Gisela Hauss
Dagmar Schulte (eds.)

Amid Social Contradictions

Towards a History of Social Work in Europe

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Introduction

Social Work at the Interface of Social Policy, Profession, and Solidarity

Gisela Hauss

The essays collected here are the result of a successful collaboration between two European networks. The first, the "Network for Historical Studies on Gender and Social Work in Europe", had in 2001 envisaged a comparative investigation of the history of social work in Europe; to that end, it initiated a research project on the history of welfare in Eastern Europe, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, which was completed in 2005.[1] A working group of the second network, "Athena, Advanced Thematic Network in European Women's Studies", set out to develop a teaching module on the European history of social work.[2] Their shared interest in such a history led members of the two networks to gather historical insights in a single volume, dedicated to a new and comparative perspective. The present collection gives evidence to the hitherto unquestioned assumption that no social work existed in Eastern Europe before 1989 must be revised. Social work has its own specific roots, lines of development and configurations in both eastern and western Europe, albeit under different welfare arrangements. Presenting the distinct histories of social work across Europe, this collection opens up new perspectives for both higher education students and teaching faculty, as well as for gender respectively social work practitioners and researchers, leading towards a history of welfare in Europe.

This publication focuses on the nature of the so-called "dual", or rather "manifold", mandate of social work. On the one hand, social work was an attainment of the nation-state project and as such entrusted with securing the stability of as yet young nations; its professionalisation was directed towards and oriented to state social policy. On the other hand, there were endeavours to develop distinct subject-specialist standards at a professional and academic level to provide distinct access to social practice. Social work theorists and practitioners striving for professionalisation were beholden to their subjects and thus to a civil society not always aligned with state social policy.

1 Hering, Sabine/Waaldijk, Berteke: History of Social Work in Europe (1900–1960). Project based at the University of Siegen, completed 2005, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (see Hering/Waaldijk 2006 and Schilde/Schulte 2005).

2 Athena Working Group 2C: Women, Feminism and the History of Social Work. The present collection has benefited from funding made available by Switzerland's indirect participation in European projects, specifically through the Federal Department of Home Affairs (EDI) and the State Secretariat for Education and Research (SBF).

Social work existed and continues to exist in multifaceted force fields and must therefore acknowledge and consider its scope for development and dependencies in theory and practice (see Lorenz 2006).

The manifold mandate of social work - its inherent contradictoriness - is explored here along three thematic lines. The first six essays consider the *Professionalisation of Social Work*, focusing on professional training and curricular studies, and the expansion of welfare structures. They reveal the preconditions, advances, setbacks, movements and impediments involved in professionalisation. Their various perspectives suggest different underlying notions of professionalisation, such as an increasingly pedagogic conception of welfare, scientifically oriented basic and further training, and greater autonomy from state requirements. They show that the criteria for professionalisation can be differently weighted. The development from "amateur" to professional social work is described as a fluid transition and their interrelation emerges as manifoldly intertwined. Throughout these essays, however, professionalisation marks a change, enabling dissociation from what was, what followed, or what was lacking in other places or working areas.

The rich diversity of this volume also foregrounds unexpected correspondences, parallel developments, and transnational movements and discourses in the history of social work. The training facilities for welfare workers established in the early decades of the 20th century are conspicuous focal points in the European history of professionalisation. For instance, renowned female social workers[3] networked in the women's liberation movement and discussed approaches to qualified training at international conferences held in Paris (1928), Frankfurt (1933) and London (1938). The demand for an independent discipline, for social work as an autonomous profession, became an international discourse. The theoretical and practical preoccupation with social problems such as poverty, illness and population policy constituted a second transnational starting point for professionalising social work. Europe's social problems in the early 1900s called for responses from both the state and the voluntary sector. Irrespective of national differences, they challenged social work to tackle a range of issues, including poverty relief, the protection of women and children, as well as hygiene. The essays collected here demonstrate that a history of European social work involves both convergences and divergences. Writing such a history, then, demands simultaneous consideration of these convergences and divergences.

The second major theme of this collection is *Integration, Selection, and Exclusion in the Context of Social Welfare*. Such a perspective makes evident that societies - and hence their institutions, including social work - are always caught in the force field of integration and exclusion. While welfare benefits are used to support and integrate those living in need and on the margins of

3 Helena Radlinska (Poland), Ilse Arlt (Austria), Alice Salomon (Germany), Elizabeth MacAdam (United Kingdom).

society, they can quickly become means of selection and exclusion. Who should receive welfare, who is privileged and who not, and who decides about what with which consequences? Such questions establish orders that can restrict an individual's scope of action and exclude him or her from social roles. Within the context of social welfare, social work and social policy are intimately interwoven. Social work as a rule assumes a key function in assessing individuals and executing state welfare. It was precisely in these functions that other organisations replaced social work in some socialist societies. The essays collected in this section explore the ambivalent and contradictory nature of the concept of integration and of the social policy programs designed to safeguard equality, thus unearthing their intrinsic processes of selection and exclusion.

The third major theme, *Motherhood Policy and Child Protection*, examines the contradictions inherent in social work in an explosive and highly sensitive area, where individual privacy and integrity are particularly subject to negotiation. With the expansion of the nation-state in the first half of the 20th century, motherhood and childrearing were seen increasingly less as a private or family matter; instead, the state assumed ever greater control over the terms and conditions of birth and parenting. Family autonomy over pregnancy and birth were restricted through state intervention to uphold child protection and control the birth rate. Motherhood became a subject of debate particularly where its construal became suffused with family policy measures and population policy, eugenicist and nationalist thinking. Such developments involved the social professions in both totalitarian and democratic states in the debate over the autonomy of families, motherhood protection, and the assertion and implementation of population policy endeavours. Four essays in this section investigate how population and family policies are interlocked with maternal and infant welfare under quite different national welfare arrangements. The contributions to each of these themes are surveyed below.

Professionalisation between dependence and autonomy

Spanning the early 20th century to the 1960s and 1970s, Caroline Skehill's "Women in the History of Social Work in the Early to Mid-20th Century in the Republic of Ireland: An Exploration of the Care-Control Dilemma" opens the theoretical debate on approaches to professionalisation. The essay discusses select findings from Skehill's research on the history of social work in Ireland against the background of Foucault's "history of the present". She claims a "problematisation approach" to the professionalisation of social work and thus moves beyond merely progressive or critical histories. She interprets social work as complex and contradictory, beholden at once to

societal expectations and individual rights, as well as determined and influenced at the same time by subject-specialist discourses and specific contexts. Skehill argues that a "problematising historiography" can do justice to such complexity.

Vesna Leskosek's essay, "Power and Social Work under Socialism", applies concepts of power and control to examine the professionalisation of social work in Slovenia (1960-1980). Like Skehill, she explores the inherent dual orientation of social work towards individual and societal requirements. She further considers how the professionalisation and deprofessionalisation of state poverty relief and unemployment benefit illustrate these force fields in the case of Slovenia. In the 1970s, the Slovenian social welfare network, established and subsequently expanded by the socialist government, was increasingly dismantled. Control and decision-making powers over relief measures were transferred to local commissions, resulting in regionally organised assistance provided by workers for workers. Leskosek discusses the downside of such grass root efforts, originally intended to achieve greater efficacy. Access to assistance became more difficult. Social work thus lost its professional autonomy, which, as she suggests, led to new initiatives beyond state contracts and public control.

In "Tuberculosis Welfare in Basel: Institutionalising and Professionalising Social Work in the Context of Middle and Upper Class Charity (1911-1961)", Daniel Gredig explores a social problem that was prevalent across Europe from the second half of the 19th century well into the 20th, and called for the establishment of institutions providing assistance and prevention. He describes tuberculosis welfare in Basel, a medium-sized Swiss city, as an area of medicine in which middle class welfare initiatives extended their range of activities and influence long before state welfare institutions were expanded at a rather late stage in Switzerland. Working in the slipstream of qualified doctors, welfare workers had a relatively free hand to professionalise their work, unchallenged by state and municipal controls. Tuberculosis welfare in Basel thus emerges as a field of work in which the expertise of doctors, together with the interaction between state and private funding typical of Switzerland, could cushion the contradictions and ambivalences between state requirements and subject-specialist endeavours.

Vibeke Kingma adopts a different perspective on professionalisation in her examination of the interaction between independent and state funding in "Sources of Local Charity and Social Work in the Netherlands". Her essay distinguishes itself from others collected here in that it makes accessing historical sources its subject. It is based on a documentation project through which social security sources in the Netherlands were rendered accessible to researchers. The significance of local sources is discussed in comparison with national and district ones. The source material gathered, together with a comparison between two general works, dated 1899 and 1956 respectively, en-

ables the drawing of conclusions about the relationship between public and private welfare. As Kingma suggests, the observable rationalisation of welfare cannot be equated with an increase in public welfare at the expense of private funding. Growing professionalisation went hand in hand with a relatively constant relationship between public and private welfare, thus making local sources highly relevant.

In "Traditions of the Social Work Profession in Interwar Poland (1918-1939)" Izabela Szczepaniak-Wiecha examines social work training in Poland. She describes the development of curricular studies and training programs during the re-establishment of the Polish state in the interwar period, determined by the need to unite three different social policy and welfare traditions. Social work training began in Poland as early as 1907; eighteen years later, Helena Radlinska established social work as a university subject. Interdisciplinarity, a solid scientific grounding, an emphasis on methodological skills, the promotion of critical self-reflection and problem-solving skills afforded the fledgling profession a clear, scientific, yet also practical profile. Its intramural status, moreover, promised certain autonomy from political requirements.

Likewise, Alice Salomon, another active, influential woman, spearheaded efforts in Berlin to establish the first social work training program for women in Germany. In "Towards a History of Social Work Training in Germany - Discourses and Struggle for Power at the Turning Points", Elke Kruse divides the development of social work into four consecutive phases. She identifies four key interfaces that throw into particularly sharp relief the reciprocal influences of contemporary history, state interventions and the specific concerns of the trainees. While few impositions were made on the pioneer generation, initially allowing the program to develop fairly independently of state intervention, it was separated altogether from its claim to science during the Nazi dictatorship, restricting itself instead to qualifying trainees for auxiliary roles closely aligned with the prevailing ideology. The contradictions between state and subject-specialist demands were thus dissolved in favour of state totalitarianism.

Integration, selection, and exclusion in the context of social welfare

Dorottya Szikra's essay "Social Policy and Anti-Semitic Exclusion before and during World War II in Hungary. The case of the Productive Social Policy" analyses selection processes in Hungarian social policy in the context of "productive social policy", a state welfare program for poor farmers initiated in the mid-1920s. Whereas industrial workers were insured and thereby had social rights, farmers depended on poverty relief. From the outset, poverty aid thus divided those affected into two categories. The welfare program for

farmers was explicitly aimed at increasing the dwindling birth rate and enabling healthy poor families to help themselves. The drawbacks of the allegedly integrative initiative became particularly evident after 1940. Beneficiaries were no longer selected on the basis of need, but individuals and groups were systematically excluded from state welfare on account of their ethnicity and religion.

In "Building the 'Social State' in Hungary: The Hungarian Settlement Movement between the Two World Wars", Eszter Varsa, Dorottya Szikra and Borbála Juhász discuss welfare projects aimed at the lower social strata. Their essay investigates three different settlements, particularly their relationships with Hungary's right-wing politics at the time, marked increasingly by intersectional differentiation along the lines of "race", ethnicity, gender and class. What emerges from this discussion is an ambivalent image of social policy and social work. Whereas two conservative settlements adopted the prevailing political inequality, the third turned away from the powerful discourses and considered itself independent. The alternative concept of that agrarian settlement makes clear that at least a certain scope of action existed as regards state requirements and that a contradictory stance could be maintained.

In "Rhetoric and Practice of Modernisation: Soviet Social Policy, 1917-1930" Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova and Pavel Romanov focus on the incongruity between social policy discourse and practice, and the strained relationships between politics, economics, social policy, and actual practice. The authors examine the functions and effects of welfare state provision in three different phases. Whereas the first phase (1917-21) renders apparent the difference between rhetoric and practice, the second (1921-27) saw exacerbating mechanisms of exclusion affecting stigmatised groups while equal gender and work opportunities were much discussed. Under Stalin's rule, social policy in the third phase (1927-30) no longer heeded individual welfare rights, but placed itself utterly at the service of politics and economics. The essay impressively reveals how the initial expansion of welfare provision from 1917 to 1930 developed from the goal and demand for equal opportunities and individual protection to control serving political ends.

Kurt Schilde, in " 'Oppressed Today - the Winners of Tomorrow. The Ways and Works of International Red Aid': A Communist World Organisation in the Force Field between Governmental Oppression and Social Work for Political Prisoners", opens up a further new perspective. He focuses on an international communist organisation that considered itself the adversary of capitalist and subsequently fascist regimes. "Red Aid" dissociated itself explicitly from middle class charity, conceiving itself instead as proletarian aid against political repression. Schilde describes it as a network of communist party "welfare organisations" across the world. Even though its political self-conception sets it apart in this collection of essays, Red Aid's activities

nevertheless compare with those taken by charitable organisations: It granted legal protection, looked after political prisoners during and after imprisonment, supported the families affected, established children's homes and organised welfare provision. Amid the force field of political regimes, revolutionary forces, and civil society, this essay marks an attempt to reconsider the history of social work in an even more differentiated manner. Links exist to bourgeois, state and religious powers, as well as to resistance movements. Red Aid is merely one example of such links.

Motherhood policy and child protection

Meanwhile, motherhood was extolled in Switzerland amid nationalism and eugenics. In " 'Give the Country Good Mothers'. Normalising Motherhood in Welfare Discourse and Practice", Gisela Hauss and Béatrice Ziegler examine welfare practices on the basis of files and case reports of Swiss guardianship authorities (1920-50). While efforts closely aligned with the spreading influence of national and eugenic patterns of thinking to increase the birth rate of well-predisposed women took hold, the authorities imposed selection on women in the lower social strata. Such measures made it harder for poor women to fulfil their social role as mothers, or even deprieved them of this role. Judgements about women changed over time, influenced by a medicalisation of the social sphere and eugenic patterns of thinking, and increasingly became the precondition for harsh measures that ultimately prevented young women from assuming their socially recognised role. The essay shows that population policy interests and social work practice went hand in hand, often with disastrous outcomes for those concerned.

Gerhard Melinz's essay "In the Interest of Children: Modes of Intervention in Family Privacy in Austria (1914-45)" employs narrative interviews to delineate changing and different modes of youth welfare in rural and urban areas as well as in different periods: first, in Lower Austria; second, in 1920s "Red Vienna" amid burgeoning social reforms; third, in the pre-war period when social work was shaped by deprofessionalisation, privatisation, and re-Catholisation; and finally, during "Nazi Social Welfare" (1938-45), where the majority of social workers became increasingly involved in selection and exclusion processes. Welfare workers classified children and youths as "hereditarily deficient" or "unworthy of social support", although they knew that this would mean deportation and possible annihilation. In interpreting youth welfare as contradictory and at no point as forming a single, unified machinery that unquestioningly carried out state imperatives, Melinz attributes a certain scope of action and thus responsibility to welfare workers for what occurred in their sphere of influence.

In "Helping the Mother to be 'Soviet': The Medicalisation of Maternity and Nursery Development in Russia in the 1920-1930s", Yulia Gradskova studies the discourse of motherhood in various professional journals, wherein the medical and social assistance for mothers was embedded. Motherhood was valued high in the Soviet Union and the state's protection of mothers led to a range of facilities to safeguard this ideal (maternity hospitals, maternity clinics, nursery schools, special rest houses for pregnant women). Like industrial work, motherhood was considered a productive activity. Gradskova shows that while the ideal of motherhood persisted, amid increasing state centralisation under Stalin, it assumed a new dimension through being "sovietised" into "social motherhood". Stalin's government took repressive measures in the face of a decreasing birth rate: Induced abortions were forbidden and birth control tightened. The essay reveals further how this situation accentuated the ambivalence of control, selection, and assistance among professionals. State political interests seized hold of motherhood with a view to asserting "coercive Sovietisation" aimed at increasing the birth rate.

The last contribution to this book, Mirja Satka's "Investing in Future Citizens. Finnish Social Policies and Child Welfare Social Work after World War II" considers the post-war period. The essay shows that social policy as well as concepts of motherhood and childrearing remained interlinked after 1945. It analyses a study on childhood published in 1954 by Lauri Tarvainen, the chief civil servant in the field of child welfare at the Ministry of Social Affairs since 1952. The study based professional social work, which was undergoing reorientation at the time, on psychological knowledge. It focused on the family's internal emotional structure and maternal deprivation in infancy as the central issues and starting point of social work. The immense significance attributed to the mother-child relationship was considered an impediment to the expansion of family-external child care, casting female social workers with children into an ambivalent role. The essay situates the specific situation of the 1950s in the vacillating constructions of childhood in the 20th century, thus rendering apparent the dependence of gender and generational relations on politics and contemporary history. Ultimately, the essay makes clear that researching the history of social work must take into account such circumstances.

This book heralds an approach to a comparative history of social work in Europe. Although social work developed very differently in various countries, as the essays collected here demonstrate, a comparative perspective nevertheless allows for comprehensive statements about that history. The convergences and divergences delineated throughout this collection show that the social work profession underwent different regional and national developments, along neither simultaneous nor by any means straight lines towards greater professionalisation. Professionalisation intensified in various countries at different times and alternated with deprofessionalisation, subject to

prevailing social policy and political contexts. However, all contributions clearly illustrate a thrust towards greater professionalisation across Europe in the 1920s, borne by the women's liberation movement and manifest in the establishment of social work training centres and curricular programs in both eastern and western Europe. Considering the autonomy of social work from contemporary history, or its dependence upon it, throws light on the conspicuous interrelations between European discourses and social work concepts. Thus, the growing influence of population policy and eugenic discourses in 1930s and 1940s Europe changed the relationship between motherhood and state. Various essays here show how such reasoning found its way into social work in both eastern and western Europe. Finally, adopting a European perspective makes plain that a history of social work cannot be written without contradiction. Rather, it exists forever in the force field of integration and exclusion, remaining ambivalent throughout. Historicising the dual mandate typical of social work on a European scale calls for further differentiation. The force field inherent in this mandate becomes evident on different levels, differentiating and manifesting itself in many-faceted ambivalences and contradictions. The collection offered here sets out to examine critically these ambivalences. The historical perspective adopted is meant to provide contemporary social work with a critical potential, challenging it to position itself amid current European developments.

The editors are grateful to Prof. Dr. Sabine Hering, whose professional network has served this collection well. Many of the authors contributing to this volume have already been involved in the Volkswagen Foundation project mentioned at the outset. We would also like to thank Kathleen Weekley for her excellent co-editing of the essays and Michèle Spieler for her painstaking copy-editing.

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I Professionalisation between Dependence and Autonomy

Women in the History of Social Work in the Early to Mid-20th Century in the Republic of Ireland: An Exploration of the Care-Control Dilemma

Caroline Skehill

Introduction

Ireland, part of Britain until 1921, has a long history of colonialism, struggle for independence and a dominant nationalist politics. The Irish Free State was established in 1922 and became the Republic of Ireland in 1949. Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom - although now with greater autonomy - and is thus not included in this chapter.[1] In terms of the welfare state, it is generally accepted that a comprehensive statutory system emerged in the Republic of Ireland following the Health Act 1970 and prior to this, most social and personal services were provided by voluntary organisations, mostly of the Catholic Church, which had a symbiotic relationship with the state. Many authors have explored the complexities of Irish politics over this period but for this paper, it is sufficient to note that, during the period in question, social services for families mostly were provided by Catholic organisations, via institutional care for children, welfare services for poor families, and from the mid-20th century on, adoption services. Protestant, Quaker and non-denominational organisations also operated in this sphere but on a significantly lower level than the Catholic ones (Skehill 1999). The main provisions of the residual state came under the Poor Law Act 1834, under which care for the destitute was provided through workhouses and from 1862 provision was made, where possible, for the boarding out (fostering) of children in country homes. Families and children who availed of state services at this time can be called the "residuum", involving mostly destitute and or illegitimate children and their mothers. Those who received (limited) state assistance tended to be those who for personal or economic reasons did not have access to, or avail of, the dominant voluntary, non-statutory services.

In this context, it is important to note that professional social work in Ireland - i.e. practice that required specialist training in social sciences and or a

1 While Northern Ireland remains a separate jurisdiction and yet part of the UK, there are core connections between it and the Republic, not least of which is that until 1921, Irish history is all-of-Ireland history. The author is currently doing research to address this important gap in knowledge of all-Irish social work over time. In this chapter, "Ireland" refers to the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland.

specialist area of social work - can for the most part be traced as a separate and somewhat distinct practice from the religious voluntary sector of social care and social assistance from the beginning of the 20th century. In Ireland from the early to mid 20th century, family intervention was the most common social work practice, with unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children being central objects of intervention, support and surveillance. While recognising the other significant arenas wherein social work has evolved - most notably medical and psychiatric social work in Ireland - this paper concentrates on the practices of Irish social workers (all female practitioners up to the late 1960s/1970s)[2] in the field of child welfare. For the most part, this meant intervention with unmarried mothers, foster mothers, illegitimate and destitute children during the early to mid-20th century.

Currently, professional social work in Ireland is a recognised, consolidated and well-positioned profession in the statutory sphere, mostly notably in the area of child welfare and protection. Indeed, it is there that the practice of balancing between individual need and statutory function has been, arguably, most explicitly played out historically. Skehill (2004) provides an in-depth history of child welfare social work and Skehill (1999) a more generalist overview of the development of the profession (see also Skehill 2000 and 2003).

It is against this backdrop that I begin this chapter with two assumptions: First, that the history of social work shows us that it has always been a practice of "mediating in the social", balancing care and control functions simultaneously; and second, that the *nature* of this balance is complex and often contradictory, depending on both the context wherein social work is practiced *and* the lens through which we view it.

Part One begins with some commentary on this lens and makes the case for understanding social work as a practice of mediation in the social between the dualisms of care and control in terms of its "archaeological construction" and the conditions of possibility (its genealogy), as articulated by Michel Foucault. Part Two analyses some features of Irish social work as it developed in the first half of the 20th century, demonstrating the complexity of the relationships between *the nature of social work practices* and *their surrounding conditions of possibility*. In general, the chapter focuses on the specific question that underpins the theme of this book: how can a critical understanding of the history of professional social work illuminate and contribute to our understandings of its "dual mandate in the force field between service to the state and serving the client"?

2 There were 97 trained social workers by 1970 (cited in Skehill 1999: 156).

Part One: Underpinning assumptions

In the absence of time-travel, the inaccessibility of the "truth" of the past is a given, thus the first limitation is that it is only possible to illuminate findings from the data available to us. As we know from many historical studies, official histories and archives (which can dangerously be presented as the truth about a certain era), are themselves products of their own time, which means that for much of history, certain voices - e.g. of women and children - within these official sources are missing or lacking. This is certainly the case in standard histories of social work and related areas in Ireland, where a form of "recovery history" has been required in order to recognise and publicise the role played by certain important women in social work developments. This has involved actively searching for archives outside of official sources via oral history work, networking and investigative work. Through this process, a number of "new" truths about the role of women in constructing social work and social work-related services over the century have been brought into the public domain through the discovery of often dusty but usually meticulously organised records of key women's/social workers' organisations which until recently were held personally in homes, offices, under beds and so on.[3] What remains un-researched to date are the voices of the service users themselves, thus this work is limited to data relating to the practices of the professionals and the broader policy context within which they operated.

Any attempt to understand history will be influenced by the lens through which we view it. My research has been underpinned by an attempt to find, communicate and preserve evidence relating to the social and historical construction of social work over the past century in Ireland. My particular interest has been to explore the ways in which the profession developed as a "mediator in the social" balancing between the complex duality of care and control. I have found that the historical approach offered by Foucault - the study of archaeology (construction of discourses such as social work) and genealogy (the "conditions of possibility" that surround that strategy) referred to as a "history of the present" (Foucault 1970, 1972a, 1972b, 1977, 1984, 1988) - offers an effective way to deal with official and dominant discourses while also looking beyond this to find "minority" discourses and what might seem initially like insignificant data in unexpected places (Skehill 2003).

This approach is favoured for analysis of social work in Ireland for a number of reasons. First, rather than attempt to distinguish between discourses such as "culture" and "the social", a history from this approach involves a genealogical analysis that takes account of the range of discourses

3 A paper presented at the first meeting of the European History Network in Mainz 2001 highlighted this central challenge for discovering and representing the history of social work and women in the Republic of Ireland. See Skehill 2003.

which made the strategy of social work possible at certain moments in the past. David Garland's (1992) work has influenced my genealogical approach which has sought to understand the social, cultural, political and institutional discursive contexts of social work at any moment in time. This is important because of the complex context within which social workers and their philanthropic predecessors operated in Ireland from the early to mid 20th century. It was characterised by a dominant set of interrelated discourses of nationalism, Irishness and Catholicism during the period of struggle for Home Rule and a post-independence period of separation, struggle for detachment from discourses of colonialism and "all things British".[4]

Second, a genealogical approach recognises the validity of engaging critically with received histories in order to move beyond generalist, progressive histories and to open up the possibilities for considering a multitude of factors, connected and disconnected, in understanding a certain phenomena. As articulated by Dean (1994: 4), Foucault's "problematisation" approach to history seeks to "remain open to the dispersion of historical transformation, the rapid mutation of events, the multiciplicity of temporalities, the differential forms of timing and spacing of activities and the possibility of invasion or even reversal of historical pathways". A history of the present also recognises the interplay between dominant and minority discourses at any one time - in evaluating histories, the dominant discourses, which carry greatest "power", can be identified but alongside this, it is essential to investigate the hidden or marginal "micro-practices". Prior to my historical work, the history of Irish social work was confined to analyses of women and philanthropy in the 19th century[5] and generalist accounts of the professionalisation of social work, which tended to focus on developments in social work training up to the 1970s and establishment of social work by the newly-formed health boards. The research reported here shows how professional social work developed as a mostly *secular* or at least *non-denominational* strategy in a context where the *socio-spiritual* discourses of Catholicism, anti-proselytising and moralising according to religious norms and values represented the most powerful and dominant discourses of intervention in the social sphere.[6] To gauge the place of social work in this context, we must move beyond the grand narratives and seek the minority voices and practices of an emerging strategy which, since its inception, has focused on family interventions, mostly in the field of child care and protection. Such an analy-

4 The Irish struggle has been analysed at great length but for a competent introduction to the issues, see Lydon 1998.

5 See e.g. Luddy 1995 and Cullen/Luddy 1995. See Skehill 1999: 51–58 for an overview of the gendered nature of philanthropy in Ireland during the late 19th century.

6 For a comprehensive analysis of the nature of socio-spiritual discourses vis-à-vis secular and non-denominational discourses, see Skehill 2004; for an overview of the development of social work in Ireland from philanthropy to professional practices, identified in four distinct phases, see Skehill 1999, and Skehill 2000.

sis of micro-practices will, one hopes, provide insight into a formative period in the history of social work in Ireland and illuminate the complexity of the so-called "care-control" balance that is arguably one of the most enduring characteristics of the profession irrespective of its context.

Third, this approach to history requires us to work with the assumption that life and individuals were as complex in the past as they are in the present, thus we must resist generalisations such as Catholic/Church/Women. Instead, all we can do is identify majority views and search around them for minority practices of significance. Of importance for this analysis therefore is the study of practices of certain individuals and particular organisations, which have often gone unrecognised in other histories, and consideration of their impact on the construction of certain practices and perspectives influential in the construction of social work during the period in question.

In sum, the present approach enables us to consider the complex mosaic of relations between dominant political, social, institutional and cultural processes at any one moment, allowing more sophisticated analyses of relationships such as the "private-public" interface, which for professional women such as social workers, was often contradictory and contested. Such a framework presents the opportunity to explore three dimensions of practice which I hope will illuminate the nature and form of social work in terms of its relationship between individual and society. The chapter analyses the complex and often contradictory ways in which the exclusively female workforce[7] engaged with an almost exclusively female clientele of mothers and their children up to 1970. This analysis will identify commonalities with the emergence of social work as a gendered activity in other jurisdictions[8] and illuminate the particular nature and form of practices in Ireland. The analysis will also, however, be limited by the use of this approach. The reader cannot, for example, rely solely on this chapter for a general summary of the history of

7 To appreciate the gendered nature of philanthropy in Ireland, two key features of philanthropy in Ireland are of importance: a) most philanthropy was carried out by religious or lay women associated with a religious organisation and while evidence of independent female leadership can be found in the histories of some Protestant and Quaker activities, most philanthropy was delivered under the aegis of the Catholic Church where scope for independent female activity was largely constrained by a traditional Catholic hierarchy of male leadership who largely controlled the management and organisation of the services themselves (see e.g. Clear 1987, for a comprehensive overview of the relationship between male clergy and female religious and lay philanthropists. See also Luddy 1995, and Cullen/Luddy 1995. b) Professional social work emerged from practices of philanthropy that were mostly non-denominational and often secular and in these instances, it tended to be females who both delivered and led services, exclusively or in partnership with mixed gender committees. Given the genealogical conditions, however, the distinction was not always explicit (see Skehill 1999, 2004 for more detail).

8 For comprehensive analyses of histories of social work, social care and social assistance across eight Eastern European countries from 1900–1960, which represent the first attempt to illuminate the complex and essentially gendered nature of practices involving social intervention with individuals and families, see Schilde/Schulte 2005; and Hering/Waaldijk 2002; and the website "History of Social Work in Eastern Europe 1900–1960" at http://www.sweep.uni-siegen.de.

social work in Ireland. This leads to a possible risk of frustration whereby "snippets" and "insights" offered might not be fully understood without a more general mapping. The chapter is best read alongside the more detailed expositions referred to above and within the context of the core question raised in this book.

Part Two: Illuminating the nature and form of social work from the early to mid-20th century in Ireland.

We can consider the development of social work in Ireland from the early 1900s to 1973 using the frameworks for analysing history offered by Mitchell Dean (1994), progressive histories, critical histories and problematisation histories. The proposition is that the story of how the dual mandate of social work has been constructed in Ireland in this period can be told in terms of:

- The "progressive story" - the successful occupation of space in the social by professional social workers, between individual and society, within the context of a non-denominational state, dominant Catholic Church and patriarchal society.
- The "critical story" - the evidence that while occupying certain public spaces, professional social workers operated mostly in the realm of consensus politics and individualism, with little or no engagement with feminist ideologies or practices.
- The "problematisation story" - using the evidence to take on board the contradictions and complexities of mediating in the social to understand why social workers are thus positioned.

Proposition One: The progressive story: How did professional social work develop in the context of a non-interventionist state and a dominant Catholic Church?

One of the core strands of female "public" activity in Ireland is to be found in the realm of philanthropy and "social care" which, as evidenced in histories of social work in Britain and elsewhere, was closely aligned with the origins of professional social work. In Ireland, one of the most accepted legitimate public spaces for women during the 19th and early to mid-20th centuries was in the sphere of philanthropy - arguably the "natural" site of intervention between the public and the private. Indeed, in this period, a proliferation of philanthropic work was established and delivered by women from all religious backgrounds, though in different contexts depending on the denomina-