort to resist the juridical state's imposed narratives and instead record the past as lived, understood, and represented by a particular group of Black British activists. The archive also contains documents created by juridical state institutions: letters; police witness statements; transcripts of the inquests. Moreover, the archive has extensive clippings from both supportive and hostile publications. This meticulous process of record collecting provides an insight into different perspectives on the fire and campaign. However, placing the documents within this collection rather than (or as well as) archives created by local and central government bodies re-casts them as records of resistance.

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[47] Perry, Kennetta. 2023. The Sights and Sounds of State Violence: Encounters with the Archive of David Oluwale. *Twentieth-Century British History,* 34, 3: 467–490.

Conclusion

The campaign which was launched two days after the fire brought the experiential expertise of Black Britons living in South London to the fore—on the streets, in the courts, and in the archive. This expertise, discounted by state institutions, shows how the experience of racism and violence suffused many people's everyday lives to the extent that it shaped how they viewed a disaster within their community. For those fighting for social justice, the fire shows how experience can be a powerful tool for political mobilisation and deployed within state institutions as well as in opposition to them. For historians, the disaster highlights the ways and places in which experience was mobilised by activists to resist the practices and narratives of state institutions. It also points towards the pivotal role of certain archives as repositories of experiential expertise in minoritised communities' interactions with juridical state institutions. These records need to be read with sensitivity, acknowledging ethical and epistemological issues which arise when the researcher does not share in certain lived experiences, or the extra burden of emotional labour and need for care when they do.

The New Cross fire has in turn become part of the experiential expertise of Black Britons. In their 2019 poetry collection, *Surge*, Jay Bernard reflected on their archival research into the New Cross massacre while writer in residence at the George Padmore Institute. They wrote about how many "questions emerged not only about memory and history, but about my place in Britain as a queer black person".[48] Bernard's questions were inflected, not only by the archive created by activists in the 1980s but also by the continued experience of marginalisation and the violence which could accompany it. During their residency, a fire at a 24-storey block of flats in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea killed 72 people and injured many more. In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June 2017, stories circulated about the cause and suspicions that the true death toll was being withheld. Bernard's interaction with the New Cross archive was therefore also shaped by another disaster and the experiences which it brought to the fore. They continued, "I am from here, I am specific to this place, I am haunted by this history but I also haunt it back".[49] The historical parallels between the two fires are

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[48] Bernard, Jay. 2019. *Surge*. London: Chatto & Windus: xi.

[49] Ibid.

apparent: violence wrought by marginalisation; state indifference exemplified by an uncaring Prime Minister; and the almost immediate initiation of a campaign for truth and justice. In the years before the fire, a group of Grenfell residents became experts in the dangers the building posed to all those living there but their warnings were not heeded, and the refurbishment was approved by the local authority.[50]

While experiential expertise has long been recognised by activists, and is being increasingly acknowledged by academics, the limits are apparent. Just as state institutions largely ignored the experiential expertise brought to bear by the New Cross massacre campaign, some bereaved families and survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire criticised the public inquiry for failing to consult on the terms of reference.[51] Expert witnesses at the inquiry were limited to the technical issues of building materials and fire analysis with the lived experiences of residents recorded separately. The organisation and conduct of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry thus shows that state institutions are still yet to reckon with experiential expertise. It is impossible to say with certainty that integrating this expertise into judicial processes in the aftermath of mass casualty and fatality disasters might improve decision-making. But it would ensure that there was space within these processes for the people affected to say how they might, if not "fare well", then fare better.

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[50] Hodkinson, Stuart. 2019. *Safe as Houses: Private Greed, Political Negligence and Housing Policy after Grenfell*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2.

[51] INQUEST. 2019. *Family Reflections on Grenfell: No voice Left Unheard*. https://www.inquest.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=47e60cf4-cc23-477b-9ca0-c960eb826d24. Accessed 7 November 2023.

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"Low Risk Doesn't Mean No Risk": The Making of Lesbian Safer-Sex and the Creation of New (S)experts in the Late Twentieth Century

Hannah J. Elizabeth

Introduction: "Whatever Happened to… the Dental Dam"?

In 2000, the British Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans Queer (LGBTQ) newspaper *The Pink Paper* published a short tongue-in-cheek article entitled "Whatever happened to… THE DENTAL DAM". Printed on a peach background, and accompanied by a large colour photo of lavender and pink latex Fiesta dams, the short article explained

> At the height of the 80s AIDS panic, this six-inch square piece of thin latex was the only thing stopping the lesbian population from contracting HIV. Or so the hysterical women's groups who advised ladies to use them reckoned. Passion killers in plastic form, dental dams were at best fiddly […] and, according to one of Terrence Higgins Trust's lesbian sex advisers,

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utterly pointless in preventing the spread of HIV between women. Lick that![1]

Dental dams, as the article indicated, were a safer-sex technology which emerged in the 1980s when it was unclear if oral sex presented a possible route of HIV transmission. Like a condom, dams were intended to be used as a barrier between partners, placed over the vulva or anus to prevent any exchange of fluids during oral sex. Unlike the condom which became a key part of safer-sex, the necessity of the dental dam was hotly contested. Here, *The Pink Paper* positioned the HIV/AIDS charity, the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) and its "lesbian sex adviser", as the preeminent experts on "lesbian sex", in opposition to the "hysterical women's groups" who pushed for latex barriers during the "80s AIDS panic"— damning both panic and the dental dam to this "hysterical" past. The derisive humour deployed here allowed *The Pink Paper* to ridicule the dam as a safer-sex object, with the article rendering its use more ridiculous still through the provision of DIY instructions and false coyness around how the dam was used

> Those lesbians with a touch of the Valerie Singletons[2] made their own at home by slicing a rolled condom (handy in venting those anti-man anxieties) or, simpler still, by applying clingfilm to the, ahem, appropriate area.[3]

Playing on tired stereotypes, the article deployed mocking humour which relied on man-hating, domesticity, and prudishness to ridicule would-be dam users, and reinforced the narrative that dams were "passion-killers in plastic form". The article concluded "to no one's surprise, the practice [dam use between cis women] never really took

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[2] Valerie Singleton was a presenter on the BBC's flagship children's television programme *Blue Peter*, a programme famous for its craft project demonstrations.

[3] Ibid.

off, and nowadays dental dams are only ever talked about with dreamy reverence on women's internet chat rooms".[4]

This scathing article is interesting in part because it is representative of a genre of queer women's safer-sex coverage, and specifically assessments of the dental dam, which emerged in the 2000s. Generally, articles from this period offered potted histories of the dental dam from the perspective of the anti-latex victors, giving the impression that the dam's history had concluded, its existence as a safer-sex object agreed to be obsolete, and its emergence onto the queer women's scene an isolated aberration. Such narratives failed to acknowledge the complex factors which gave rise to the dam alongside other objects and ideas which became part of the queer women's safer-sex canon, such as gloves, and the appraisal of past sexual and drug using histories. They also failed to acknowledge that for some, latex barriers worked; if not to prevent HIV, then to acknowledge that sex between cis women was real sex, queer sex, risky sex, and good sex. This chapter, in exploring the experiential and professional expertise which informed queer women's safer-sex practices in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s, takes the dam's history rather more seriously, positioning it as an object which allowed queer women to define what sex, and "faring well", meant for them.

Existing histories documenting the response of women who have sex with women (WSW) to the AIDS crisis explore their roles as carers and activists—nursing those living with AIDS, distributing clean needles, giving blood, and leading marches—but their direct response to the virus within their own communities, bodies, and relationships remains under-explored.[5] WSW responded to anxieties about HIV transmission

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[4] Ibid.

[5] There has been some recent brilliant historical engagement with lesbian responses to their own HIV risk. Day and Hedger both address lesbian activism around HIV in the USA in their theses, and the weRAGE on project documents the "ditch the dental dam" campaign and its fallout. Hedger, Kathryn. 2018. "Standing Against a 'Willful and Deadly Negligence": The Development of a Feminist Response to The AIDS Crisis. Unpublished MA thesis, Texas State University, https://digital.library.txst.edu/items/c99 5730f-ca44-4a4b-ad17-085c28c274a8. Accessed 7 November 2023. WeRAGE on and The Love Tank, "Ditch Those Dams"; https://www.werageon.com/react/ditch-those-dams, Accessed 20 November 2023; Day, Emma. 2020. Out of the Silence: Women Protesting the AIDS Epidemic, 1980–2020. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Oxford; Elizabeth, Hannah. 2020. The Slippery History of the Dental Dam. History Workshop Website. 6 March. https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/queer-history/the-sli ppery-history-of-the-dental-dam/. Accessed 7 November 2023.

within their community by drawing on previously acquired expertise as activists and by asserting experiential expertise over how sex, risk, and safety should be defined and performed within their communities. In queer women's safer-sex, we find a missing history which parallels that of the development of safer-sex practices between men and heterosexuals,[6] whose specifics may be fruitfully explored to enrich our understandings of the variety of expertise deployed by activists.

This chapter traces this history of experiential expertise through the arrival and partial dismissal of the dental dam among British queer women's health campaigners, the move towards harm reduction (rather than risk elimination) and the "agnostic position" within advocated safer-sex practices.[7] By exploring the emergence of queer women's safer-sex advice, while focusing particularly on the dental dam, this chapter offers an intimate history of HIV activism which places women's experiences at its centre. It demonstrates how women, in the absence of the scientific and state opinion (which came to dominate other forms of safer-sex knowledge), wrote and disputed their own rulebook across intimate borders. Here, I use the term "lesbian safer-sex" to describe sex practices and ideas occurring between women, following the language and definitions used by actors at the time. I also use the broader term "queer women's safer-sex", to acknowledge the queer, bisexual, and trans women who also make up this history. This is wholly appropriate, as the blurry boundaries of lesbian identity and lesbian sex were part of the battleground on which the need for the dental dam was contested.

Dating the emergence of lesbian safer-sex in Britain is not as simple as locating the first queer press article or pamphlet to advocate dental dam use between women. The archive documenting nascent safer-sex activism in the early days of the AIDS crisis is scattered and dominated by the queer print culture from the cities which would become hubs of activism in the US and UK. This chapter is restricted to the discussion of English language texts and the author's interest in British lesbian health activism, and while it reaches beyond the UK's borders to acknowledge the transatlantic exchange of safer-sex ideas, a great deal more research is needed to understand the transnational nature of queer health activism

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[6] Blair, Thomas R. 2017. Safe Sex in the 1970s: Community Practitioners on the Eve of AIDS. *American Journal of public health*, 107, 6: 872–879.

[7] O'Sullivan, Sue and Parmar, Pratibha.1992. *Lesbians Talk (Safer) Sex*. London: Scarlet Press, 47–49.

and information networks.[8] By reading early advice texts, this chapter reveals something of the politics and experiences which shaped how queer women negotiated their HIV risk and strove to "fare well" in the face of a new health crisis.

Later sexual health messaging would often offer deceptively simple slogans directed at individuals such as "Condoms & lube give freedom to fuck".[9] However, earlier (and specifically queer) safer-sex messaging attempted to include a variety of practices and ideas aimed at protecting personal and collective health and wellbeing which went well beyond a focus on latex barriers. Health was a core tenet of feminist and queer liberation well before AIDS was identified, with personal and collective experience lauded as a form of expertise in the absence of, or in defence against, medical expertise.[10] When safer-sex emerged, it was rooted in earlier queer and lesbian feminism, building on earlier health texts and lore as it attempted to fight the misogyny which placed women and LGBTQ people at greater risk of exposure to HIV. Consequently, much of the nascent discussion of how to make sex less risky prioritised the values of queer liberation as a form of wellbeing and right to "fare well" alongside early understandings of transmission prevention.

Emerging Knowledge, Experiential Expertise, and Practice

As Brier has argued, queer women were involved with defining how queer communities should respond to AIDS from its emergence in 1981. American AIDS activist Cindy Patton, who would later go on to co-author the hugely influential safer-sex pamphlet *Making It: A Woman's Guide to Sex in the Age of* AIDS, authored early safer-sex responses rooted in

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[8] For a useful discussion of transnational queer HIV/AIDS activism see the chapter "Crossing borders". In George Severs, 2024. *Radical Acts: HIV/AIDS Activism in Late Twentieth-Century England*. London: Bloomsbury.

[9] Such slogans grabbed attention and conveyed simple safer-sex advice, but in the case of Gay Men Fighting AIDS and their activist contemporaries, their educational materials often also had activist and community building intent, ensuring gay men's health stayed top of the agenda. Gay Men Fighting AIDS, Condoms & Lube Give Freedom to Fuck. 1997. The Wellcome Archive, London.

[10] For a discussion of this health activism see: Kline, Wendy. 2010. *Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Women's Health in the Second Wave*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

queer feminism in articles in *Gay Community News* in June 1983 and June 1984. As Brier contends, Patton's call in "Talking about AIDS" for queer folk to attend to the "political" in the "personal" and to "channel our anger outside of our community" was a demand for collective rather than individual answers to AIDS, a response markedly shaped by her feminism.[11] In a later article, Patton argued for a dismantling of problematic perceptions of gender and "stereotypes about sexuality" which she saw as obstructions to healthy sexuality for queer men and women.[12] Indeed, Patton maintained that the shift to "safe sex" offered "an excellent time for lesbians and gay men to talk with one another about sex, and re-ground sexual liberation in our understanding of sexual desire".[13]

As Brier makes clear, Patton was by no means alone in her feminist and liberationist response to AIDS. Queer men were also calling for collective responses to the threat of AIDS which attended to the ways misogyny and homophobia made LGBTQ communities especially vulnerable, while rejecting narratives which attempted to blame individuals for its spread.[14] Important (but controversial)[15] early texts provided rubrics of safer-sex thought and practice drawn directly from sexual and patient experiential expertise, alongside early medical expertise. For example, the 1982 edition of *The Advocate Guide to Gay Health,* and the Callen and Berkowitz's 1982 *New York Native* article "We Know Who We Are: Two Gay Men Declare War on Promiscuity", and their 1983 book *How to Have Sex in an Epidemic: One Approach.*[16]

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[11] Patton, Cindy and Andrews, Bob. 1983. Talking About AIDS. *Gay Community News,* 18 June. Cited in: Brier, Jennifer. 2007. Locating Lesbian and Feminist Responses to AIDS, 1982–1984. *Women's Studies Quarterly,* 35, 1/2: 234.

[12] Patton, Cindy. 1984. Illness as Weapon. *Gay Community News*, 30 June. Cited in Brier. Locating Lesbian and Feminist Responses to AIDS. 243–244.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid. 238–241.

[15] The controversy surrounding these texts ranged from disquiet around suggestions that certain sex acts be avoided, consternation at their "anti-promiscuity" stance, and challenges to Sonnabend's (later disproved) "multifactorial theory of AIDS" which argued no single novel agent caused the disease.

[16] Callen, Michael, Berkowitz, Richard, Dwokin, Richard. 1982. We Know Who We Are: Two Gay Men Declare War on Promiscuity. *New York Native*, 8 November, 23-29; Callen, Michael, Berkowitz, Richard. 1983. *How to Have Sex in an Epidemic: One Approach.* New York: Tower Press.

Indeed, these texts, which focused on safer-sex between men who had sex with men (MSM), drew on the expertise and early theories of Callen and Berkowitz's doctor Joseph Sonnabend particularly, and followed an established pattern of expert health advice (both professional and experiential) created through an alliance between MSM and "gay and gay-allied health professionals".[17] Discursive, generally sex positive, collective, multifarious, emphasising knowledge seeking, and in the 1983 text, explicitly promoting latex barrier use, these texts would go on to be reprinted, contested, rethought, referenced, and rejigged for decades, their legacy outlasting the debunked multifactorial theory of HIV transmission.[18] Significantly, these texts also had a reach well beyond the North East coast of America, offering vital information when knowledge was limited, they appeared at queer events and on reading lists in the UK.[19]

Building on American texts but influenced by the UK's own cultural and epidemiological contexts, British queer organisations began to produce pamphlets on AIDS in 1983. The likely first UK AIDS advice leaflet was produced by the Gay Medical Association (GMA), but several co-produced information sheets and leaflets soon followed, with the GMA working in partnership with the THT.[20] Such leaflets demonstrate a blurring of experiential and professional expertise, with the border between of activist, queer, and professional identities dissolving for some in the fight against AIDS. These early pamphlets generally advised reducing the number of sexual partners and presented those who had been in North America as potentially risky prospects. As these pamphlets evolved, they incorporated new knowledge about routes of transmission and the variable transmission risk (later understood as viral load) of different bodily fluids. Between 1983 and 1986, more progressive THT publications moved away from talk about limiting the number or type of

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[17] Blair. Safe Sex in the 1970s, 872.

[18] For reflections on, and early recordings of, Callen and Berkowitz's collaborative activist relationship see *Episode 2. How to Have Sex in an Epidemic | Fiasco*, 2022. https://shows.acast.com/fiasco/episodes/episode-2-how-to-have-sex-in-an-epidemic. Accessed 20 November 2023.

[19] Cook, Nigel, Ogg, Derek. 1983. AIDS in Scotland: Mystery Virus Claims Two. *Gay Scotland*, 1 July, 10–11.

[20] See Gay Medical Association collection at The Bishopsgate Institute, Especially Gay Medical Association 1983. AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

partners, towards grading different sexual acts in terms of relative risk: the "it's not who you are, it's what you do" form of safer-sex advice.[21] Listing different sex acts also allowed pamphlets to reach a broader audience, often including information for men and women together, while the emphasis on acts rather than identities disrupted ideas of heterosexual or lesbian immunity, or gay male identity as monolithic. Texts like these, while drawing on the latest scientific research as far as possible, also disrupted the scientific categorisation of sexualities by refuting epidemiological categories which linked object choice with sexuality.

Texts aimed at women which explicitly addressed the risk HIV posed to lesbians, and offered ways to mitigate this risk, began to emerge in 1986 in the US and UK. In the Spring of 1986, Southern California Women for Understanding published *Lesbians: Low risk for AIDS, high risk for discrimination*, a pamphlet that attempted to clarify "myths" about lesbians and AIDS, instilling a sense of responsibility and solidarity with gay men by emphasising that AIDS-related discrimination would be experienced by gay men and lesbians alike.[22] While the text did not give safer-sex instructions, and stated "no cases of AIDS transmitted by lesbians have been reported", it did emphasise that lesbians were at risk through intravenous (IV) drug use, sex with men, blood transfusions, and artificial insemination; the implication being such activities were best avoided.[23] The expertise appealed to in the pamphlet was largely scientific or legal, with "myths" responded to with "facts" which cite medical or legal sources, indicating a knowledge hierarchy which placed professional expertise above experience.

In July 1986, a more instructive pamphlet was published by San Francisco's Women's AIDS Network, with San Francisco AIDS Foundation

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[21] Terrence Higgins Trust. (1986). A.I.D.S: The Facts, The Wellcome Archive, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/cxrq9rqy. Accessed 7 November 2023.

Terrence Higgins Trust. (1986) AIDS: More Facts for Gay Men. The Wellcome Archive. https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ax4fgwxt. Accessed 7 November 2023.

[22] Southern California Women for Understanding. 1986. Lesbians: Low Risk for AIDS, High Risk for Discrimination. Queer and Trans Safer Sex Project. Sexual Minorities Archives. https://qtsafersex.omeka.net/items/show/83, Accessed 20 November 2023.

[23] Southern California Women for Understanding. 1986. Lesbians: Low Risk for AIDS, High Risk for Discrimination. Queer and Trans Safer Sex Project. Sexual Minorities Archives. https://qtsafersex.omeka.net/items/show/83. Accessed 20 November 2023.

funding, *Lesbians and AIDS—What's the connection.*[24] Like earlier texts aimed at men who had sex with men, the pamphlet speculated on the relative riskiness of different sexual acts, suggested using latex barriers for some (gloves, finger cots, a dental dam) and avoiding others altogether. Drawing on collective experiences of discrimination and activism, the pamphlet emphasised that the increased hostility towards homosexuality catalysed by AIDS warranted increased solidarity between gay men and lesbians, and the queer community overall.

While these two American 1986 pamphlets are important early examples of AIDS education materials targeting lesbians, their reach seems to have been limited. Certainly, a year later when Tamsin Wilton, then a "novice AIDS activist" in England, set about writing her own "information leaflet for lesbians about safer sex and the risks of woman-woman transmission of HIV", she was "forced to concede defeat", finding "quite simply, no information available that I could draw upon".[25] It is possible that these early American attempts to provide safer-sex information to lesbians were slow to make it across the ocean to Wilton, or suffered from the customs confiscation and police raids which plagued early attempts to disseminate AIDS education literature.[26] Thankfully, as Wilton later

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[24] San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Women's AIDS Network, "Lesbians and AIDS—What's the Connection?", July 1986. Queer and Trans Safer Sex Project. Sexual Minorities Archives. https://qtsafersex.omeka.net/items/show/82 . Accessed 20 November 2023.

[25] Wilton, Tamsin. 2005. Forward. In *Lesbian Women and Sexual Health: The Social Construction of Risk and Susceptibility.* Kathleen Dolan ed. ix–xi. New York: Haworth Press.

[26] Anon. 1984. "Dramatic Raid on Gay's the Word". *Gay Times.* May. 13, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/dramatic-raid-on-gays-word/docview/2075483874/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023; Cummings, Peter. 1985. "Gay's the Word Bookstore on Trial Over Banned 'Obscene' Literature". *The Advocate.* August 20, 16, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/gays-word-bookstore-on-trial-over-banned-obscene/docview/2465378353/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023; Anon. 1984; Anon. 1984. Gay's The World–Customs Puts the Boot In. *Gay Times,* November. 12, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/gays-world-customs-puts-boot/docview/2075493496/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023; Anon. 1985. More Customs Seizures, *Gay Scotland.* January, 4, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/more-customs-seizures/docview/2216048419/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023; Anon, Publishers Angry after Zipper Raid. 1984 *Gay Times*; September, 13, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/publishers-angry-after-zipper-raid/docview/2075495208/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023; Marshall, John, 1986 "Battles Ahead to Save Zipper Store", *Gay Times,* June. 9, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/battles-ahead-save-zipper-store/docview/2076694719/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023.

reflected, 1987 seems to be the year that publishing on lesbian safer-sex truly took off, with Wilton finding Cindy Patton's comparatively weighty *Making It: A Woman's Guide to Sex in the Age of AIDS* to be the reference guide she had been searching for. Incidentally, 1987 was also the year Nottingham's lesbian magazine *Diversion* published a multi-page discussion of lesbian AIDS risk, citing the San Francisco text among its sources, but perhaps publishing too late for Wilton's use.[27]

Making It, co-authored by Patton with Janis Kelly, and illustrated by Alison Bechdel, brought together what was known by 1987 about women's AIDS risks, offering practical safer-sex advice to heterosexual, bisexual, and lesbian women in a combined text written in English and Spanish, with translations by Papusa Molina. The 1987 edition featured a striking pink cover and ran to a combined fifty-three pages. From its first edition, the pamphlet published by Firebrand Sparks was collective in its approach, refusing to draw sharp lines between different communities of women. The first lines of the introduction explained that AIDS was an "equal opportunity disease" that impacted a diverse range of individuals and not just white gay men or drug users. Those at risk included married heterosexual women and lesbians.[28]

This intersectional approach is perhaps why *Making It* had such broad appeal, with a second edition published in 1988, and the pamphlet cited extensively across English language safer-sex literature.[29] With its boundary blurring approach to sexual identities and acts, *Making It* also assured its continued relevance even after safer-sex educators began to question the need for latex barriers between women. Indeed, Patton's ongoing call to arms and explicit discussion of the specific risks women faced seems to have been inclusive enough to satisfy those who later argued for discussions of "real vulnerabilities", rather than "theoretical" risks, which the sexual encounter engendered.[30] For example, long-time

[27] Diversion, 'Lesbians and AIDS', *Diversion*, Spring 1987, 11–16, Sparrows' Nest Library and Archive, http://www.thesparrowsnest.org.uk/collections/public_archive/9733.pdf. Accessed 7 November 2023.

[28] Patton, Cindy and Kelly, Janis. 1987. *Making It: A Woman's Guide to Sex in the Age of AIDS*. New York: Ithaca. 5.

[29] I suspect it also saw circulation and citation across Spanish safer-sex literature, but unfortunately, I lack the linguistic skills to ascertain this with any certainty.

[30] Gorna, Robin. 1996. *Vamps, Virgins and Victims: How Can Women Fight AIDS?*. London: Cassell, 338–344.

AIDS activist and head of health promotion for the THT, Robin Gorna, a staunch critic of "latex lesbians", cites and quotes Patton's AIDS work extensively, albeit not *Making It* specifically. As *Making It*'s introduction explained

> Safer sex is a new way of looking at our health. Safer sex starts with each one of us – individually and as part of a group effort – doing it, talking about it, trading advice with friends. Decisions about safer sex and drug use are not about doctors and tests; they are about each of us choosing to respect ourselves.[31]

As with Patton's earlier work, here a community-oriented approach was taken, with safer drug use and safer sex both offered as behaviours to protect the self and the welfare of others. What "our health" meant in this context, as the pamphlet explained, was personal. Coping with AIDS was an individual experience for every woman regardless of their sexuality, class, marital status, or ethnic identity.[32]

Acknowledging differences in "coping" thus validated different experiential expertise, ways of being "safe", ways of being well and "faring well". Indeed, perhaps one reason for the persistent longevity of this text is this flexible approach to safer-sex and safer drug use; it avoided prescriptive instructions or calls for abstentions, and instead paid attention to the experiences and contexts of the women it spoke to, encouraging readers to deploy their own experiential expertise. This approach, which emphasised collective and individual agency, was flagged in the introduction which explained the purpose of the pamphlet

> Because we are each different, not everything will work for everyone. Learning to be creative, to plan in advance, to stand firm on safer sex and drug-use decisions, and to seek support from others, are at the heart of these changes.[33]

Here we see a plurality of approaches to safer-sex or health which went well beyond using latex, including "learning", "planning", and

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[31] Patton and Kelly. *Making It*, 5.

[32] Patton and Kelly. *Making It*, 5.

[33] Ibid.

seeking "support". Still, using a dental dam for oral sex was among the "suggestions" and "changes" women were encouraged to consider.

Making It introduced dental dams as part of the general barrier paraphernalia needed for oral sex, regardless of the genders of the couple. In simple terms it explained "If you are sucking a man, use a condom… If your partner is having oral contact with your vagina use a dental dam. Also, if either person has oral-anal contact, use a dental dam".[34] It is worth noting that this suggestion that men, as well as women, use dental dams with women, was fairly unusual. Indeed, in the 1990s, the fact the Health Education Authority (HEA) and other UK public health bodies made no attempt to promote dental dams to heterosexuals was seen as indicative of their limited usefulness.[35] This omission was despite some pro-latex AIDS activists campaigning to get dental dams promoted by the HEA, and made widely freely available via the NHS, as part of welfare state sexual health provisions in a similar manner to condoms.[36] But as *Making It* made painfully clear, dental dams were not equivalent to condoms materially or experientially, they were a "make-do prevention tool".[37]

In the 1980s, dental dams were largely only available from medical or dental supply companies, and their use in a sexual context was not backed by the scientific research or technological development which condoms enjoyed. Consequently, unlike the condom, would-be dam users in the UK and US first had to discover a source for this illusive barrier, either through medical suppliers or via queerer routes, such as queer newsletters, sex shops, or activist networks. There are accounts of UK activists posing as dentists in order to bulk buy dental dams to give out to people as part of safer-sex direct actions, subterfuge which they then publicised gladly to highlight the gap in state sexual health provisions.[38] As a result of this ongoing scarcity, many would-be dam users resorted to "Saran Wrap"

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[34] Patton and Kelly. *Making It*, 5, 13.

[35] O'Sullivan and Parmar. *Lesbians Talk (Safer) Sex*, 45.

[36] Anon. 1990, "ACT UP Launch Women's Safer Sex Campaign" *The Pink Paper*, 17 November, 1, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/act-up-launch-womens-safer-sex-campaign/docview/2075493854/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023.

[37] Patton and Kelly. *Making It*. 13–14.

[38] "ACT UP Launch Women's Safer Sex Campaign", 1.

in the US, or cling film in the UK as an impromptu barrier—a practice which has actually persisted as the dam has fallen out of vogue.[39]

For those lucky enough to source a dental dam, as *Making It* explained, using the dams took some practice and ingenuity. This included rinsing off any talcum powder before use, and being sure to remember which side of the dam made contact with "the mouth juice and which side has the vagina/ass juice". The guide highlighted how some dam users fashioned holders out of garters and underwear to avoid confusion, and explained "it may take some practice to find out how to make dental dams part of the mystery and excitement of sex".[40] The idea of "practice" was advocated elsewhere in *Making It*, indicating while it felt anyone could become an expert in safer-sex, one did not start out that way, experience was needed. Bechdel's humourous cartoons also emphasised this point, depicting awkward but entertaining conversations about consent, risk, and identity, alongside slightly sillier images of women struggling to make condoms sexy. For *Making It*, safer-sex took work, but that work was a duty to the self and the community.

Ditching the Dental Dam

Despite the efforts of pro-latex activists, attempts to make latex barriers part of lesbian safer-sex encountered immediate challenges. Scientific research on the dams' efficaciousness was slight, risks of different lesbian sexual practices hard to measure, and complaints about the usability of dams extensive. Conflicts over the need for the dental dam came to a head in 1992 when AIDS activists, researchers, and health workers gathered in Amsterdam for the annual International AIDS Society conference. Among a variety of other direct action activities, the New York branch of the AIDS activist group ACT UP protested the THT approach to lesbian safer-sex,[41] decrying the UK activists' new sexual health campaign about the HIV transmission risks posed to (cis) women who had sex with (cis) women. The THT campaign prioritised mitigating transmission risks

[39] Cooper S. Beckett, Dylan Thomas, and Ginger Bentham, 2018, "Swingset 323", *Life on the Swingset—The Swinging and Polyamory Podcast, SS323.*

[40] Patton and Kelly. *Making It*, 14.

[41] Loben, Carl. 1992. "Aids Activism in Amsterdam" *Gay Times*. October, 31, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/aids-activism-amsterdam/docview/2075474179/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023.

to lesbians who shared drug injecting equipment, had sex with cis men, or used insemination by donor sperm, over the risks inherent in sex between cis women. While this THT campaign proposing lesbians "ditch those dental dams" caused some controversy and debate in the UK's queer press, the vocal and visible ire of ACT UP New York drew mainstream press attention, and considerably ramped up the volume of an ongoing debate about lesbian safer-sex. Calls to "ditch the dental dams" had previously resulted in raised eyebrows, but now resulted in raised voices which carried beyond the borders of the UK's queer communities.

During the protest, some "extremely angry lesbians" from ACT UP New York graffitied the offending THT posters with the word "SHAME", and activists from THT and ACT UP engaged in a shouting match, arguing over the limits, risks, and definitions of lesbian safer-sex.[42] ACT UP penned a damning press release condemning the THT campaign, and the THT then responded with their own press release.[43] For months, the UK queer press rumbled with acrimonious letters and discussions about lesbian safer-sex, its definitions, and the disputed need for latex barriers. Part of the US activists' recriminations stemmed from a feeling that the THT was using the same essentialist definitions of lesbianism favoured by the US Centres for Disease Control in order to arrive at the idea lesbians were at low risk of HIV. These definitions had erased lesbians with HIV from epidemiological statistics in the US, with a bearing on the distribution of AIDS funding, activism, and research. The marked differences in access and experience of welfare (particularly around healthcare) between US and UK queer activists likely contributed to the acrimonious gulf between the two groups, and formed the context for this ACT UP misreading of the THT campaign.

Looking back at the "ditch those dental dams" campaign shortly after the furore which erupted around it, Women's Development officer at the THT Da Choong explained the thinking behind it. "Our purpose was to present a balanced view based on the latest research and from a health-education approach of risk reduction rather than risk elimination".[44] To do this, the updated information in the short health campaign adverts explained that lesbians were

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[42] Anon, 1992 "Tempers Flare Over Safer Sex", *Capital Gay*, July, 1.

[43] weRAGEon and The Love Tank, "Ditch Those Dams".

[44] O'Sullivan and Parmar. *Lesbians Talk (Safer) Sex*. 20.

✱ [at] very low risk in oral sex
✱ … so ditch those dental dams
✱ don't bother with gloves unless it turns you on
✱ if you share sex toys, use condoms.[45]

But in smaller print, the health promotion adverts also cautioned "lesbians have been infected with HIV through sharing 'works', sex with men and donor insemination", and advised lesbians to read the new THT leaflet: "HIV & AIDS: Information for Lesbians".[46]

The new THT leaflet, part of the same campaign targeting UK lesbians, worked to detach identity from risk. Lesbians were reminded that despite their practices being regarded as low risk they were not immune to HIV risks.

"For each of us, keeping our risks to a minimum is dependent on what we do and not how we identify".[47] The leaflet also worked to destigmatise HIV and risk activities, arguing for honest and open discussions as a form of safer-sex and community care. It explained

it is important that we help each other tell the truth about who we are and what we've done. Not making judgements about the lifestyles and sexual practices of others will go a long way towards encouraging honesty or trust.[48]

The leaflet then demonstrates this kind of open non-judgemental discussion by offering practical advice on cleaning injecting equipment, and the whys and hows of having safer-sex with cis men. It then offered a practical discussion on risks and their mitigations for sex between cis women, touching on and normalising a variety of practices. With an affirming and reassuring tone it begins

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[45] Terrence Higgins Trust. 1992. Lesbians & HIV: What Are the Risks? *The Pink Paper*, 21 June, 5, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/advertisement-terrence-higgins-trust/docview/2081973139/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Terrence Higgins Trust, "HIV & AIDS: Information for Lesbians" (London, June 1992), 1. EPH510, The Wellcome Archive.

[48] Ibid. 1.

If the sex you have with women avoids blood or virginal fluid getting into your bloodstream, or vice versa, then you will already be practising safer sex. This means that you can carry on kissing her all over, or using your fingers inside her vagina or anus.[49]

While the leaflet advised that women "forget dental dams for oral sex—unless they turn you on!", it went on to stress that oral sex was only safe if you have no open wounds in your mouth and the recipient partner was not experiencing any bleeding from their vagina or anus.[50] By suggesting the use of dental dams as a legitimate "turn on", the leaflet gave space for women who felt more comfortable using a barrier for oral sex, because of fears of HIV or other personal preference. Alongside advocating the use of gloves for some women, and dental dams for those who wanted them, the leaflet also cautioned against the sharing of sex toys without condoms and advised the use of lubricant.[51] The final concluding section of the THT leaflet reiterates that "what we do in bed with each other poses very little risk" but that "it is vital that we create a climate of trust where lesbians with HIV can feel safe".[52] The rest of the leaflet was taken up with information on testing, where to get safer-sex paraphernalia, helplines, and AIDS organisations.

Clearly the 1992 THT "ditch the dental dam" campaign never argued sex between cis women carried "no risk". However pushback against the campaign resulted in a flurry of lesbian safer-sex messaging from other charities and activists, deploying the slogan "No risk isn't low risk" as their taglines.[53] While this pushback took the form of letters to the queer press, it also saw the (re)launch of more lesbian safer-sex materials. These campaigns offered similar information to the THT's controversial campaign, albeit emphasising potential risks a little more and showing greater deference to the pro-latex position. To engage with both sides of the argument, while admitting gaps in knowledge, research, and expertise

[49] Ibid. 3.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid. 5.

[53] A prime example is the Lesbian and Gay Switchboard 1992 poster and leaflet campaign which deployed the slogan "Low Risk Isn't No Risk", Charlesworth, Kate, 1992 "Low Risk Isn't No Risk: Lesbians, HIV and Safer Sex", Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/f35utm3x. Accessed 7 November 2023.

persisted, the "Lesbians Talk" book series released *Lesbians Talk (Safer) Sex* in 1992. In the collectively written and discursive text, the authors codified "the agnostic position".

The agnostic position left space for the personal use of latex barriers while attempting to sidestep the politicisation which they had come to signify. It admitted that only an individual had the knowledge to assess her risk and comfort levels regarding different sex acts and risk mitigations. The authors explained that "the agnostic position"

> leaves the way open for those lesbians who are worried, and can't resolve that worry, to use safer sex. But it also indicates how pressing it is for us to build a framework in which to place our worries, our information, our politics, our uncertainties, and our knowledge. Not all decisions are rational or make total sense, especially those around sex! Deciding to practise safer sex with another woman in specific circumstances may not always be rational, but may make that sexual encounter a freer, more exciting, more caring experience. Conversely, deciding not to practise safer sex with another woman in specific circumstances may be a rational risk assessment of the danger of HIV transmission […] In celebration of our perversity, we should be revelling in the wealth and breadth of the sexual choices we can make in the time of AIDS.[54]

Given that dental dams were harder to obtain than condoms or cling film, it is hard to judge the extent to which they ever became part of the "celebration" of "perversity" called for here.

For Robin Gorna, a (s)expert and "out bisexual"[55] woman, dental dams represented a significant misstep in the fight against HIV among women. Indeed in Gorna's 1996 book on women and AIDS activism, *Vamps, Virgins and Victims*, she devoted an entire chapter to demolishing arguments for what she dubs "laminated sex". Drawing on her experiences as an activist, educator, and woman, Gorna argued

> What is worrying is the emphasis on 'theoretical' risks of sex between women conceals and ignores the very high HIV risk encountered by some lesbians and bisexual women. …It is established that HIV prevention which overestimates small risks can encourage people to take high

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[54] O'Sullivan and Parmar. *Lesbians Talk (Safer) Sex*, 47.

[55] Skinner (1996).

risks, so …latex lesbianism itself may be more accurately characterized as endangering lives.[56]

Here Gorna drew not just from her work as an educator and activist, but also cited academic research on health promotion. Gorna's position against dams was longstanding, and not just epidemiological. She also criticised the way latex had permeated sex positivity, arguing it was fine if it was an erotic addition, but undermined progress if latex barriers were allaying the "'yuck!' factor", leaving the work of feminism around challenging discomfort with "sexual fluids" unfinished.[57] The issue with the dental dam then was not merely their fiddly impracticality and the unpleasant taste of latex, they also represented an experience of sexuality overladen with a fear of HIV disproportionate to the risks involved. They belied a discomfort with women's bodies stemming from internalised homophobia and misogyny which rejected the messiness of sex. Gorna had made these points even more emphatically in an article for the queer women's magazine *Diva*, reviewing the film series "Hot and Sticky: Women and The Safer Sex Debate" curated by the Institute for Contemporary Art in London.[58]

Attending with two HIV positive friends, Gorna offered an excoriating review of the films on show, drawing on her friends' experiential expertise as HIV positive women involved with activism and HIV support groups. Of the sixteen films on show, only one dealt with women having sex with men, instead the approach was to focus on latex barriers between women. Or as Gorna's friend Kate "raged", "they reduced all that complexity and urgency to pushing dental dams and latex gloves? That's the least important message".[59] Dismissing the films' collective attempts to eroticise latex barriers, Gorna relays an anecdote about her own experience trying to use the Oasis "Oradam"—a latex mask which covered the mouth, chin, and ears. Explaining the mask resulted in her partner feeling "nothing", and Gorna, in a fit of giggles, "blowing hot air into my ears", she dismissed the technology. She then declared, with reference to the limited scientific

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[56] Gorna, *Vamps, Virgins and Victims*, 338–339.

[57] Ibid. 355.

[58] Gorna, Robin. 1994. "Sticky Moments: Do we need latex sex?". *Diva*. 1 August, 10–14, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/sticky-moment/docview/2216023407/se-2. Accessed 7 November 2023.

[59] Gorna, Sticky Moments, 12.

evidence of women to women HIV transmission, "Quite frankly, for a risk that small, I'm not willing to ditch the tastiness of oral sex to start licking a carrier bag".[60] Gorna also argued that the absence of a dental dam campaign targeting heterosexual men indicated the absence of any real transmission risk.

Taking a more serious tone, Gorna's article then argued

> The promotion of 'latex lesbianism' and insistence on 100 per cent risk free sex (an oxymoran) fuels fear against women with HIV. It encourages a highly inaccurate perception of the real risks of HIV transmission and ruins many women's sex lives.[61]

An assessment Gorna evidenced with quotes from her friends' responses to the films, with Bea saying "If you'd just been diagnosed it would totally freak you out". Her friend Kate then added that the films would "just make you drink, smoke and fuck—or wrap yourself in latex and die".[62] Offering her own assessment and alternate approach to lesbian wellbeing, Gorna argued that latex lesbianism endangered the lives of queer women. She went on to explain that the risks queer women faced did not originate from one another. Instead she wrote that "our risks are men and drugs". To avoid the risk of HIV, lesbians needed to build "self-esteem" that "includes relishing our sexuality".[63]

Dental dams then were incompatible with lesbian welfare according to Gorna, because they disrupted self-esteem and had an exclusionary effect. While the wider politics of latex barriers and the personal or collective taking of (calculated) risks is important to this history, it is not the only reason people chose to "ditch" the dam. As Gorna hints at in her scathing review of the Oradam, they were rarely deployed with enthusiasm, even by sexual health activists. For example, attendees at the 1995 Promoting Our Health conference discussed lesbian safer-sex paraphernalia and practice during a sexual health workshop, and reported on the consensus among attendees in the newsletter *Dykenosis*

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60 Ibid. 14.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

> We …looked at the barriers currently available for lesbians to make sex safer. Many of us there were working in health promotion and we all agreed it is extremely difficult to promote the use of latex gloves, dams, finger cots etc because (apart from the hypocrisy of most of us not using them ourselves) they seemed very primitive and cumbersome (and not even designed for use in sex) and there is no research to back up any claim we might make that we are at risk without them.[64]

Dykenosis was the newsletter of Birmingham-based lesbian health activist group LesBeWell. Started as a health project with a focused on sexual health, LesBeWell began producing its newsletter *Dykenosis* to fill a perceived gap in knowledge and activism around dyke health. As I have argued elsewhere, this took the form of information dissemination, lobbying, and complaint, intervening in the welfare state by providing missing services and seeking to improve existing ones.[65] The newsletter drew on a combination of professional and experiential expertise, with articles, letters, reviews, and research reports by LesBeWell members, *Dykenosis* readers, and healthcare practitioners. *Dykenosis* generally took a cautious approach to lesbian safer-sex, campaigning for more research and promoting dental dams, including those "designed for sex" when they finally came on the market. Given this context, the poor reviews of the dams and other latex barriers quoted above are especially illuminating. The quote is also typical of the newsletter's discursive style, which valued LesBeWell's combination of personal and professional expertise. In a report from LesBeWell's 1995 "Dykenosis in the Flesh" conference, the discussion on lesbian safer-sex and dental dams was reported

> Very few people participating had ever used dental dams for safer sex. The reasons given for this reluctance included the fact that the name is off-putting (and recent developments towards "oral dams" as a term would not help this!), they spoilt the fun as they are not exactly sexy, they were too small and required two hands to hold them in place, they smelt and tasted unattractive, few people knew where to get them from and the costs involved, and the packaging is generally unattractive and lead to concerns

[64] Haines, Jo. Lee, Helen. 1995, "Lesbian Sexual Health", *Dykenosis*, 2, The Wellcome Archive, https://wellcomecollection.org/works/fgur5y64. Accessed 7 November 2023.

[65] Elizabeth, Hannah J. 2023. "The Wild Women of the West (Midlands)": how LesBeWell imagined queer women's health and its obstacles in the 1990s through the pages of Dykenosis. *Contemporary British History,* 37, 3: 309–338.

about hygiene. As a group, we found it very difficult to think of good things to say about them although one person suggested that the need to carry them around along with gloves, lube, nail files etc. etc. could bring back the handbag![66]

This review is especially damning given that LesBeWell was made up of lesbian health activists whose expertise combined the experiential—they were politically and sexually active dykes—and more professional forms of expertise—many of them worked in healthcare. Indeed, LesBeWell's membership and the newsletter's readership included numerous queer women working in the health professions, allowing them to mix experiential expertise with knowledge gained through academic research and work within the NHS, state social care and private healthcare. LesBeWell had also been working to make dental dams available to their readers for some time, advertising the "designed for sex" Lolldams and also providing the standard dams to those who asked. They also frequently carried safer-sex adverts and distributed leaflets from other lesbian health organisations, including those promoting lesbian safer-sex which involved barriers. And yet, "very few people… had ever used dental dams".[67]

Conclusions

Moves to provide for the welfare of HIV-affected communities in Britain are increasingly well documented, yet women and queer women especially remain under-represented in the historiography. This chapter traced the history of queer women's safer-sex in Britain through the arrival and partial dismissal of the dental dam among British lesbian health campaigners. By exploring the emergence of queer women's safer-sex advice, while focusing particularly on the dental dam, this chapter offered an intimate history of HIV activism which placed women's experiences at its heart. It followed the emergence of knowledge about queer women's sexual risk and how, in the absence of the scientific and state opinion, women wrote and disputed their own rulebook for sex and lesbian wellbeing across bodily, personal, professional, and even national borders.

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[66] LesBeWell Volunteer, 1995, *Dykenosis In The Flesh Report, June 1995, 4,* Lothian Health Service Archive.

[67] Ibid.

The expertise explored in this chapter was often a blend of experiential and professional expertise drawn from experiences of living a queer identity and striving for collective wellbeing in the face of a major health crisis. While safer-sex emerged from a collective ambition to safe-guard queer sexual health and guard liberationist ideology from abstentionist approaches to HIV/AIDS, the personal nature of sexual risk, and the absence of adequate scientific research, created a reliance on individual approaches where the origin of any particular (s)expertise was obscured. Many of the authors of sexual health advice explored in this chapter claimed (s)expertise on the basis of both personal and professional experiences, their activism indivisible from ideological and personal perceptions of what queer health and queer sex looked like.

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Afterword

Pat Thane

Introduction

The chapters in *Everyday Welfare in Modern British History: experience, expertise and activism* together add a significant new dimension to our understanding of the history of the twentieth-century British welfare state. This is achieved by examining the motivations of people and groups who campaigned for reform based upon their own diverse personal experiences. This Afterword sets out to identify areas for more considered discussion and debate around the potential contribution of what has been the largely overlooked concept of experiential expertise. Furthermore, the Afterword considers how this in turn expands knowledge and prompts further study of the past and present of the welfare state and "states of welfare".

Campaigners for social reform have generally been volunteers seeking state action to resolve social and economic problems they experienced or observed in others. This included demands for innovative state welfare before 1945 and thereafter mainly for remedies for weaknesses or gaps in existing state services, aiming to improve their relevance to peoples' lives.

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While campaigning, they often, as far as possible, developed and ran new services funded by voluntary donations to meet urgent needs. In recent years historians have increasingly recognised the significance of voluntary action in the emergence of the welfare state and in complementing its subsequent activities.[1] But despite what they/we have revealed less is known about the motivations of volunteers and activists, including the importance for many of personal experience. It is this experiential expertise which is so convincingly described and analysed in contributions to this collection, which cover the period since the later nineteenth century, and together open up new avenues for future research.

Relevant research has long existed, but commentators, authors, historians and policy specialists in general have failed to notice the presence and significance of experiential expertise. Examples include George Behlmer's work on the origins of the National Council for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in the 1870s. Campaigners, mostly middle-class men and women, became aware of the issue, mainly through their voluntary social work or from reports by working-class people concerned about abuse by neighbours. As a result, knowledge was shared that there was a serious problem of physical and sexual abuse of children, often by their parents, which was ignored by the legal system and in popular discourse. They used this experience successfully to pressure government to implement legislation against child cruelty in 1889. They then campaigned for comprehensive state-supported care for abused children, while themselves inspecting suspected cases and supporting abused children when necessary, by placing them in voluntary care homes. Their activities led the state in 1908 to give local authorities responsibility for detecting abuse and taking children into care in collaboration with the NSPCC which continued to inspect and report abuse on the local authorities' behalf.[2] This is an early example of collaboration between voluntary and official action which became increasingly prevalent thereafter.

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[1] Including: Thane, Pat. 2012. The "Big Society" and the "Big State": Creative Tension or Crowding Out? The Ben Pimlott Memorial Lecture, 2011. *Twentieth Century British History,* 23, 3: 408–429; Hilton, Matthew, Crowson, Nick, Mouhot, Jean-Francois and McKay, James. 2012. *A Historical Guide to NGOs in Britain. Charities, Civil Society and the Voluntary Sector since 1945.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan.

[2] Behlmer, George K. 1982. *Child Abuse and Moral Reform in England, 1870–1908.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

In her chapter Caitríona Beaumont describes how women's organisations, including the largest organisation of working-class women in the early twentieth century, the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG, founded in 1883), built on their own and other women's experiences to campaign especially for free health and welfare services for mothers and their children. Their aim was to end the ill-health they suffered due to lack of access to medical care and to reduce the high levels of infant and maternal mortality.[3] These groups raised donations to create voluntary child and maternal health clinics to advise and assist mothers with health and child-care, sometimes providing free or subsidised food and milk. At the same time they demanded that the state adopt this model nationally, gaining support and funding from some local authorities and increasingly from government. State provision of such services, delegated to local authorities, grew from 1914 fuelled by the need to replace the generation dying on the battlefields. However Deborah Dwork in describing these campaigns and actions, and their effects, does so without noting the driving power of experience.[4]

Beaumont and Ruth Davidson in her chapter describe how the WCG with other women's organisations, driven by their experience of the continuing deprivation of poorer women, continued their campaigns through the inter-war years. They set out to ensure that local authorities provided essential services, their members sometimes serving as local councillors as women's political rights were extended, with growing success as Labour took control of increasing numbers of local authorities. The WCG also extended public knowledge of women's experiences and support for reform through publications such as *Letters from Working Women* (1915), a collection of 160 letters in which working-class women movingly described their experiences of poverty and family life, including childbirth, child death, their own ill-health and lack of health care.[5] It made a significant impact. It was initiated by Margaret Llewellyn Davies, a middle-class Cambridge graduate who was the WCG's general secretary from 1883 to 1921 and aimed to make the wider public aware of the

[3] Gaffin, Jean and Thoms, David. 1983. *Caring and Sharing. The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild.* London: Holyoake Books.

[4] Dwork, Deborah. 1987. *War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children. A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898–1918.* London: Tavistock.

[5] Llewellyn Davies, Margaret. 1915, reprinted Virago 1978. *Maternity. Letters from Working Women.* London: Virago.

experiences of poorer women. In 1931, with the same purpose, she edited *Life as We Have Known It: the Voices of Working-Class Women* Here six older members of the WCG contributed accounts of their lives, mostly spent in poverty, followed by extracts from letters of 12 more members and from two describing their experiences as elected local Poor Law Guardians.[6]

Other women published accounts of the lives of deprived women to arouse sympathy, concern and efforts to improve their conditions. The largely middle-class Fabian Women's Group, affiliated to the Labour Party, did so over many years, including from 1909 to 1913 surveying the daily lives and budgets of 30 families in Lambeth, South London, who were getting by on around £1 per week. The moving findings were published as *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913).[7] The editor, Margery Spring Rice, was another Cambridge graduate who became active in voluntary causes to win support for poorer women after learning of their experiences. This included joining the Birth Control Movement to protect women from the dangers of repeated pregnancy, miscarriage and childbirth without medical support, leading to long-term sickness or death. She co-founded the North Kensington Women's Welfare Centre, one of the earliest and largest of London's Health and Welfare Centres for women. In the 1930s she conducted a detailed investigation of the lives of a sample of women from around England and Wales who were scraping by on very low incomes and then conveyed their experiences in their own words in a book published in 1939, *Working Class Wives*. Here the terrible effects of their lack of access to affordable health care, decent housing or an adequate diet for themselves or their families were revealed.[8] The book made a considerable impact, contributing to the growing demands for a free health service and increased low-cost house-building.

These are just a few examples, in addition to the case studies included in this volume, of how women of all classes utilised the expertise they

[6] Llewelyn Davies, Margaret. 1931, reprinted Virago, 1977. *Life as We Have Known It: the Voices of Working-Class Women,* with an Introduction by Virginia Woolf. London: Virago.

[7] Pember Reeves, Maud. 1913, reprinted Virago 1979. *Round About a Pound a Week.* London: Virago.

[8] Spring Rice, Margery. 1939, reprinted Virago, 1981. *Working Class Wives.* London: Virago.

gained from experiencing personal deprivation or from observing the lives of low-income women, to demand action by central and local government. Their action resulted in gradual, limited, locally uneven success between the wars, complemented by the growth of voluntary services. They contributed to the extensive pressures and proposals for state welfare reform during the Second World War, for example through the Women's Group for Public Welfare as described by Beaumont, leading to the success of the Labour Party in the 1945 general election and its creation of what became known as the welfare state. Labour's reforms massively extended previous state welfare provision and improved the living conditions of many people, especially through establishing the National Health Service in 1948, providing care for all health needs free of charge. For the first time working-class women could receive expert care in childbirth.

But Labour could not implement all its welfare ambitions before it lost the 1951 election to the Conservatives, who did little to improve services or benefits. Labour's plans were constrained by the difficulty of funding them while also working to revive the post-war economy. The economy grew, and they achieved full employment (at least for men) for the first time in peacetime. This greatly improved the incomes and living standards of most working-class households, funded partly by higher taxes on the better off. But Labour could not achieve everything in just six years. Tax rises and controls, including maintaining wartime rationing to control consumption, alienated middle-class voters who had supported them in 1945, hence the Conservatives' narrow victory.

Consequently, there were gaps and inadequacies in the post-war welfare state and voluntary organisations soon campaigned for further expansion of state welfare. Among the critics was Richard Titmuss who after the war became the leading social policy academic in Britain, and in the 1950s an advisor to the Labour Party. He argued that the reformed social services were "developed by the professional, administrative and technical interests upon whose skills the services depend" rather than seeking to extend "knowledge of contemporary social needs" and how they could best be met.[9] He was profoundly hostile to the term "welfare state" which, he said, evoked "the image of paternalism", handing down

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[9] Titmuss, Richard. M. 1958. *Essays on the "Welfare State"*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

benefits to people rather than engaging them in the process and seeking to understand their lives.[10]

Titmuss shared this hostility with William Beveridge, despite his reputation as the "Father of the Welfare State", and Michael Young, then head of research for the Labour Party, later founder of the Consumers' Association among other contributions.[11] All three believed that too many of the new measures were "top down", treating people as dependents upon the state not as participants in creating a more cohesive, improved society, and were too distant from everyday lives and needs, from experiential expertise. When Titmuss became Britain's first Professor of Social Administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in 1950, he took over a department which mainly trained social workers. He conflicted with the female colleague in charge of this training because he believed it focused too much on teaching social workers to apply rules set by professional experts and too little on understanding the realities of peoples' lives. He stressed the need of social workers to acquire their own perceptions of their clients' needs, learning directly from their experiences.

Titmuss expressed his ideas in his first published collection of essays, *Essays on "The Welfare State"* (1958),[12] the inverted commas indicating his scepticism about the term. He reformed social work training to include experiential expertise though neither he nor contemporaries used the term. The approach became increasingly well known, including following the report of the Seebohm Committee on the reform of social services (1968)[13] which Titmuss advised, but practice was slow to change. The more Titmuss became involved with social services the more he criticised the distance of staff from the experiences of their clients. In 1966 he became deputy chair of the Supplementary Benefits Commission when it replaced the National Assistance Board as the supplier of means-tested benefits, intended to be more humane than its predecessor. Again, he

[10] Ibid.

[11] Harris, Jose. 1997. *William Beveridge. A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 452: Thane, Pat. 2005. Michael Young and Welfare. *Contemporary British History*, 19, 3: 293–299.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services. 1968. Home Office. London: HMSO.

found that staff applied professional "expert" rules when assessing applicants' needs rather than listening to their accounts of their conditions. He did his best to improve their training, with limited success in an understaffed organisation.

By the 1950s it was clear that it was not only women campaigners who believed that the experiences of ordinary people should play a key part in providing welfare that genuinely met their needs, as existing services too often did not. From the 1960s some public services gradually responded, as suggested in Charlotte Clements' chapter where she discusses the newly developing field of youth work. Further evidence of this is highlighted in Angela Davis' discussion of childminding and Chris Millard's discussion of psychiatric services. These concerns along with other gaps and weaknesses in the services led to the continuing expansion of voluntary action even while the welfare state was growing to its peak. Increasingly from the 1960s voluntary organisations, or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as they were gradually more often known, were no longer mainly "top-down" organisations of middle-class philanthropists. They were also associations of disadvantaged people demanding improved conditions to meet their needs, based on their collective personal experiences.

One example is the working-class Mothers in Action (MIA) formed in 1967 and discussed by Davidson in her chapter. Another is the Disablement Income Group (DIG) founded in 1965 by Megan du Boisson, who, suffering from the early stages of Multiple Sclerosis (MS), discovered that there were no state disability benefits available to married women like herself who were not in paid employment and outside the National Insurance system. DIG grew rapidly and attracted paid, trained workers as well as volunteers pioneering campaigning by disabled people for disabled people. Another woman suffering from MS founded a Scottish branch. DIG played an important part in persuading the Labour government to introduce the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970, which introduced a wider range of cash benefits for disabled people and their carers. Moreover, the Act required local authorities to register disabled people and publicise services for them. These organisations played an important advocacy role with and on behalf of disadvantaged groups, some also providing targeted services.[14]

[14] Evans, Tanya. 2009. Poverty. Stopping the Poor Getting Poorer. The Establishment and Professionalization of Poverty NGOs, 1945–95. In *NGOs in Contemporary Britain,* eds. Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton, James McKay, 147–163. Basingstoke: Palgrave,

As several of the chapters describe, the coming together of such groups increased their awareness of the extent and value of their collective experiential expertise, enabling them to beneficially assist one another to "fare well", when other sources of assistance were lacking. In their chapter Hannah Elizabeth discusses the underexplored experiences of the British community of women who have sex with women (WSW) as they supported and advised one another through the AIDS epidemic. Too often excluded from help by homophobic prejudice, this group shared and built upon their experiences, the knowledge they gained from them, and from such professional advice as they could find. This was done to protect each other and to help themselves, in the absence of much relevant scientific knowledge or of state services supportive of their needs.

Shelter was another long-lived, influential voluntary organisation founded in 1966. It grew out of growing awareness of the extent of homelessness which gained especial publicity from Ken Loach's highly successful film *Cathy Come Home* (1966), about a young couple falling into poverty and homelessness. This is just one example of the influence of modern technology on understandings of the experience of deprivation. Kate Bradley and Eve Colpus in their contributions to this volume describe how the increased accessibility of the telephone enabled new services to develop from the 1950s. These new helplines aimed to enable people at risk of suicide, victims of racism and many others to describe and discuss their problems with a sympathetic other by telephone at any point in the day or night. Moreover they allowed callers to receive supportive advice without the stress of meeting a stranger face to face during office hours. Awareness that too many people suffered painful experiences but felt unable to approach formal mainstream services or were unwilling to do so because they expected little help led individuals to establish telephone communications giving real support. This innovative practice was initiated by the Rev Chad Varah, founder of the Samaritans, described by Bradley, and Esther Rantzen, founder in 1986 of Childline to support troubled children, as described in this volume by Colpus.

In these and other ways the contributors to *Everyday Welfare* open up for debate neglected dimensions of the British welfare state. The case

Macmillan; Berridge, Virginia and Mold, Alex. 2011. Professionalisation, new social movements and voluntary action in the 1960s and 1970s. In *The Ages of Voluntarism. How we got to the BIG SOCIETY*, eds. Matthew Hilton and James McKay, 114–134. London: British Academy/OUP.

studies explored in this collection can be built upon in future to deepen our understanding of past and present, successful and unsuccessful, moves to ensure that people "fare well". Future commentators, authors, historians and policy specialists can now be alerted to the significance of and extent that campaigns for welfare reform are motivated and shaped by the experiential expertise of groups and individuals. They can consider how state services may improve or indeed undermine those personal everyday experiences. Moreover the collection is a reminder that they need to be aware of the failures Titmuss detected of officials to pay attention to users' accounts of their experiences. *Everyday Welfare* creates a unique opportunity for those who write and care about welfare and welfare policy to ask new questions and find new answers about "states of welfare" in modern Britain.

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