Learning From the Past To Shape the Future: Uncovering Social Work's Histories of Complicity and Resistance

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Accepted for publication in Ioakimidis, V., & Wyllie, A. (Eds.). (2023). Social Work's Histories of Complicity and Resistance. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.

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Introduction

This has been a difficult book to prepare. For uncovering the complex political history of social work requires more than archival research, historical analyses and engagement with international scholarship. Making sense of the profession's complex past has been an activity akin to "soul searching", an emotionally laborious process. At a time when forms of collective soul-searching have resulted in the very future of social work is being openly debated, we felt a sense of immediacy in approaching this task (Maylea 2021; Michael-Garrett 2021). Despite the fact that this book uncovers and interrogates aspects of social work's past that are disturbing, it is important to stress that our starting premise is that social work is a "profession worth fighting for". No doubt, like most institutions and professions, social work is a contested activity.

However, unlike many other institutions and professions, social work occupies a critical space between state policies and some of the most vulnerable people in our societies. It is exactly such proximity with people affected by inequality and poverty that has led social workers to witness horrendous state brutality. Many social workers, over the years and across all continents, have challenged violence and oppression and sought to radically transform the profession through their engagement with broader social movements (see Ferguson et al, 2018). Jones et al (2004) in their manifesto that provided the basis for the formation of the Social Work Action Network (SWAN) have suggested that:

> More than any other welfare state profession, social work seeks to understand the links between 'public issues' and 'private troubles' and seeks to address both. It is for this reason that many who hold power and influence in our society would be delighted to see a demoralised and defeated social work, a social work that is incapable of drawing attention to the miseries and difficulties which beset so many in our society. This alone makes social work worth fighting for *(Jones et al, 2004).*

Both editors had qualified as social workers prior to joining academia. Despite our commitment to social work values, the contradictory and contested social work theory and practice led us, early on in our careers, to question the perceived uniformity of the social work profession. Initially, as practitioners and later, as researchers, we were faced with the reality of a Janus-faced profession. On the one hand we witnessed truly inspiring, empowering, and emancipatory practice that kept fuelling our desire to be part of a "profession worth fighting for". On the other hand, we also witnessed the impact of oppressive and often alienating social work practices. The latter informed our decision to research the plight of communities and individuals who had suffered from state violence and injustice directly or indirectly facilitated by social work and social workers.

The initial challenge we faced while working on this book was addressing the following question: "if social work is a profession of two souls, which one are we to prioritise in this soul-searching exercise?" Histories of emancipatory social work really do offer glimpses into a global profession that places itself unconditionally on the side of the oppressed (Ferguson 2008; Lavalette,2011; Reisch and Andrews, 2002). At a time when much of social care is dominated by the tyranny of 'new technocracy' (Esmark, 2020; Gillingham, 2019), recalling and learning from histories of resistance and emancipation can provide our students and colleagues with crucial examples of hope, necessary for re-imagining social work alternatives. Conversely, reflecting on histories of complicity, disturbing and distressing as they might be, help us understand the complex socio-political context within which social work operates. Histories of oppression act as a constant reminder of the social catastrophes that can occur should social workers stop defending and prioritising fundamental human rights.

In this sense, it became evident that in order to be fully understood, the "two souls" of social work needed to be reviewed comparatively rather than in isolation. How are we to cherish the example of Polish social worker Irena Sendler, who confronted the Nazis and saved thousands of Jewish children in the notorious Warsaw Ghetto, if we do not simultaneously concede that the vast majority of German social workers at the time had actively supported Nazism? How can we celebrate the vast contributions of anti-racist social workers throughout the 20th century if we ignore the fact that mainstream social work, in several parts of the

world, had operated contentedly and obediently within systems of institutional racism and colonialism?

It is for these reasons that the current book explores both the histories of complicity and political resistance. Uncovering social work's troubled history not only creates the necessary space for social workers to learn from mistakes of the past, but, crucially, it also offers an opportunity for the profession to engage with a process of reconciliation and justice, supporting victims of structural violence and accounting for our profession's past in hope of its future. There are three main pillars in this process: a) mapping and recognising the typologies of institutional oppression, b) understanding the external and internal factors influencing social work's complicity and c) working towards justice, reconciliation, and change.

Mapping and recognising the typologies of institutional oppression

Categorising the types of institutional violence and oppression social work has been complicit in is a rather complex exercise as most (mal)practices naturally overlap with each other. Chapman and Withers (2019, p 7) have described such overlap as interlocking oppressions:

> Real power relations between helping professionals and service users come into being only as they interlock with both the specific stratifications and the violence opened up for that particular service user in receiving that particular service and the service provider's experiences of racism, colonialism, disablism, cisism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, sexism and ageism.

In fact, as this book presents, multiple dimensions ("stratifications") of the human experience have been targeted by the disciplinary state as unwelcome, problematic, and dangerous. However, we should also recognise that the common denominator in most of the histories of oppression categorically refers to the dimension of social class. For working class communities have been disproportionately targeted by coercive social services; an experience relentlessly exacerbated when additional "stratifications" such as race, disability and gender identity are also present. Such intersection between multiple human identities, experiences and social

roles makes the process of disentangling the different types of oppression rather challenging. For analytical purposes we have proposed a typology of oppressive social work practice, on the basis of its target population, ideological knowledgebase and specific practice.

A. Shaping the ideal-type family

Historically, one of the most fundamental and persistent preoccupations of state social services has been the shaping of the ideal-type family. The use of the term ideal-type does not refer to the Weberian concept of 'comparison via abstract idealisation'. In most contexts within which social work has operated as a state-sponsored profession, the ruling classes maintained a fairly concrete idea of how working-class families should behave and think. Indeed, the history of social work speaks to its evolution as an interclass profession, with its early founders and pioneers emanating from the middle class and focusing primarily on lower class populations (Kendall 1998; Strier 2009). In the industrial metropolises of modernity, the prescribed social roles for the working-class family were informed by the need to ensure the production-consumption binary and as such were primarily assigned on the basis of class and gender. The model of patriarchy that emerged from the industrial revolution dictated that men were the uncontested household bread winners, while women were bound by lifelong caring responsibilities. The children of the working-class family would invariably be seen at a state level, as either the future workforce or merely a burden- depending on the specific financial and socio-political conjecture. The combination and perpetuation of these roles would ensure a) the consolidation of family as a core production unit for capitalist economies, b) the dispensing of state caring responsibilities to the family level, and c) the reproduction of moralistic ideas about the function of families.

State social work has been a key activity in the process of ensuring that the family unit abides by the prescribed roles dictated by the capitalist economies, albeit never the most important or prominent. Any family or individual who would deviate from the prescribed moral and social roles would be seen as 'deviant', 'problematic', 'underclass' or, in the most recent addition to the lexicon of repression, 'troubled' (see Crossley, 2018).

Featherstone et al (2018, p 27), in recent work on the development of social model for child protection have suggested that:

> "(W)ith the exception of a few decades of the 20th century , history shows a strong tendency towards individual social engineering to produce model citizens., with parenting practices the primary focus of state attention".

It is exactly such relentless emphasis on parenting, or more precisely mothering, that gave substance to a social work toolkit historically characterised by moralism, individualisation and demonisation of the poor. The oppressive repertoire in the formative years of social work included moralistic casework, strict eligibility criteria and draconian family supervision.

Institutional oppression in social services, as manifested in the historical tension between social care and social control, has been the core characteristic of the welfare state in the era of modernity. This book, however, places particular emphasis on specific episodes in social work history, where the 'care and control' pendulum was firmly fixed towards the latter. Episodes that are characterised by unusual brutality and inhumanity. Elsewhere, we have described these episodes "social work's horrible" histories (Ioakimidis et al, 2020; Ferguson et al, 2020), for they represent some of the most repugnant examples of social work and social welfare practice.

For example, in the UK, a context where child protection policies have led to objectionable and contested practices, one would identify the history of forced child migration to Australia and Canada as a concrete case of extraordinary cruelty. The forced migration of children was a policy aimed of reducing the burden of residential care institutions, through the relocation of orphaned children to Australia and Canada. Between 1920 and 1970 more than 130,000 children were sent to former British colonies, where they lived:

> …a life of servitude and hard labour in foster homes. The majority came from deprived backgrounds and were already in some form of social or charitable care. Many ended up on remote farms, or in state-run orphanages and church-run institutions. They

were often separated from siblings and some were subjected to physical and sexual abuse (The Guardian, 2019)

Shockingly, according to the Independent Enquiry into the Commonwealth Immigration Scheme, many social workers and Local Authority Children's Officers viewed these practices as reasonable and appropriate at the time of migration. During roughly the same period, the Irish state also encouraged and funded the creation of a nexus of abusive institutions aiming at detaining, stigmatising, controlling and punishing working class women who had become pregnant outside of marriage. These institutions, known as mother-and-baby homes, became spaces of unbearable cruelty and abuse for well over 10,000 young mothers. According to the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes (2021) "around 9,000 children, one in seven of those born in the 18 institutions covered by the Commission's terms of reference, had died in them between 1922 and 1998, double the rate of infant mortality the general population". Tragically, many of these children were buried in unmarked graves.

The pattern of the ideal-type family creation and the subsequent demonisation of 'deviant' families had a different focus in countries where the state prioritised a more explicitly ideological agenda. Throughout the 20th century, the battle for winning young people's hearts and minds against the "communist threat", was particularly pronounced in Latin America and Southern Europe. Spain and Greece are key examples of the latter region. As the painful history of babies stolen from their families during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco continues to unfold in Spain, the role of social services has come under the spotlight. In October 2018, a former doctor was found guilty for his part in the scandal, but escaped punishment, and a recent documentary film, The Silence of Others, has shed fresh light on the ongoing struggle for justice by those affected. In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936-9) and the subsequent defeat of the republican forces, Franco created a sophisticated and extensive system aimed at the ideological and political control of the population. It was based on two main pillars (Ioakimidis, 2020). The first was the ruthless suppression of socialist ideology, mostly through the incarceration and coercion of left-wing citizens. The second was the creation of an ideal type of Spanish family.

In pursuit of both these goals, victims' associations estimate that up to 300,000 new-born babies of left-wing and working-class families were illegally removed from their parents and given for adoption to mostly middle-class nationalist families. This practice continued well into the 1970s. The sheer scale of what happened in Spain belies the direct involvement of several state institutions, and the complicity of thousands of individuals who worked for or alongside the state, including doctors, nurses and social workers. The Spanish Catholic Church held a key role in this vast surreptitious network and Franco's social services, the Auxilio Social, were directly implicated in the removals. As Martinez (2020, p 7) explains:

> The mission statement of the second school of social work in Spain, founded in Madrid at the beginning of the dictatorship, can serve to illustrate the ideological backlash in the field of social work brought about by the newly established political regime. According to this school's mission statement, social work [asistencia social] was 'a feminine area of study which aims [were] either a preparation of women for a service to society or an improvement of their education in order to become good and Christian mothers.

In Greece, social work was established as a professional activity at the beginning of the Civil War (1944-1949) with a key mission to contain families from rebel-controlled regions and establish, particularly within these regions, a child protection system through the physical segregation and eventual separation of families. Research on Greek social work suggests that the profession was so immersed in the politics of 'child-gathering' that nearly all social work practitioners in the 1950s had, in one way or another, been involved in the notorious 'child colonies' (Ioakimidis, 2011). Children from regions controlled by the Greek partisans were forcibly admitted to child protection institutions that resembled 19th-century workhouses. They were separated from their families and were subjected to systematic brainwashing and torture. Mando Dalianis, in her unique longitudinal study that includes interviews with affected children over a period of 30 years, provides evidence of the horrific nature of those institutions (Mazower and Dalianis, 2000). More recently, Gonda Van Steen (2021), in her ground-breaking study of the post-civil war illegal adoptions uncovered the silenced stories of the 3,200 Greek adoptees who were sent to the USA between 1949 and 1962. The study suggests that such cruel practice was indeed informed by a number of factors, including the

ideological tensions in post-civil war Greece, the destroyed infrastructure and economy, and the first large-scale 'business' of adoption to meet increasing demand from the USA.

Ideological tensions and the agenda of "supressing the threat of communism" alongside a the "criminalisation of poverty" also formed a key factor in the development of Latin American histories of violent and arbitrary child removal. In Chile, during Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, it is estimated that more than 15,000 Chilean babies and young children were arbitrarily offered for international adoption. In most cases, the records of these adoptions were destroyed.

According to the Chilean Adoptees Worldwide (2022):

> In Chile, this phenomenon is referred to as Illegal Adoptions and Child Trafficking and today the results of the official investigation have confirmed that the complete public system of Chile was involved. Doctors, nurses, midwives, hospitals, social workers, lawyers, judges, the child protecting authority and the civil registry, all have been having their involvement as per the findings of investigation team. But also nuns, priests, and even ambassadors and consuls have been identified of being involved

B. Racist and Colonial Social Services

The second broad category of institutionally and structurally oppressive Social Services is linked to the implementation of policies enabling colonialism and racial hierarchies. In effect, these policies were aimed toward social engineering, with the main objectives being to a) absolve early capitalism of criticisms pointing towards systemic failures responsible for the perpetuation of inequality b) articulate an individualised narrative that pathologized the poorest in society and c) justify the brutality of colonial expansion and racial hierarchy by presenting people of non-white European race as inferior, ultimately subhuman, and therefore, worthy of exploitation and cruel treatment.

The theorisation of these policies drew its foundational narratives from the grotesque pseudoscience of eugenics, which emerged from the rapid development of natural sciences

and engineering, upon which the industrial revolution based its impressive advances. This inspired, in the 19th century, a 'social science' that attempted to mimic and apply the laws of nature to human societies. Charles Darwin's theories of evolution through natural selection and Gregor Mendel's laws of inheritance were seen by the 19th century ruling classes as safe, appropriate and persuasive ways of explaining poverty, inequality and petit-crime. In 1883 Francis Galton coined the term "eugenics" and defined the discipline as "the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations either physically or mentally."(NIH 2022, np)

The idea of promoting 'human improvement' via the use of barbaric and invasive interventions gained widespread popularity among elites in Northern Europe and the US. Social work, a professional activity that in the early 20th century was desperately searching for a respectable 'scientific identity' was quick to subscribe to principles of social engineering. Social work practitioners in the UK and the US, up until the 1940s would routinely use eugenics as the dominant analytical tool for understanding, predicting and 'case working' working class families (Kennedy 2008; Starkey 2000; Welshman 1999).

In the US, eugenicists advocated for strict anti-immigration policies and supported racial segregation and discrimination in an effort to prevent the demographic mixing of white and non-white populations. Their alarmist and pseudo-scientific theories, particularly influential within the federal government, led to the adoption of catastrophic interventions such as the forced sterilisation of the 'feeble-minded" and the disproportionate targeting of Black and Latino families from welfare authorities. The legacy of institutional racism is still evident in the child protection system, where recent research has highlighted the continued overrepresentation of Black children subject to child welfare processes (Roberts, 2002).

In 2021, the US National Association of Social Workers (NASW) recognised the historical link between social work and theories of eugenics. Such recognition was part of the "Undoing Racism Through Social Work" report, a brave document that documented histories of racial oppression within and beyond social work, urging the profession to make amends with its troubled past. This report recognised that:

> In Many of the leading U.S. social scientists and social reformers of the day supported eugenics theories that were later adopted by the Nazis. In North Carolina, social workers participated in the involuntary sterilization of mostly women of color, women on welfare and in mental institutions. (NASW, 2021, p 3).

The report also explains how, up until the 1970s, social problems such as poverty, crime and unemployment were considered as largely 'hereditary' and endemic within the inferior underclasses. Therefore, the 'treatment of choice' would include practices aimed at preventing those communities from 'reproducing'. Forced sterilisation practices lasted until well into the 1970s, permanently affecting more than 7,600 working class and minority citizens (Boggs, 2014). In the state of North Carolina, sterilisations were recommended by social workers based on their 'diagnoses' of home environments and school performance (Boggs, 2014).

Principles of racial hierarchy were also utilised in the development of colonial social services in Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Latin America, where violent assimilation policies targeted First Nations and indigenous communities. Implementation of these polices saw the direct involvement of that state Social Services in actively suppressing indigenous cultures and forcibly extending settler values to native communities (Ioakimidis, 2020). Despite local and contextual variations in each country, the pattern of oppressive social services intervention seemed to broadly follow the following pattern:

- Marginalisation of non-western cultures
- Criminalisation of native/ indigenous communities
- Strict control of parenting with subsequent suppression of indigenous models of "community parenting" as deviant
- Disproportional child removal rates targeting native/ indigenous communities
- Suppression of indigenous languages and traditions
- Illegal adoptions
- Institutionalisation through abusive residential schools and care institutions

A characteristic example of violent assimilation is the infamous “Canada Scoops”, referring to the removal of several thousand children from aboriginal families under the guise of social care. According to The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, within a period of nearly 20 years (from the early 1960s until the late 1980s) the child welfare system:

> …removed Aboriginal children from their families, communities and cultures, and placed them in mainstream society. Child welfare workers removed Aboriginal children from their families and communities because they felt the best homes for the children were not Aboriginal homes. The ideal home would instil the values and lifestyles with which the child welfare workers themselves were familiar: white, middle-class homes in white, middle-class neighbourhoods. Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal parents and families were deemed to be ‘unfit.’ As a result, between 1971 and 1981 alone, over 3,400 Aboriginal children were shipped away to adoptive parents in other societies, and sometimes in other countries. (The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, 1999)

In many respects, the “Canada Scoops” brings echoes of the Aboriginal Protection Act (1869) that paved the way for the creation of the “stolen generations” in Australia. For a period spanning almost 100 years, colonial social services implemented a policy and practice of methodically removing indigenous children from their families in order to ‘uproot’ whole communities and forcibly assimilate them into western culture. Most of these children were placed in residential schools, whose racist and colonial nature has been responsible for inflicting trauma at both collective and individual levels.

In the African continent, the South African case provides one of the most brutal manifestations of divisive colonial social services. The origins of social services, and consequently social work in South Africa, can be traced back to principles of Social Darwinism so integral to the establishment and domination of apartheid, one of the most extreme expressions of colonial authority. These principles enshrined in the Apartheid system of structural and institutional segregation dictated that social services were strictly provided along racial lines; they were therefore inherently unequal, hierarchal, and ultimately de-humanising. South African social work stands indicted with culpability for its origins in and

complicity with colonialism and Apartheid in its ideologies, knowledge base, discourse and practice (Harms-Smith, 2014). The historical tension between social work complicity in institutional oppression and social work resistance against Apartheid, was reflected on the actual split between the white Social Work Association of South Africa (Swasa) and the South African Black Social Workers Association (Sabswa).

Undoubtedly, the most extensive, horrific and murderous case of social engineering in social services is that of Nazi Germany. As Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis (2020) have highlighted, the German 'Fuersorgerinnen' ('social carers'), the precursors of the more anglicised post-war 'social workers', were immersed into eugenics discourse and uncritically accepted its principles, believing that this was more about 'public health' improvement rather than an aggressive form of social engineering. In this context, the role of social workers was two-fold. On the one hand, social work contributed to the process of nurturing the ideal-type Aryan family, through ideological indoctrination and "education". On the other hand, social work practitioners were directly involved in the process of recording and identifying the racially inferior and "unworthy citizens" (i.e. people with disabilities, mental health challenges, minority communities etc). Identification of the "unworthy" would lead to their eventual detention and in many cases their extermination. The implicit or explicit involvement of social workers with policies and ideologies that culminated to the Holocaust has been, by some distance, the single most horrendous chapter of social work's global history.

One of the most notable examples of high-profile social work collaboration with the Nazi regime can be traced to the "Reich Centre for Combating Juvenile Crime" which was created in 1939. The Centre was headed by a social work 'leader', Friederike Wieking, who promoted pseudo-scientific research on the social Darwinist idea of "crime heredity" (Wildt, 2002). Part of Wieking's activity saw the development of concentration camps for those the Nazis described and classified as deviant youth. These camps provided spaces for unethical experiments, arbitrary detention, torture and execution of young people. Such was the recognition of Friederike Wieking's work within the Nazi leadership that she was eventually promoted to government director in the Reich Criminal Police Headquarter.

C. Institutionalisation, incarceration and securitisation

The previous two categories of our, admittedly broad and overlapping, typology focused on the ideology, pseudo-science and theoretical conceptualisations underpinning the legacies of oppressive social work. The third major category encapsulates the range of specific practices that were utilised by social work practitioners, among others, in order to materially implement the policies and ideologies of the repressive welfare state. Key dimensions of the practical implementation of those policies were formed through the use of power and coercion. Justification for the use of oppressive techniques aimed at the discipline and control of communities social workers were expected to work with, was based on the existence of "problematic" or "troubled" individuals that needed to be 'contained' rather than supported.

Although, in recent years there has been a welcome expansion of literature exploring aspects of social work's past and its politically contradictory nature (Ioakimidis and Trimikliniotis, 2020; Reisch, 2002; Chapman and Withers, 2019), there is still a persistent myth surrounding the evolution of the social work profession. This myth relates to the idea that social work is an unconditionally and inherently benevolent activity. The idea that the social worker is an individual who has consciously selected the ethical career of a humanitarian and therefore automatically qualifies as compassionate and humanitarian practitioner, is as old as the profession itself. Such a conceptualisation of social work has been magnified by the often neutrally presented narrative of its religious and philanthropic origins. One needs to remember that in the formative years of social work in the UK, the public discourse never interrogated the theoretical and philosophical base of the profession, as it was considered unquestionably benevolent. Instead, the emphasis was on the gradual transformation of social workers' 'good intents' into a structured professional activity. Jones (1983, p 81) in his seminal study of the origins of state social work in the UK reminds us that:

> One of the principal objectives of the COS [Charity Organisations Society] founding members was to transform philanthropy from an unskilled 'duty' of the rich to an expert and professional activity undertaken only by those who were prepared by social theory and appropriate methods

According to Jones (1983) the emergence of a social work that followed the 'scientific' methodology would be seen by some people, even within the middle classes, as less caring and direct than almsgiving. However, the expectation of the COS, in these formative years, would be that professionalisation of social work would counter-balance the potential risks of creating a more assertive workforce. After all, this narrative held, despite a change in its methods of practice, the newly formed profession would remain characterised by 'the liberal and compassionate middle-class values' (Jones, 1983). Similar Chapman and Withers (2019) in their study about the violent history of benevolence argue that there is a need for social work to disrupt the profession's "shared genealogy of morality".

In many respects, the idea of an unconditionally benevolent and humane profession, immune from the hard-heartedness of other activities, informs more recent ideas of care as "tough love" directed towards unruly and chaotic service users. The fundamental principle of this rather simplistic and self-serving approach is based on the following logic: social work is an ethical and caring profession; service users are often manipulative; therefore, practice that can be seen as controlling and oppressive is a result of the service users' uncooperativeness rather than the profession's lack of compassion.

The prioritisation of social control over social care, on many occasions, has taken the material form of institutionalisation and containment. The most persistent and characteristic examples of this repressive institutionalisation can be found in the field of mental health (Ferguson, 2017). Oppressive approaches to mental health included the creation of abusive total institutions and the use of coercive and violent medicalised therapies (such us the use of lobotomy and confinement). Carr and Taggart (2017, np), while exploring the case for a Truth and Reconciliation process in psychiatry, focused on the two pillars upon which power and oppression in mental health services operate:

> **Power** in psychiatry and mental health services is **structural** as well as **interpersonal**. Although operating in the same harmful system, staff nonetheless remained in a position of power within those structures. They had a choice to work where they did, were not subject to containment and compulsion, and could leave the hospital at the

> end of the working day. They also had a professional (and human) duty to speak out and act if they witnessed abuse within services, as the best staff did and still do.

As we highlight in this book, practitioner complicity in oppressive practices usually operates under the guise of technocratic neutrality. It is exactly such pseudo-neutrality that has allowed the development of a sophisticated "coercive toolkit" entwined with the logic of institutionalisation; the surveillance and securitisation approach. Although, securitisation and surveillance were proclaimed as tools primarily destined for the criminal justice system, it is their historical - and more recently unprecedented proliferation - in the welfare state that deserves greater attention of the social work literature. Historical examples of strict surveillance of people social services worked with have already been described in the previous section where we placed a particular emphasis on colonial residential schools and Nazi social services. However, the securitised social services, borrowing expertise from the military, were not uncommon in the post-second world war Europe. As Mazower and Dalianis (2000) explain the development of post-war child protection services ("children villages") in Greece:

> Conditions in these villages in many ways resembled prison life and there was the same rigid sense of a division between 'inside' and 'outside' worlds separated usually by walls or guarded barbed-wire fences. They were run on quasi-military lines, often by former officers, who employed corporal punishment and made the children wear uniforms. Letters were censored, just like in prison, and the atmosphere was generally unfriendly. As in prison, there were no clocks or calendars, and the day was regulated by the ringing of a bell. The children were marched everywhere, even on occasional visits to the world outside, to the cinema or local park. Most teachers were indifferent or cruel to their charges, though there were some exceptions. (Mazower and Dalianis, 2000, p 99)

Italian scholar Giorgio Agamben (2005) provided us with an important conceptualization of the oppressive nature of practices embedded in securitization of services when he referred to the rise of the "state of exception"; a suspension of the juridical order which is exploited by the state in order to curb liberties and justify oppressive measures in the name of a nominal

or actual threat to national security and order. It is exactly this state of "legalized lawlessness" that we have been witnessing in many countries that pledge to fight the so-called enemy within.

More recently, social workers have been appointed in detention centres for asylum seekers, institutions of ambiguous legality have emerged across Europe, often in direct conflict with international conventions for the rights of refugees. In a similar vein, social and community workers in the United Kingdom and France have been recruited in order to 'reach out' to Muslim communities and identify potential cases of extremism and radicalization of young people (Stanley et al 2018). Within the context of rising Islamophobia and a steady erosion of civil liberties, the proposed collaboration of social workers with intelligence services and law enforcement institutions requires careful interrogation. Indeed, as several of the histories explored within this volume illustrate, uncritical collaboration has the potential to oppress, victimize and stigmatize entire communities (Ioakimidis, 2015, Finch and McKendrick, 2019). There is a risk that social workers involved in such projects could be expected to police and control vulnerable communities instead of working with them in order promote social justice and equality. Certainly, the social work answer to the disproportional levels of inequality, poverty and marginalization of minority communities cannot be further policing and manipulation.

Lessons from our troubled past; Time for a Social Work Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Process.

Exploring the past, and most importantly, making amends with its troubled aspects can be a complex, painful and unsettling journey for social work. It is our contention that, despite the challenges embedded in this process, dealing with contested historical legacies, is a journey that social work cannot escape. Proclaimed inevitabilities aside, social work should not try to consciously avoid this journey either. For its contradictory legacies of harm are still present and visible in modern social work theory and practice, albeit largely unspoken. In fact, the most fundamental reason for engaging with the profession's troubled past is not related to the profession itself, whether that be its institutions or practitioners. Rather, it is critical because outside the microcosm of inter and intra professional social work debates, there are

whole generations of communities that have been harmed, abused, traumatised, and ostracized by social services. Recognizing the profession's role in such collective and intergeneration harm is a step towards empathizing with, and actively supporting, the healing and liberation of these communities.

The question of "how to make amends with our past" is a relatively recent one for social work. Social work literature has been slow in responding to broader debates within societies in transition. In most cases, the social work discussion about historical wrong-doings had taken the form of a delayed, reluctant and diluted reaction to broad public debates. Although there are no publicly articulated arguments presenting the case against engagement with its past injustices, let alone apologise for them, our involvement in international social work fora and professional associations suggests that anecdotally, there is considerable opposition to making amends with social work's past.

The three main arguments typically posited against a meaningful engagement with the past can be presented as follows:

A) Social work is not an activity with significant professional or academic status. Uncovering past legacies will only serve to undermine our professional status even further.
B) A possible social work apology for past wrongdoings will open the "pandora's box" and will make the professional associations and employers vulnerable to litigation. After all, why should contemporary social work, pay for the wrongdoings of past generations
C) Apologies and apologetics are performative and do not lead to meaningful change

It is crucial that all these arguments are addressed, irrespective of whether they are rooted in genuine and legitimate concerns. The first argument appears to be the most popular within professional associations and societies of social work, and draws its narrative from the more technocratic tradition of social work. The rationale here is that social work has traditionally been a 'lower status- lower power' professional activity, at least in comparison to other professions with whom social workers often work on similar territory (psychiatrists, lawyers

etc). Opening up difficult debates, this argument sustains, can create enormous pressures in terms of professional recognition and public trust, and ultimately does more harm than good.

However, this argument adopts several theoretical misconceptions which reflect an uncritical understanding of the context of power imbalance within which social workers operate. Most problematically this argument positions the institution and reputation of social work as an institution, rather than the rights and dignity of people it purportedly serves. It also follows the miscalculated fallacy of the political neutrality. Social workers, despite the pressures they face as professionals and employees, still retain significantly and disproportionately more power than the individuals and communities they work with. Performing "damage limitation" activities while there are well evidenced, and widely articulated cases of intergenerational harm infected by social services is also short-sighted. Ultimately, such baggage will have the opposite outcome in relation to the status and reputation of social work by deteriorating relationships and breaching trust with communities. Social work should draw its legitimacy and recognition from the communities it works with, rather than the artificially prescribed hierarchies it operates within. Whenever social work fails to recognize its political dimension and emphasizes instead the technical aspects of the profession, it is exposed to the risk of becoming irrelevant or - at worst - oppressive. Therefore, hiding past legacies can be seen as sign of insecurity and social irrelevance that can only lead to the repetition of the profession's troubled past. Elsewhere, we have described the example of Greek social workers during the dictatorship of the 1970s, who, motivated by an agenda of professional recognition, enthusiastically made themselves available to the authoritarian regime as experts in disciplining the politically unruly youth (Ioakimidis et al 2020; Ioakimidis, 2011). The military regime, in return, offered this much-desired recognition by promoting social workers to the higher level of senior civil servants. However, this short-sighted quest for recognition meant that social work in the country, despite its temporary promotion within state hierarchies, remained socially irrelevant for decades beyond the dictatorship.

The second argument, that contemporary social work has no moral or ethical responsibility for the profession's past, argument has been shaped by a mixture of liberal individualism and self-serving managerial 'pragmatism'. The former element is reminiscent of narratives suggesting that contemporary generations should not "pay for" the wrong-doings of their

predecessors. It echoes, for example, the intervention made by Republican Congressman Henry Hyne, who, during a discussion about reparations in response to the legacies of slavery, proclaimed "*I never owned a slave. I never oppressed anybody. I don't know that I should have to pay for someone who did, generations before I was born*". (cited in Sandel, 2010)

Ideas of moral individualism, as the basis of denying the continuity of past legacies, can appeal to supporters of the philosophical concept of 'autonomy'. However, when applying them, in a rather selective manner, to contemporary debates about past wrong-doings, they not hold to scrutiny. In fact, they do a disservice to the liberal thesis on autonomy insofar as they ignore intergenerational and historical aspects that shape and determine individual experiences. Even for the staunchest apologist of this logic, it is difficult to sustain that the white European population, whether in North America, South Africa or Australia have, notwithstanding class inequalities, has not benefited from centuries of racial hierarchy. The impact of 'dividends' created in a system based on racial exploitation and colonialism, although not shared equally across the white population in these countries, are undeniably reflected in the persistence of epidemiological, financial, political, and educational advantages relate to those of indigenous and ethnic minority communities.

Social work that operated in racially segregated societies was part of a range of professions that established their professional status, and the benefits that derived from this, through the implementation of repressive and institutionally racist policies. As this book highlights, case study after case study, such levels of complicity were not limited to a small number of "bad apples". Rather, engagement with oppressive practice became, given the appropriate conditions and concessions, the accepted norm of social work practice in the given context. Acknowledging the intergenerational continuities not only counters ideas of moral individualism but also addresses the latter part of this argument linked to fears of litigation. Social work as a predominantly state profession cannot be immune from discussions about the judicial aspects of past wrong doings. Instead of engaging with this discussion from a position of insecurity and reluctance, social work can (and should) proactively create alliances with survivors' movements demanding collective reparation for victims. Not only would supporting survivors' movements provide much needed space for reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust, it would also demonstrate that social workers, despite the limitations

imposed by their proximity to the state, remain committed to human rights and social justice, and prioritise the people they work with.

The third argument adopts a superficially 'radical' approach. Proponents of the "apology as meaningless performativity" response to calls for a reckoning of the professions past tend to recognize the significance and lasting impact of past wrong doings. They also subscribe to a largely helpful analysis that points towards the structural dimensions of oppressive social services. As mentioned above in this chapter, histories of oppression within social work are critically linked to the contradictory nature of social services within colonial and capitalist societies. Promoting ruling class interpretations around deviance, poverty and ill-health had a concrete material basis. These interpretations functioned as conceptualizations supporting the perpetuation of class inequalities and class exploitation. Unless the root causes of historical injustices remain unchallenged , social work will not be able to bring about change within and beyond the profession. Poulantzas, in his classic response to Miliband in their debate about the role of the state in capitalist societies, very eloquently suggested that '*as is always the case when a scientific theory is lacking, bourgeois conceptions of the State and of political power have pre-empted the terrain of political theory almost unchallenged'* (1969, p 69).

This approach, valuable and valid as it is, remains incomplete when it does not engage with the interpersonal dimensions of structural oppression. It is exactly such dichotomy between the structural and the interpersonal that it is bridged through engagement with the survivors' movements and the subsequent recognition and acknowledgement of the profession's past wrongdoings. It is an elitist form of ideological purity to ignore the voices of survivors calling for an apology as a crucial step towards justice and healing. Survivors' movements worldwide have demonstrated the importance of state (and consequently state services) apologies for leading to a "ripple effect" that can be triggered through official acknowledgement of past wrong doings.

Dr Fejo King (2011), an aboriginal woman, social worker and active member of the Australian Association of Social Workers, assumed a leading role in The Stolen Generations Alliance in

Australia and campaigned tirelessly for a federal apology. Highlighting the symbolic and material importance of an institutional apology, King noted:

> The Stolen Generations Alliance believed an apology would make a difference to all Australians, not just to Indigenous Australia. (...) The ripple effect of the Apology as it was reported across Australia and around the world has been phenomenal and is what is lifted up to the light and held as the showpiece of this presentation. The international response was unexpected. The Stolen Generations Alliance received emails from countries torn apart by war in Africa, and Eastern Nations who told that they gathered in their communities and together watched the Apology. (2011, p 137).

Beyond the debate surrounding whether a reckoning with social work's past is needed or warranted is the question of what form and process this would take. Historically, processes of acknowledging and making amends for historical injustice and wrongdoing have reflected three distinct political and philosophical approaches: a) retributive, b) restorative, and c) emphasis on forgetting.

Retributive approaches to dealing with past injustices emphasize the importance of delivering peace and reconciliation through a process of identifying and persecuting individuals found to have committed serious crimes against humanity. In their most common form, retributive approaches require the set-up of criminal tribunals responsible for delivering justice in relation to the specific political-geographical jurisdiction within which crimes were committed. An early and rather incomplete example of retributive justice in transitional societies was the Nuremberg trial that brought leaders of the Nazi regime to justice. More contemporarily, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) provides a characteristic case of retributive justice in transitional societies.

In terms of social work responses to past injustices, countries that followed a retributive approach to making amends with the past include Chile, Germany, and Argentina. In Argentina, social workers were persecuted for crimes against humanity committed during the dictatorship, while in Germany the only recorded persecution of a Nazi social worker during the de-nazification process was Friederike Wieking, discussed earlier in this chapter.

Restorative approaches to making amends with past wrong doings follow considerably different philosophical and political principles to those of the retributive strand. Restorative approaches are influenced by First Nation and indigenous philosophies of collective healing. The emphasis here is not on persecution and punishment of specific individuals but rather on recognition of the collective harm inflicted and subsequent encouragement of healing through dialogue. Gilbert and Settles (2007, p 7) describe how:

> Restorative justice views crime as a harm to individuals, their neighbourhoods, the surrounding community, and even the offender. Crimes produce injuries that must be repaired by those who caused the injury. In this sense, crimes are more than a violation of law, and justice is more than punishment of the guilty. Restorative justice strives to promote healing through structured communication processes among victims, offenders, community representatives and government officials. It also strives to accomplish these goals in a manner that promotes peace and order for the community, vindication for the victim, and recompense for the offender. Under this restorative perspective, justice is not based on punishment inflicted but the extent to which harms have been repaired and future harms prevented.

The most iconic and representative example of restorative justice in response to state inflicted violence is the creation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa. In this country, social workers were involved in discussions about past harms and contributed to the national truth-seeking dialogue, although their contribution was not necessarily social work-specific. National Social Work Associations in Canada and Australia also attempted to follow a restorative and reconciliatory approach, through recognition of social services' complicity in acts of cultural genocide and support for the development of action plans towards making amends. In the case of the US National Association, recognition of past wrongdoing inflicted by institutionally racist social services also followed restorative approaches accompanied by a more assertive political agenda demanding structural change and expecting social workers to fully engage with anti-racist practices.

Other countries have opted to avoid discussions about the past altogether and are characterised by an emphasis on forgetting. In Spain, transition to democracy was characterised by a marked unwillingness of the State to investigate institutional violence during Franco's regime. Such unwillingness was formalised through the Pact of Forgetting (Pacto del Olvido) which ensured the suppression of the judicial, academic or even political discussions with regards to holding individuals responsible for past violations of Human Rights. Consequently, only recently have discussions about illegal adoptions and the role of Church and Social Work reluctantly resurfaced in the public domain. Greece seems to have followed a relatively similar path. Although the leaders of the 1967-1974 military junta were imprisoned, a rather disorganised "national reconciliation" approach meant the records referring to violations of human rights were destroyed and questions about suppression of civil liberties during the latter half of the 20th century were not openly addressed by the state.

The following table provides a summary of the best-known social work responses to making amends with historical injustices that involves social services:

Country	**Description of documented Social Work/ Social Services oppressive practices**	**State Responses**	**Social Work Responses**
Australia	Colonial social services, forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, violent institutionalisation (Stolen Generations)	Apology from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2008)	'Acknowledgment' Statement. (2004) Creation of "Reconciliation Action Plan" (2013-) **Restorative Approach**
Argentina	State sponsored illegal adoptions targeting left wing and working-class families	Truth and Justice Commission Restoration of Democracy (1983)	Social Work Association contributes to the "Never Again" movement for Memory, Truth and Justice. Removal of complicit practitioners from the Association's register.

		Conviction of perpetrators for crimes against humanity committed in the context of the international crime of genocide	**Retributive Approach**
Canada	Colonial social services, forced removal of indigenous children, family separations, violent institutionalisation	Prime Minister Harper offered full apology (2008) Pope Francis apologised for the Roman Catholic Church's involvement in abusive Canadian boarding schools. (2022)	National Association Apology for contributing to the injustices imposed on Indigenous peoples. (2019) Commitment to Reconciliation Statement **Restorative Approach**
Chile	State sponsored illegal adoptions targeting left wing and working-class families	Transition to democracy. (1990) National Committee of Truth and Reconciliation.	Restoration of the democratically elected professional Association. **Restorative with a focus on Structural Change**
Germany	Holocaust, promotion of the Aryan Family, segregation of "racially inferior families"	Nuremberg Trial. Denazification. Reparations	Recognition of social work's complicity (through events and publications supported by the Association). No formal acknowledgement or apology **Mixed Retributive and Restorative approach**
Greece	"Child Gathering", detention of children from rebel	No state recognition of	No official response from Hellenic Association of Social Workers

	influenced regions, state sponsored illegal adoptions.	the illegal adoptions. Child protection records are inaccessible or destroyed	**Emphasis on Forgetting**
Aotearoa (New Zealand)	Substantial history of removal of Māori children from their whānau (extended families) and placement in pākehā (European) foster homes or institutions. 1986, Pūao-te-Āta-tū report exposed institutional racism within the then Department of Social Welfare. More recent exposure of substantial history of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children in care, particularly in both state and church institutions.	Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act, 1989, strongly influenced by Pūao-te-Āta-tū report. Implemented innovative process of Family Group Conferences, derived from models of whānau decision making, and provision for "iwi (tribal) authorities to undertake statutory care and protection functions. However these were not adequately resourced. 2018, Labour-led Government implemented Royal Commission of Inquiry into abuse in care between 1950-1999, initial	1993 Publication of then New Zealand Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics and Code of Bicultural Practice. 1999 name of association changed to Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers. 2008 Code of Ethics and Code of Bicultural Practice combined into one bilingual (English and Te Reo Māori) Code of Ethics document. "Responsibility for a Te Tiriti o Waitangi based society" first ethical principle. ANZASW statement of support for this inquiry.

		focus on state care subsequently expanded to faith-based care. Hearings ongoing. February 2021 Labour-led Government commissioned Ministerial Advisory Board to report, Te Kahu Aroha, released September 2021, recommending reform to more Māori and community led response.	ANZASW statement that the association "fully supports and stands behind the findings and recommendations of Te Kahu Aroha – the Oranga Tamariki Ministerial Advisory Board report. We are saddened and hurt by the continued systemic failings of the Government and previous leadership of Oranga Tamariki that has been harmful to tamariki and whānau. We are pleased to hear the Government has accepted the recommendations and we now call on them to ensure plentiful resourcing and funding to enable the full implementation of the aspirational changes. The voice and value of social work has been systematically stripped out of Oranga Tamariki by both the Government and leadership and we fully embrace the finding that social work must return to the core of Oranga Tamariki."
	2019 – significant media exposure to increased incidence of Māori children being uplifted from their mothers at birth by Oranga Tamariki (statutory care and protection agency), as a result of a "subsequent children" amendment to legislation enacted by previous neoliberal government.		
Spain	State sponsored illegal adoptions targeting left-wing and working-class families	Pact of Forgetting outlaws research on or public scrutiny of abuses committed under Franco	No official response from Spanish Association of Social Workers **Emphasis on Forgetting**
South Africa	Apartheid-racially segregated social services	Release of Nelson Mandela (1990).	Creation of a unified, non-racial "National Association of Social Workers, South Africa." (2007)

		First multi-racial elections (1994) Establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation. (Restorative justice approach)	Historical split between the white Social Work Association of South Africa (Swasa) and the South African Black Social Workers Association (Sabswa) **Restorative approach**
UK	Commonwealth Child Migration Scheme	Prime Minister Gordon Brown apologised and announced £6m fund for victims of (2010)	The historical involvement of social workers has not been adequately documented. The scheme's abusive nature was revealed by a social worker (Margaret Humphreys) whose contribution has been celebrated by BASW and IFSW **Moderate Restorative approach**
USA	Institutional racism, disproportionate rates of child removal from non-white families, institutionalisation, forced sterilisation	President Bill Clinton apologised for the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment (1997) The U.S. House of Representatives apologised for slavery and the impact of the Jim Crow Laws. (2008)	NASW apologised for racist practices in US social Work (2021). "Undoing Racism report" proposes Racial Justice Priorities and Action Plan. **Restorative with an emphasis on Structural Change**

Table 1: *Official social work responses to the profession's histories of complicity and oppression*

This chapter presented the typologies of social work's complicity in historical injustices. It also addressed, in a comparative manner, official social work responses to the profession's troubled past. Our intention has been to reinvigorate the rather anaemic global debate about

social work's responses to past legacies and we have tried to do so by adopting a critical epistemological perspective that sides with communities that have suffered harm at the hand of social work.

Despite the fact that some official social work associations have made efforts towards recognising past injustices, there is still a need for a more structured and nuanced approach to recognising past harms. This should be based on a meaningful and genuine paradigm shift within global social work. Notwithstanding the symbolic reparatory nature of a social work apology, a more material and substantial approach to historical justice should also be forward-looking and political, prioritising structural change within social services. The 'liberal peace' approach that emphasises a western conception of liberal democracy and marketisation is not fit for purpose in the context of social services. On the one hand 'liberal peace's' Eurocentric nature suppresses grassroots knowledges and collective participation, perpetuating historical mistakes of state orchestrated assimilation. On the other hand, the principles of marketisation and profit making are incompatible with social care. It is for these reasons that we invite the global social work community to develop an approach focusing on the following main actions:

- Symbolic reparations and recognition of past injustices through an official social work apology. Such apology needs to be expressed by global social work organisations, encouraging and legitimising national associations that are, for various reasons, reluctant or unwilling to deal with past legacies.
- Establish a global Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission for social work and social services. The emphasis should be on dialogue, truth-seeking, restorative justice and collective reparations.
- Support arguments for collective material reparations. These reparations may have a different outlook in different countries. For example, Irish movements of survivors prioritise access to historical records as a reparatory gesture while movements of Greek adoptees who were sent to the US, demand Greek citizenship.
- Create meaningful and genuine alliances with survivors' movements and communities that have suffered from past injustices.

- Work with broader social movements and trade unions towards countering marketisation and technocratic principles in social services.
- Collectively reimagine an inclusive, social justice based social work

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