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The Future of Social Work
What Next for Social Policy?

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To the memory of Jean Packman, colleague, partner and inspiration

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abstract Social work faces an uncertain future in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. Aside from the social care sector, which tragically witnessed disproportionate deaths in several countries, the profession was little involved at the height of the crisis. In the economic recession which followed it, social workers are sure to be engaged with those most adversely affected. Its record in such situations is ambiguous.

Keywords Poverty • Charity • Managerialism • Coercion • Risk

Historically, there have been few activities or occupations whose identity and status has been more disputed than social work's. Originally (in the UK, the USA and much of Europe) a nineteenth-century development of the charitable sector, and concerned with poverty and alcoholism, it evolved during and after the Second World War into a branch of welfare states, particularly services for disadvantaged children and families, people with mental illnesses and disabilities, and infirm elderly citizens. But there have always been minorities of dissidents among practitioners, at every stage of this evolution—conservatives, especially in the USA, who insisted on narrow forms of professionalism, suitable only for private practice, and radicals, especially in the UK, who denounced the deployment of state power by employees of public agencies (Statham, 1978).

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During the final two decades of the twentieth century, the tide had been out on social work's status and its wider social influence in the UK—not in the dramatic way which occurred in the 1970s, when notorious scandals about child abuse were all over the media, or even in the brief horror of the murder of the toddler Jamie Bulger in 1998, but more in its anonymity. Public services had settled into the kind of bureaucracy and managerialism which characterised Third Way organisations under Tony Blair and Bill Clinton (Jordan with Jordan, 2000), and training courses had come to follow a prescribed curriculum to prepare students for roles of implementing official guidelines in often impersonal processes of decision-making.

This was more obvious in the UK than in other European Union countries. The voluntary sector had revived from near extinction in the 1950s, but still employed many fewer qualified practitioners than the public services. In Europe, the functions empowered by federal and local legislation were carried out in bodies managed by religious, charitable or communal organisations, but funded from taxation. This model was largely adopted by the post-communist countries, where some of the traditions from the Austro-Hungarian Empire were recalled and revived, though with more influence from Anglophone literature (especially in Hungary).

But suddenly now, with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic—on economies, as much as on the health and well-being of populations—there is a crisis of poverty and mental health as well as long-term illness and physical fragility. What has been immediately evident in the UK has been the mobilisation of voluntary action by a broad section of ordinary citizens (many not previously involved in organisations, and without any structure of management or leadership), to check out and help those most at risk, and make sure that any who need treatment or follow-up have appropriate access to public and voluntary sector services. All this has happened while an inept and tardy government has largely failed to mobilise a timely and proportional official response to the emergency.

This book will be concerned with the implications of all these events—the duration and aftermath of the pandemic itself, the longer-term needs of the victims who survive it, but (above all) the ways in which economies and societies are being transformed by these developments—for the future of our world. What seems certain is that we shall not simply return to the previous structures and cultures, or ways of relating to each other.

After all, throughout the years since 2008, governments have continuously told their citizens (especially in the UK and USA) that we cannot

afford the public services that the great majority of them clearly needed, and which the ever-increasing inequality among them obviously required (Bywaters et al., 2014a, 2014b). It was constantly and confidently asserted by politicians, who were re-elected with increasingly austere programmes, that these cuts were needed to sustain even the stagnating living standards of all but an ever-richer elite. Yet now suddenly it became not just possible, but urgently essential, to spend vastly more on benefits and services for almost all of the population, just to avoid a disastrous recession after an expensive crisis in health.

Meanwhile, one important indicator of the morale and resilience of the citizenry—subjective well-being (SWB), statistics on which, including national, regional, local, occupational, health-status and income-related averages, had been published since the early 1970s (Easterlin, 1974)—had been stagnating throughout the subsequent decades (Layard, 2005). It seemed as if, since this corresponded precisely with the increased inequality in the incomes of populations, that more equal societies almost always did better (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). The likelihood that people would become unhappier as well as poorer and less healthy in the aftermath of the pandemic seemed to require further analysis, both to clarify its implications for social relations generally, and for social policies in particular.

In the new century, social work continued to be under critical scrutiny, but this focused more on its bureaucratic structures and procedures, established in the Third Way period of reforms in public services. The death of Baby Peter Connelly in Haringey, North London, in 2007, led to the imprisonment of his mother and her boyfriend, but the subsequent inquiry into the involvement of all the main agencies was highly critical. It concluded that he had been failed by doctors, lawyers and the police as well as by social workers. He had been visited 60 times by the authorities in eight months, but his home was found to have been in a deplorable state of neglect, and he had 50 injuries. The practice of the agencies was judged to have been 'incompetent' (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 26 October 2010).

This was one of the factors which contributed to the setting up of the Review of Child Protection, under the leadership of Professor Eileen Munro, which reported in 2011. It asked the question: 'what helps professionals make the best judgements they can to protect a vulnerable child?' One of the first conclusions in the final report was that the system was 'over-bureaucratised and focused on compliance'; performance indicators and targets were given 'undue importance'. The system was 'defensive' and gave too little attention to the development of expertise in working

directly with children and families. Preventive services should be developed, concerned with relationships, not records of compliance. 'When the bureaucratic aspects of work become too dominant, the heart of the work is lost' (Department of Education: Munro Review, p. 10).

There have been several other proposals for new directions in social work practice, such as Lena Dominelli's (2012, 2019) account of 'Green Social Work', linked with practice in response to environmental disasters and climate change, and Terry Bamford's (2015) history of how social work became 'an unloved profession', and lost its position as a driver of social reform. All these indicated awareness of the negative consequences of excessive bureaucratisation, leading to failures in adapting to new challenges as well as tragedies in specific cases.

So social work cannot rely on an established professional role, like those of medicine, education or the law, to emerge into the post-pandemic world. It must be ready to demonstrate its relevance to the new situation, updating its identity and practice in relation to changes in society's structures, needs and relationships.

Yet it appears to be far from ready to face this challenge. Having been cast in the role of a fairly technical, not to say routine, version of 'professional' practice, taking orders from courts over child protection, and from managers and accountants over the needs of elderly and disabled people, it seems unprepared to be proactive in making a contribution either during the pandemic or after it.

For instance, how can it help the myriad unofficial, ad hoc, local mobilisations of ordinary people in response to the pandemic to retain their motivation, to establish a constructive and co-operative relationship with the public authorities in every district, and to evolve in line with the needs of communities? How can it avoid the twin hazards of demeaning this heroic effort, and patronising its lack of a 'proper' basis in professional training, or trying to control or direct it, in ways that drain its inspiration, its rooted character in local communities, and its informal but effective organisation?

A Paradoxical Situation

It should be an opportunity for social work to emerge from a shadowy and ambiguous role as a servant of the legal power of the courts (in cases involving children and families) and of managers and bureaucrats (for older and disabled people), to play a role akin to its emergence during and

immediately after the Second World War. Then the disruptions of bombed cities and displaced populations called for a service to support people disrupted or bereaved during the conflict, and enable them to sustain family and community relationships (Monckton, 1945, Packman, 1975, ch. 1).

In the present crisis, the media constantly bear witness to the strain on relationships of processes like social isolation, the closure of schools and workplaces, and the infections and deaths in care homes. The similarities with the wartime disruptions are striking: if social workers of various kinds then made themselves useful (for example, finding placements for children being evacuated from cities to the country, or helping homeless victims of the Blitz) surely they can do so in the chaos following the pandemic?

Yet they seem to have been remarkable by their absence from the public debates, or analyses of the ways services have dealt with the crisis. How are we to understand this, in terms of the recent history of the profession, and how its practitioners and their managers now see their roles?

One answer to these questions is that there is nothing new for social workers in the present circumstances or the requirement to meet the needs of those most adversely affected by them. In so far as our society in the UK has experienced increasing inequality and social injustice for at least four decades, social work has been adapting to these tasks, and struggling with the moral and political issues they raise, throughout this period (Jordan, 1990). Such issues arise in a very high proportion of encounters with both individuals and communities, and service users often challenge them to account for themselves, their policies and their powers, in terms of ethical and political values.

To understand the structural situation of social work in relation to these wider issues, we need to look back to the reforms of public services initiated by Tony Blair from the beginning of his first term in office. Together with his intellectual guru, Anthony Giddens (1998), Blair (1998) set out the rationale for these measures, under the overall banner of the 'Third Way'. They chose to define this platform for New Labour policies in terms of a list of 'values'—'equality' (the equal *moral* worth of all human beings); 'opportunity' (as distinct from *outcome*); 'autonomy' (personal freedom, choice, political liberty); 'community' (reciprocity, mutual obligation, social inclusion); and democracy (devolution of power, empowerment).

But these much proclaimed 'values' gave few clues as to the actual policy programme of New Labour, which had many elements of continuity with the privatisations and work-enforcement measures of the Thatcher and Major governments. If anything, there was a more demanding version

of the imposition of the 'obligations of citizenship' (Mead, 1986), which had become the dominant ideology in the USA, with poor people required to prove the genuineness of their needs, their willingness to change their behaviour, and above all their keenness to accept low-paid service wok, including part-time and occasional jobs (Waddan, 1997). New Labour drew up a 'New Social Contract' (DSS, 1998), based on the concept of 'tough love' (Phillips, 1993), an idea which was originally expressed in relation to the murder of a child, but borrowed from the USA in the moral panic which ensued.

'Tough love' implied that service providers (notably social workers) should expect more from service users, should test their eligibility for services more strictly, activate them for work more vigorously, and follow them up more rigorously in their efforts to be independent. Instead of passivity and need, the new rationale emphasised participation and achievement, stressing the significance of family and education in the acquisition of norms and self-discipline, the demand for reciprocal effort in exchange for the receipt of welfare benefits and services, a tough response to crime, drug use, truancy and 'disorder', as well as the expectation of moral obligations and standards for all, and support only for those in 'genuine need' (Driver & Martell, 1997).

New Labour brought forward a series of 'New Deals' for increased labour-market participation and the mobilisation of communities to 'combat social exclusion'. At a cost of £3.2 billion (raised from taxes on windfall profits by the privatised utilities), they offered subsidies to employers, education and training to participants, on condition of co-operation with the compliance conditions for the receipt of welfare benefits.

There were New Deals for young unemployed people (aged 18 to 24) who had been on jobseekers' allowances for at least six months; for long-term unemployed people out of work for over two years; for lone parents (with compulsory interviews for work and training 'advice'); for people with long-term illnesses and disabilities; for partners of unemployed people; and for deprived communities (Jordan with Jordan, 2000, p. 27).

But the distinctive feature of most of these programmes was the way in which they were to be implemented. Although the policy documents which announced their roll-out never used the terms 'social work' or 'social worker', they all described detailed programmes for training new staff, for adopting new face-to-face approaches to practice, and for being more demanding and authoritative in their relationships with their clienteles. On the one hand, they aimed at reducing social exclusion, and

especially the isolation of impoverished communities on the margins of cities (Power, 1997)—such as were found all over the USA (Wilson, 1989), Europe (Paugam, 1998) and Australia (Thorpe, 1997) as well as the UK. But on the other, they aimed to do so by means of a kind of personalised pressure, brought to bear on poor people, and 'outsiders' more generally, in one-to-one and group encounters.

The fact that the social work profession was scarcely mentioned in these documents was highly significant. New Labour had a deep distrust of local authorities, seen as repositories of the most unreconstructed 'Old Labour' values and policies. The Blair government sought to by-pass them by setting up new agencies and projects, and training specific employees for each of these. Above all, it saw the new managerialism (Clarke et al., 1994) influencing policy (Audit Commission, 1997, Department of Health, 1998, NSPCC, 1999) as the key to implementing policies for raising expectations of the 'passive' populations of ghettos and marginal estates.

Although these policies were characteristic of the first wave of New Labour reforms, their effects have retained a lasting influence, on the practices and cultures of social work as well as its organisation. Gone were the days when practitioners could hold meetings to discuss the relative merits of liberation and social control in their work, or alliances with other public service workers to take political action or organise strikes—when teams could debate radical measures to address injustices in their approach to practice (Jordan, 1990). The new managers would hold their feet to the fire, and evaluate their performance according to criteria derived from statistics on outcomes and costs.

In particular, whereas the Major government had largely ignored the widespread phenomena of working for cash while claiming benefits (Jordan et al., 1992), minor drug-dealing and hustling, all of which characterised the cultures of 'estates on the edge', the Blair administration was committed to being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime', by educating, disciplining and controlling these unruly elements in society (Lister, 1998). If any community consisted of members committed to *restrained competition* for the sake of co-operation (Jordan, 1996, ch. 2), then it also requires members to *contribute* to shared systems for the common good. According to the logic of workfare coercion, if poor and marginal people cannot afford to contribute much through taxes, and if these in turn make their earnings too small for subsistence, then they should be compelled to work, if necessary through the threat of sanctions (reductions in) or disqualifications for benefits.

The UK government proudly claimed that employment (much of it part-time) had increased by 648,000 between May 1997 and September 1999; it also initiated the recruitment of job advisers with 'street credibility' among young black people (*The Guardian*, 26 November 1999) and a call centre to ring long-term claimants about vacancies (30 December 1999). These practices were still in operation in job centres all over the UK 20 years later (Channel 4 TV, *Inside the Universal Credit system*, November 2019).

Taken together, all these new initiatives constituted a culture shift in UK public services, characteristic of an era of 'Neo-Liberalism' (Harvey, 2005). The emphasis was on *toughness* and *enforcement*; it was reflected in the new titles given to various agencies—the Benefits Agency Fraud Investigation Service and the Home Office Immigration Service Enforcement Directorate. Along with the Child Support Agency, the Social Exclusion Unit and the Employment Zones, policies on youth and adult criminal justice, child protection and mental health all took on aspects of this ethos of toughness and enforcement, with slogans borrowed from American sports, such as 'Three Strikes and You're Out', or American police culture ('zero tolerance'). Pressure, persuasion and confrontation became central to implementation and practice (Jordan with Jordan, 2000, pp. 28–9).

It would be surprising if some of this did not influence social work practice, especially in child protection, where the scandals of the 1970s had left deep scars. The whole structure of case conferences and inter-agency reviews was designed to allow decisive interventions, with far less emphasis on social workers' role in supporting parenting and broadening children's experience to enhance well-being.

Indeed, this reflected what was happening in other fields, such as health and social care. Systems proliferate, as business-orientated managers and bureaucrats design ways to define and measure practice, breaking it down into procedures, and requiring practitioners to record and quantify these. As Bregman (2020, pp. 272–8) points out, this distracts from the central point of health and social care, and devalues the skills in relationships which are essential for their best traditions.

Social work became permeated by 'risk assessments', aiming to calculate the danger of harm to a child; if this was less than threatening, there was unlikely to be much in the way of support on offer for the family. If the purpose of social work is defined as being 'to enhance people's well-being' (International Federation of Social Workers, 2001, p. 1), then this

was a glaring omission. The well-being to be enhanced was very substantially derived from relationships in family and neighbourhood, and social work's origins lay in trying to improve these, and their feelings about themselves (Jordan, 2007).

The original ethos of the social work services created at the birth of the welfare state in the UK, immediately after the Second World War, was to replace the stigmatising and insensitive interventions which had characterised the Poor Law regime up to that time. Already in the USA, President F.D. Roosevelt had broken the strong political resistance to state intervention with his Civil Works Administration in 1933. This created employment and income for previously excluded people, and reduced inequality more than any other programme in the whole twentieth century. Its front-line staff were social workers (BBC Radio 4, *The New Deal: A Story of Our Time*, presented by Mary-Beth Hamilton, 9 October 2020).

In the UK, the turning point for children's services was the Second World War, and specially the death of Denis O'Neill (Monckton, 1945, Packman, 1975), which exposed the dreadful inadequacies of Poor Law provision for children. He had been removed from his parents and placed on a remote farm, where he and his brother were brutally treated by their foster father, vividly described in the latter's memoir (O'Neill, 1992). The new local authority services set up in 1948 were to be informed by a fresh spirit of empathy and responsibility, and staffed by social workers trained on new courses.

But over the following years, social workers found it difficult to *share* the care of children with their parents and wider kin; for instance, requests for short-term voluntary admissions were treated with suspicion. In a research study, Jean Packman (1986) had found that social workers regarded such requests as indications of parental inadequacy, were reluctant to act on them, and preferred compulsory removals, even when voluntary arrangements had been requested. When families were asked what help they had been given by social workers, one third replied 'bugger all' (p. 185).

In the case of elderly and disabled people, and those with mental illnesses and disabilities, social work had not been drawn into significantly more controlling and enforcement roles, but it had become very largely concerned with financial assessments and decisions about situations in which domiciliary services would no longer suffice to maintain 'independent' life outside residential care.

Since the early 1990s, this whole sector in the UK had become the province of the private sector (Jordan, 2020b, pp. 36–7); financial enterprises had used investments in the building of care homes, or supplying the care itself, as ways of diversifying portfolios that included property in the Caribbean or the Far East. With the coronavirus pandemic, residents of care homes became the most vulnerable citizens in the UK—and in Spain (Jordan, 2020b, pp. 36–7); social workers did not feature in media accounts of either of these tragedies, because most residents made their own decisions about admission, and paid their own fees in full until they had run down their savings to the point where they qualified for means-tested local authority support.

For all these reasons, social work was largely invisible to commentators on the impact of the pandemic; it was seen as at best a means of protecting vulnerable children through interventions sanctioned by the courts, and carrying out financial assessments on older and disabled people. Perhaps the nearest to relevance for the new emergency were those social workers involved in mental health services, since the rates of stress and overt mental illness had increased with lock down of households and the risks to partners and children of violent individuals.

By contrast, the staff of care homes, many of whom were infected during their efforts to protect and look after residents, were hailed as heroes. This was entirely justified, though their heroism was forced on them, in many cases by government delays in the introduction of social isolation policies, or the lack of protective equipment, or the discharge of elderly patients from hospitals without proper checks on their coronavirus infection status.

But social work had an opportunity to lead the mutual assistance and community organisation which arose in response to the pandemic, and seems to have missed it. The implications of this, and the appropriate response to it, will be among the topics for this book.

Well-being and Social Value

The other opportunity for social work to redeem itself was missed in the UK over ten years earlier. The sudden impact of research into people's self-assessed well-being (SWB) based on surveys of their satisfaction with various aspects of their lives, from income and material possessions to health, close relationships, associations, community and citizenship, raised important issues for public policy (Layard, 2005).

Managers, administrators and politicians turned to its findings, and organised responses to them; yet these studies had relatively little influence on social work practice or its institutional structure.

It should have been a golden opportunity for practitioners, since it highlighted the importance of relationships—the very stuff of social work—for well-being, revealing that these were more significant (in positive and negative ways) than income in determining levels of life satisfaction. It was a chance to identify the weaknesses in the economic model which had dominated politics—the pursuit of growth through markets in everything, including human services—and to re-evaluate the contribution of the quality of people's intimate, associational and civic relations (Jordan, 2007, 2008).

This was demonstrably as important for statutory duties such as protecting vulnerable children or compulsorily admitting people with severe symptoms of mental illness to hospital as it was for counselling and care. The whole point of using social workers in decisions around such extreme situations of risk and vulnerability was that they brought to such tasks an understanding of and sensitivity to the emotional and social bonds that underlay the relationships in question, including the violent and exploitative ones.

If individual brutal wrongdoers or psychotically deluded patients could be identified, and then punished or treated, by scientific processes, without causing all kinds of disruptions and difficulties in their families, membership groups and communities, social work would have little role in such situations. It is because such individuals almost always return eventually to society, if not into those particular relationships, and because those left outside those institutions will retain some kinds of bonds with them, that it is important for social workers to play a part.

In spite of the marginalisation of social work from mainstream policy debates in recent years, it has been a force in some of the processes of revaluing marginalised people in the not-too-distant past. For instance, in the period between the late 1970s and the first decade of this century, people with physical and mental disabilities were enabled to leave institutional care, where many had endured unnecessarily narrow and confined lives, and become full members of their societies (Oliver, 1990, Oliver and Sapey 2006; Department of Health 2005). Against this, of course, there have also been developments in employment policies, which have led staff of the Department of Work and Pensions to coerce

some of them into work which was unsuitable (Channel 4 TV, *Inside Universal Credit*, November 2019). Social workers have been engaged in financial assessments of many of them, to determine how much they can pay for their 'care packages', to enable them to live 'independently'.

Ahead of this, the government had enabled several local authorities to pioneer a project for adults with learning difficulties called the 'In Control Scheme' (Jordan, 2007, p. 68). With help from families and friends, the service users opened bank accounts, into which the scheme made payments, to be used for informal as well as formal support, under a plan managed by the service user, a broker, or a family carer. They were assisted by guidance, expressed in clear, informal language, listing 12 steps on the way to drawing up a plan and implementing it. While this was all constructive and well-prepared, it also illustrated how social value and respect as citizens had to be 'earned' by people with these disabilities, seen to be ways demonstrating their capacity for *choice* (Redley & Weinburg, 2006).

Indeed, the organisational setting of social work under market-minded regimes of the past four decades have often made it difficult to engage in long-term dependencies such as disabilities, and to give value and support to family members, friends, neighbours and associates who offer equally long-term support to these citizens. They are also required to help create cultures and contexts in which all of these can make sense of their societies and experience them in positive ways. This includes anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory approaches, which are sensitive to gender and ethnic differences, creating a diversity of views, and dialogues between groups about their social interactions.

As issues of immigration, social cohesion, crime and security came to dominate politics in the past decade (Jordan, 2020b), polarising different groups and communities, social work's contribution to the big issues in societies has diminished. Globalisation also creates a scale for problems and policies for their solution which is well beyond its scope. But ultimately all these influence and are reflected in relationships, and social work is required to address them in their manifestations at this micro level.

Furthermore, the focus on social well-being and social value allows social workers to make common cause with other professions in combatting prejudice and extremism. Inspectors of nurseries, schools and care homes have all adopted standards which reflect the agenda for improved relationships (Fraser, 2005, Jaeckle, 2006, p. 2).

Conclusions

In his excellent study of the history of social work, Steve Rogowski (2020) charts 'the rise and fall of the profession'. He traces its ascent to a 'high point' in the 1970s, and its subsequent domination by the 'new public management' school of organisation, in the face of rising poverty, exclusion and social problems. He concludes that none of this has supplied a suitable environment for the best in social work practice, but that a better future is by no means impossible.

This book attempts to focus on that future, and the forces that will influence it. The coronavirus pandemic has shifted governments and the constituent institutions of societies from what seemed to be their inevitable course (as a result of the momentum from a dominant globalisation process, based on the industrial might of China and the inequality and coercion in Western service economies) to a period of great uncertainty, and the involvement of the state in the economy and society to an extent not seen since the Second World War. This is both exciting and perilous; all the first signs seem to point towards greater authoritarianism in politics, and less equality and freedom for citizens. But at the same time there have been social movements and institutional innovations which make alternative scenarios feasible.

Nation states have been forced to redistribute income on a vast scale to their populations, to sustain household incomes and demand for goods and services, but in the UK it has emerged that the largest outlays have been to support businesses. In October, the National Audit Office reported that of £37 billion distributed as loans under the 'Bounceback Scheme' in 1.2 million such loans, between £15 billion and £26 billion was fraudulently claimed. In the haste to avoid business failures, few checks were made, and a criminal network had set up many bogus companies very quickly to defraud the system—ultimately the taxpayers (BBC Radio 4, Today, 7 October 2020). In an economy in which microbusinesses had become prevalent, such a massive fraud had become possible to set up in very short time.

In other words, the UK government had borrowed enormous sums (the largest in peace time, in real terms), but it had distributed them in ways which were of limited benefit to ordinary citizens. Although these, such as 'furlough' payments, have been made to individuals according to a variety of principles, some very convoluted, the obvious one (an unconditional, Universal Basic Income [UBI] for all citizens) has been

strenuously avoided (in name at least) because it sounded too radical, despite the experiments in several countries showing its feasibility (see Chap. 7).

In the UK especially, the widely discredited Universal Credit system, which had already experienced vast problems in its implementation, over a 12-year period for its introduction, is being used to carry much of the burden of this system of support (Jordan, 2019, pp. 45–7). This has clearly revealed the high administrative costs and unavoidable complexity in its inbuilt means-testing, and which in any case cannot cover the many millions of self-employed workers in the economy.

So this book will consider how social work can prise itself free from the shackles of its recent, restrictive role, and play a part in a more liberating and forward-looking agenda for both services and benefits. To do this, it must shake off its links with a whole set of ideas which are hostile to and destructive of human liberation.

These are familiar to us from the literature of anthropology as well as the history of Western civilisation. Human beings evolved to their present position in the natural order in spite of their intellectual as well as their physical limitations. As Rutger Bregman documents in his *Humankind* (2020), human brains were smaller than those of other large primates, and those of Neanderthals, as well as their physiques more puny. Their success stemmed from a kind of low cunning, first in taming and training foxes to help them (as dogs) to hunt, then in devising weapons (axes, spears, bows) and stratagems (ambushes, camouflage, concealment) to surprise faster and fiercer animals; all these required co-operation in groups.

This co-operation is fragile and conditional, and the more that economic innovation caused inequality among members of communities, the more this involved institutions for coercive control over those with little or no property, who gradually lost their hunting rights and plots, and became employees and servants. The victims and losers in these processes were the ones who required relief through payments from the Poor Law authorities, or maintenance in workhouses and hospitals. Although modern systems are slightly more generous, a larger and larger proportion of citizens in countries like the USA and UK have required these forms of subsidisation in the twenty-first century, and it is difficult not to make connections between this and conflicts involving angry groups of taxpayers on the one hand, and resentful claimants of such support on the other, with increased coercion of the latter.

Furthermore, new technology is far more sophisticated than the millions of those who use it are capable of understanding. This means that people who routinely make use of social media and artificial intelligence are easily manipulated by those who deploy them, both commercial companies and political leaderships (Zuboff, 2018).

In the aftermath of the pandemic and the recession which it caused, there seem to be two alternative paths for societies. Authoritarianism may become more established in some countries, and take more extreme forms; for example, in the USA, the mass demonstrations which followed the killing of the black citizen, George Floyd, by the policeman Chauvin, has brought millions of people out onto the streets of 75 cities all over the country. But the silent majority may well rally in support of President Trump's 'law and order' stance, and shift towards support for further repressive policies and practices.

On the other hand, there may be countries in which the decline in traditional political parties allows more radical new measures to be taken, such as a higher priority for environmental conservation and a sustainable economy, along with the provision of a UBI for all citizens. This would reverse the trends of recent years, and allow a very different trajectory for the future.

This book will explore the implications for social work of both these alternatives.

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CHAPTER 2

Origins and Trajectory

Abstract For most of human history, there was no such thing as social work, and even in the twentieth century it never came into existence in the Soviet Union or its satellite states in Central and Eastern Europe (where Stalinism denied the existence of any social problems) until after the fall of those regimes in 1989. It was also later to arrive in the former colonial territories of Africa and Asia, where the imperial powers exercised more direct forms of social control, or allowed indigenous cultures and customs to persist in supplying kinship and communal systems of social support and control.

Keywords Charity • Community • Co-operation • Communism • Culture

Where it had come into existence as a professional activity (in the UK, the USA and much of Europe) social work was predominantly practised by women of the middle classes, inspired by charitable and Christian motives. Although there had been earlier pioneers (such as the prison reform campaigner, Elizabeth Fry in England) in the first part of the century, and others in Germany, the main thrust in the former came from the Charity Organisation Society (COS), and was led by Octavia Hill, who first insisted on disciplined and purposeful interventions in the lives of impoverished families.

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The COS targeted those just above the level at which they qualified for and received relief (payments or accommodation in the workhouse) from the Poor Law authorities, which had been in existence since the first decade of the seventeenth century, and reformed by a Whig government in 1834. It was committed to 'the repression of mendicity and imposture' (Charity Organisation Society, 1875, pp. 5–6), and turned away two-thirds of applications for assistance on the grounds that to help them would undermine their sense of personal and family responsibility. Even if such refusals led to admissions to the workhouse, this was seen as less likely to destroy their morals than would careless aid (COS, 1872, p. 5).

In the first three decades of the twentieth century, Poor Law services were gradually reformed, to include more educational and medical elements (Middleton, 1978). Progress in these developments had been slower than that advocated by the mainly Fabian Socialist minority report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1909 (a document mainly written by Sidney and Beatrice Webb), but as a result the whole field was ripe for radical reconstruction by the post-war Labour government (Jordan, 1974, 1976).

The most idealistic and comprehensive elements were taken in relation to children. A number of scandals had been publicised during the war, the most notorious of which was the murder of the foster child, Dennis O'Neill, by his foster father (see p. 9). He had endured dreadful treatment on the farm where he had been placed, as was revealed in a Committee of Enquiry (Monckton, 1945), leading directly to an official report, by a committee led by Dame Myra Curtis, into the wider implications of the case (Curtis, 1946).

It is important to recognise just how much of an innovation the new local authority Children's Services were. They did not use the term 'social worker' for their staff, but they recruited many young and idealistic graduates, and introduced a whole series of principles for practice (in both field work and residential care) which would be easily recognised by today's professionals. They also gave rise to training courses which were the direct ancestors of today's (Packman, 1975).

In considering the future path for social work, it is important to recall and reassert the principles behind the creation of this new service. Whereas most of the provision for older and disabled people was based on Poor Law residential homes, and that for mentally ill and handicapped citizens on the former Poor Law asylums, this was self-consciously a complete departure from Poor Law traditions, and defined itself by rejection and replacement of them.

In this book, I shall consider how these origins shaped the structures and cultures of the present day services in the UK, and how this in turn both enables and limits the possibilities for the future. Social work has a legacy of some excellent practice, informed by sophisticated theory and research, together with the US literature (Hollis, 1972), where private practice was far more influential. These sources have supplied the main body of material on which social work has been pioneered in other countries. For instance, I was amazed to discover in the early 1990s that my own books had been translated into Hungarian, and were being widely used in the preparation of a whole new cohort of practitioners there.

However, the recent history of privatisation of the residential care system, and a narrow focus on child protection by social workers in the public services, has limited the role for the profession. Although the pandemic has been a tragedy, its longer-term effects may be to offer new opportunities.

The Trajectory

One of the limiting factors in the potential for social work to develop and transform itself is the zigzag path it has taken within societies since its foundation years. There can be few occupational groups, if any, which have been so buffeted by the winds of change. There have been moments in history when the role of social work has been transformed by political and economic currents of massive proportions. For example, in Germany during the Nazi dictatorship of the 1930s and early 1940s, social workers nominated physically and mentally disabled residents of care homes for the gas chambers. Conversely, the creation of the Children's Departments in the UK after the Second World War set English social work on an entirely new path (see pp. 21–2). So external factors (not its own ethical or professional principles) have reshaped social work at key moments in its history.

Yet in another sense, social work has (mostly reluctantly) been forced to address the shortcomings of the encompassing ethical and political codes of each stage in the development of modern societies, ever since its emergence. Even after the creation of welfare states, the fundamental values of liberal democracy comprised both individual liberties (choices in markets and rights to protection from coercion by others and by the state itself) and opportunities to be included in processes through which individuals shared in a quality of life, consisting of the 'moral resources' of a

community, as well as its physical amenities and services—the 'common good' (Jordan, 1989, 1990, 2008).

There were always tensions and contradictions within this mixture of elements, and these have been greatly aggravated by the growth of inequality in incomes, in access to property ownership and wealth, and the decline in opportunities for upward social mobility, that have occurred since the early 1970s. All of these have been further exacerbated by the growing use of enforcement measures (benefits sanctions and disqualifications) in relation to the subsidisation of low wages during this period (Jordan, 1973, 1982, 1996, 2019, Haagh, 2019a, 2019b)—see below, Chap. 1 (pp. 3–4), and in which voluntary organisations, some supplying social work services, have been involved (Jordan, 2019, pp. 73–4).

The history of social work's entanglement in these policy issues in the present century has been documented in a scholarly and meticulous account by Steve Rogowski (2020). He charts the ways in which recurring issues of professionalisation and competence—as in the Munro Review (see pp. 3–4 above)—became entangled with the agendas for public sector privatisation, commercialisation and managerialism, first of the Blair government (Chap. 6), and more recently during the era of austerity (Chap. 7).

In the 'first wave', the new 'business culture' (Harris, 2003) was imposed on social work organisations and practitioners. The division between 'purchasers' and 'providers' of care, embedded in new legislation, gave local authority social workers responsibilities for assessments and management in the new Adult Services, linked with Health, while children's services were merged with Education. The General Social Care Council and the Social Care Institute for Excellence were to regulate the workforce and the knowledge base. Audit, inspection, national standards and performance indicators became pervasive features of their work (Ferguson, 2008, p. 48).

However, as we have already seen, these structural reforms were not associated with a measurable improvement in standards of practice, or an absence of the scandals that had beset social work in the 1970s. In the case of the death of 'Baby P' in Haringey (see p. 22), the department had recently been 'inspected' (using figures for forms filled within time limits, rather than quality of casework), and this was thought to have distorted the borough's management priorities (Jones, 2014).

Similar distortions in priorities were found in relation to numbers of referrals processed, home visits made and assessments completed. This

gave rise to a 'performance culture' (Webb, 2006), in which practitioners felt their skills in face-to-face work were subordinated to paper record-keeping and budgeting. Instead of giving more 'choice' to 'consumers' of services, as was the declared aim of new systems, research suggested that users often felt 'fobbed off' (Rogowski, 2020, p.125). Even such apparently empowering new measures as 'Direct Payments' to disabled people, to enable them to manage their own care provision, were found often to be very limited by local authorities, some of which saw them as ways of saving money (Spandler, 2004).

The 'second wave' of cuts, nominally in the cause of efficiency, came with the impact of austerity, following the financial crash of 2008. Under the Coalition Government, the 'Bedroom Tax' was a reduction in Housing Benefit for those tenants with spare rooms; 'sanctions', in the form of benefit reductions or disqualifications, were imposed on claimants of unemployment-related payments; and Work Capabilities Assessments, carried out by private companies, resulted in reduced support and increases in mental illness (Barr et al., 2016). Rogowski's (2020) interviews with practitioners found that they had contributed to more children being on the child protection register and waiting for mental health services, as strains on family life of poor people were intensified (pp. 138–40).

Meanwhile, voluntary agencies, many employing social workers, had become involved in placements of unemployed people under the 'Help to Work Programme', established to supply an extra year following the compulsory 'Work Programme' in 2014. This failed to find employment for two-thirds of its participants, and thereafter they were required to sign on daily, and to do intensive 'training', or 30-hours-a-week 'community work' without pay. Only one in five of these found employment at the end of these placements, many of which were with voluntary organisations, presumably alongside or supervised in many cases by social workers. Some major charities refused to take part in this scheme because of its compulsory aspects (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 28 April 2014).

Social work in the UK in the present century has reflected the polarisation of life chances in society. Whereas welfare states attempted to prevent the emergence of a group of citizens in enduring poverty and disadvantage, all these trends created just such a class, and social work became disproportionately concerned with intervention in the lives of its members, and specially with the use of its statutory powers to act against their wills, removing their children, or compelling them to enter psychiatric hospitals. This entailed much more difficult circumstances in which to try

to negotiate the issues of rights, responsibilities and citizenship which underlay social work practice.

Whereas the 'ancient professions' of law, medicine and education could retreat into their courts, hospitals and schools, appealing to their exclusive expertise to shield them from these issues, social workers found that their practice increasingly involved the most painful conflicts of interest in families and communities, and the most severe deprivations of the resources required for full citizenship participation.

The present crisis, in which the coronavirus pandemic has had such drastic effects on economy and society, seems certain to have equally momentous consequences—one way or another. For decades, inequality in the UK and USA has slowly increased, because capital, especially finance capital, has been expanding its share of national incomes, while the earnings of all kinds of employees, except those with a stake in banking, insurance and finance, had stagnated or declined in real terms. In the crisis itself, the stock markets (in the USA especially) rose to an all-time high, even as the whole economy went into recession. In other words, just when most citizens were trying to live on a fraction of their previous incomes, having been furloughed or made redundant, many of those employees who were retained in the financial sector were prospering, seeing their earnings increase, because their firms had cut back their workforces to save costs (BBC World Service, *News*, 9 June 2020).

There were several paradoxes and uncertainties about the post-pandemic prospect. In the USA, the low interest rate and the money pumped into the economy through the quantitative easing programme by the Fed, promised a tech-led recovery, faster than in the UK, where the low price of oil was more influential. The only reassuring feature of the global situation was that all the developed economies, and most developing ones, were in the same boat, having had to increase government borrowing rapidly during the pandemic.

In addition to this, the killing of George Floyd in the USA had sparked huge demonstrations against police violence by Black Lives Matters protesters all over the world, but especially in the USA and UK (where statues of wealthy slave traders were brought down by crowds or taken down by councils in Bristol and London boroughs, and demands to do the same with that of the imperialist Cecil Rhodes in Oxford were made by crowds). These events contributed to a strong sense that the recovery from the pandemic should also include new directions in society and in the public services, during the first two weeks of June 2020.

Meanwhile, there were also serious problems in the everyday functioning of these services stemming directly from the pandemic. The waiting list for NHS treatments of every kind had increased rapidly in the spring of that year, as more staff and funding went into treatments for coronavirus victims. It was predicted to reach a vast ten million by the end of the year, because social distancing and other measures to prevent fresh outbreaks, as well as aftercare for recovering covid-19 patients, were still slowing access to mainstream medical processes (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 10 June 2020).

At the same time, there was a furious debate about the speed of reopening schools following their closure during lock down. In the House of Commons, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson admitted that 700,000 children lacked access to distance-learning provision during the continuing school closures. This was one of the very few times that social work was mentioned during the pandemic; in the absence of an adequate supply of laptops, it was proposed that priority should be given to children who were in contact with social workers (ibid.).

The biggest challenges in the post-pandemic era will be around reconstructing an economy which will predominantly be composed of services without reinforcing longstanding inequalities and the coercion of poor people through the benefits system. Because of the state's vastly increased involvement in sustaining economic activity and in income maintenance, it is a far more promising opportunity to reverse these long-term trends than any previous one in the past five decades, but the overall climate of politics—the rise of authoritarian regimes in the USA (Trump), Brazil (Bolsenaro), Turkey (Erdogan), Russia (Putin) and China (Xi Jin-Ping)—makes this much more difficult.

Indeed, the extension in state powers gives authoritarian leaderships additional means to impose their controls and sanctions (such as reductions in and disqualifications for benefits) on a wider spectrum of citizens (Haagh, 2019a, 2019b; Jordan, 2020). All this creates a political culture in which it is difficult for a form of social work committed to the liberation and empowerment of citizens to flourish, even if many practitioners and theorists might support this.

Conclusions

It has been a mistake, in retrospect, for the social work profession to try to keep a relatively low profile and avoid political controversy, during a period when many new agencies for regulating societies and supplying services, mainly through commercial organisations, have been created. This stance, along with the willingness of many to become more involved in the apparatus of coercion, has been among the many factors allowing authoritarian parties to become a dominant force in the political cultures of some of the most important global economies, and to influence the programmes of other parties almost universally. Only Green Parties have really represented alternative approaches, in which environmental issues are given due priority, individual liberties respected, and the means to sustain them in the new (increasingly fragmented) service economies, with their prevalence of part-time work and self-employment, supplied.

The future trajectory of social work cannot be derived from its past history. It has always drawn its rationale, including its ethical principles, from the culture of the society in which it was embedded. Unlike teaching or medicine, both of which have knowledge and expertise which are held independently of their social context (even though they are influenced by it), social work is inextricably based in the relationships (of all kinds) which make up these societies. Hence its professional codes of ethics are made up of very general statements (such as a commitment to improving the quality of life, or increasing human well-being) which are easily captured and distorted by whatever ideological forces dominate societies.

In this way, social workers are more like the priests of past religious faiths; they end up providing some kind of consolation to the victims of cruel and unjust regimes, or warlike foreign policies, administering some comforting words or the last rites to those caught up in sufferings not of their own making. Historically, this has meant that they have more often been involved in ethically dubious policies of social control than in heroic liberation struggles—just like the pastors and priests of Germany (with the exception of a few heroic martyrs) were in the Nazi period in Germany, or indeed the church in Russia during Stalinism (Ciszek & Flaherty, 1964).

By the middle of 2020, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was predicting that the UK would have the deepest recession among the affluent developed economies, with unemployment of 11 per cent and a medium-term fall in GDP of up to 30 per cent. The government had chosen a very complex response to the

labour-market consequences of the pandemic, involving generous support to businesses, adaptations of means-tested Universal Credit, as well as the innovation of new payments to self-employed citizens forced to self-isolate. The future outcomes and longer-term consequences of these measures will be among the issues to be analysed in this book.

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CHAPTER 3

Faith and Social Work

Abstract Religious faith was historically a very important factor in the origins and expansion of social work. In this respect, the UK is an exception (along with the Scandinavian countries); the fact that public services were the dominant ones, numerically and in terms of professional expertise and education, relegated faith to a marginal influence, even if research showed that many who entered the role were motivated by their religious principles. But in Europe and the USA, faith organisations still supply a very large proportion of employment for social workers, as well as bases for their motivation and practice ethics.

Keywords Refugees • Militancy • Persecution • Diversity

There are still many parts of the world where faith provides justification for mass murder, as currently in Mali (BBC Radio 4, *From Our Own Correspondent*, 11 June 2020). But these will not be addressed here; social work is more likely to be mobilised in lower-key situations and issues, which prevail in Western societies.

My purpose in this chapter is not to review this history, or even to explore the motivation of current social workers. It is to investigate the extent to which any possible future expansion of social work in the aftermath of the pandemic will draw on faith communities for its dynamic as

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well as its personnel. Because religious communities are more important to the civic and political life of the USA than any other advanced Western societies, it will mainly address the likely outcomes of these dimensions of the future in that country.

It has been widely recognised that Christians, specifically white Evangelicals, played a key role in the election of Donald Trump as President in 2016. There were several ironies in this; Trump's lifestyle and history were scarcely those of a model man of faith. But his was a kind of conservatism (a defence of the wealth and privilege of the white community, and of a white middle class, feeling itself under threat from the growing immigrant population) that appealed to this important, active proportion of the electorate.

The past two decades have shown that economic globalisation has not resulted in the secularisation of human societies, as materialism, markets and development might have been expected to do. Instead, there has been a rise in radical religious movements, especially in militant Islamic mobilisations in the Middle East, which may have been one factor which stimulated the Evangelical, and more general Christian revivals in the USA and other Western countries.

Civil wars, religious persecution and political reaction have all contributed to the rise in refugee migrations (Jordan, 2020b), which in turn have demanded services for resettlement and retraining, and the growth of social work in the field of asylum and statelessness. Much of this has come as a new field for the profession, and has demanded flexibility and a broader understanding of human need, and it seems likely to continue in years to come; climate change may add a dimension to the mass movement of populations, and hence to the need for social work of this kind, in which awareness of factors arising from the faiths of displaced people are important.

Religious faith makes a significant contribution to people's subjective well-being, according to research findings (Helliwell, 2003). Since the Second World War, the training of social workers in the UK, Scandinavia and much of the USA has avoided the topic of faith, and assumed that clienteles, especially in the developed economies, will predominantly be poor people, among whom religious issues would not be prominent. No such assumption can now be relied upon in an emerging world of shifting populations and endemic strife between faith groups.

For example, the ability to mediate between a young generation of immigrants growing up in a secular culture (such as the UK's, or that of a

Scandinavian country) and their more traditional, religious parents and grandparents is one that will be increasingly useful and valued. The attitude to issues of faith on twentieth-century training courses—that they should be politely pushed to the margins of discussions of practice if they arose, or if students declared themselves as committed to them—cannot be sustained in these situations.

So this chapter will analyse how social work can cope with the increase in issues of faith, and conflict between faith groups, as this future unfolds. Every experienced social worker has been in the situation of suddenly being confronted by someone who is determined to bring religious issues into an interview or family session; few feel adequately prepared for these occasions. Power and resistance to it are often at stake in such moments, as when husbands and fathers claim religious authority in support of their bullying stance towards partners and children, or better-off members of a community complain of the behaviour of impoverished ones.

It feels very risky, in such situations, to engage with those who produce religious justifications for their attitudes and behaviour on their own terms. Even if the social worker or community worker feels confident that he or she can rebut the interpretation of their faith being used to justify their attitudes, their training is unlikely to have included teaching and discussion on how to handle these issues; it feels safer to evade them and move onto some safer ground.

Yet the increased mass mobility foreshadowed in recent migrations and in the prospects for human populations worldwide will demand a more direct engagement with issues of faith and relations between faiths. Uncomfortable as it may be, social workers will have to learn to counsel, challenge and mediate on such topics.

Sources of Discomfort for Social Work

There are two obvious reasons why social workers feel uncomfortable in these situations, and might be daunted by the prospect of a large increase in them in the future, as a result of the post-pandemic expansion. Accelerated mobility and globalisation will bring more 'strangers' (and their cultures and religious practices) into developed economies, and more radical nationalist mobilisations will occur in response to them, as extremism of this kind is 'normalised' (Maranz, 2020). If this produces conflicts, social workers will not relish the prospect of mediating between the parties.

This is really a shortcoming in post-war literature on professional practice, which assumed that secularisation was an inevitable consequence of modernity and was desirable as a source of political stability and international peace. Even the US literature on practice skills and professional standards, including the much-used textbook by the Jesuit priest Father Biestek (1957), made little or no reference to these issues. Social work was in this sense absorbed into the project of modernisation, which was protecting Western societies from the kinds of divisions, conflicts and ghastly slaughters that had haunted the first half of the century, and which were also preparing populations for a long ideological battle with the state socialisms of Stalin's USSR and Mao's China.

But faith bodies continued to supply the organisational basis for social work agencies, for instance in both Germany and Italy, even if practitioners were not necessarily motivated or guided by their principles in any of their practice. The pressure for a move in the direction of a version of social work with a more explicit faith orientation would be likely to come from the USA, as part of a more general shift towards religion as an organising principle in that society.

This would be uncomfortable for practitioners. People who come into contact with social workers, especially with those who are investigating allegations of child abuse, or assessing the needs of those with psychotic mental illnesses, are acutely aware of the sources of power in society and quick to identify how practitioners fit into the hierarchy of authority. They can soon gather—through local knowledge, or social intuition—what motivates them, and the weak points in their professional armour (Jordan, 1973).

If the post-pandemic development of societies involves greater inequalities of opportunities and incomes, and the growth of many forms of social exclusion (as seems likely, without a major shift in economic and social policies), this will mean that social work will involve more use of legal authority and compulsion, and greater social distance from its clienteles—trends that have already been clear in the USA and the UK in recent decades.

In the USA, by 2018–19 one in five of the population had experienced a mental illness (Mental Health Statistics). Compulsory admissions increased in the new century, despite attempts to divert patients to other forms of care (Lay et al., 2015). In the UK by 2018–19 there were almost exactly 50,000 compulsory admissions to mental hospitals, of which a very

disproportionate number were black people, who were four times more likely than white to experience this.

These powers are not exercised in a political vacuum; coercion is related to inequality, exclusion and a culture of authoritarianism (Jordan, 2019; Haagh, 2019). Social work cannot distance itself from those forces in society whose interests lie in the suppression of collective action by its clientele, and therefore demand that its problems are individualised and monitored, under the threat of legalised removal of children, or of liberty.

The Influence of Faith

Historically, faith entails membership of an organised religion. These social implications of faith—the bonds of *belonging* to a community of believers—have weakened over the past century in the developed economies, but are still stronger in most of the refugee groups who have arrived in them to seek asylum, or to escape famine. Working with them challenges social workers to think about the relationship between faith and community, and how those with a strong identification with a religious community can best be included in a Western society.

One project which has overcome these obstacles is the START (Students and Refugees Together) project in Plymouth (Bellinger & Ford, 2022). Drawing on the work of Saleeby (2009), they worked with 2000 refugees and their families over many years, focussing on their needs for accommodation, employment and integration at the end of their period in Home Office facilities. The students included some from European countries, as well as many from the local university social work course, and won awards from the EU. This demonstrated the potential for social work in this field, but was not replicated as widely as it deserved to be.

But by far the most significant contribution of a faith community to the political and cultural life of a Western democracy in the recent past has been that of Evangelical Protestants in the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016. The actual proportion of this group in the population was small—around 16 per cent of the electorate, and declining—but this was compensated by its high level of engagement, visibility and partisanship. Whereas Catholics were a larger faith population (20 per cent), and traditionally Democratic Party supporters, and both were outnumbered by atheists and agnostics (25 per cent and rising), they punched above their weight.

It seems that Trump drew his slogan 'Make America Great Again' from an Evangelical song. They were urged on by several secretive groups, such as the Council for National Policy, which included a number of super-rich donors and media owners, who adopted strategies for activating fundamentalist Evangelical voters. Its claim to be non-political seemed to be intended to gain tax-exempt status, and it included the National Rifle Association (which upheld the right to bear arms), and a number of prominent right-wing spokespeople and authors.

Many of these traced their involvement in political issues back to the civil rights struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, opposing the integration of schools in the Southern States, and the movement for Gay Rights. They were also connected with the oil industry in Texas, and campaigns to limit taxation on its profits. Other member organisations upheld Old Testament standards on the disciplining of children (BBC Radio 4, *Thinking Allowed* (presented by Lawrie Taylor), 10 June 2020).

During the presidential campaign, there had been echoes of a violent and tragic past, in the presence of a group of armed white supremacists at a Trump rally. This evoked memories of the separatist communities with their anti-government ideologies in the 1990s. One of these the 'Aryan Nation' had a farm at Waco, where their leader refused to pay taxes, and a 51 day siege by police culminated in a massacre. It had been visited by an army veteran, Timothy MacVeigh, who (on the second anniversary of Waco) perpetrated a mass murder of 168 citizens, and inflicted another 680 injuries, at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City (BBC Radio 4, *Two Minutes Past Nine*, 25 September 2020).

All these right-wing organisations, and some of the Evangelicals, which were originally represented in the campaign for the Republican candidacy at the 2016 presidential election by Ted Cruz, eventually did a deal with Trump to give him their support, with Mike Pence as his deputy. Through these processes, 80 per cent of white Evangelicals were mobilised behind Trump. The majority of African Americans and Latinos supported Hillary Clinton, and these included a substantial proportion of Evangelicals, but they were not as prominent and vocal as the Trump supporters; only the non-religious among all US citizens were clearly anti-Trump.

In this way, faith came to be strongly associated with authoritarianism in the world's dominant superpower. Social work in the USA was in a weak position to oppose this connection, and coronavirus and the crisis in UK care homes represented a further weakening in its overall position in the post-pandemic world.

Conclusions

The connexion between social work and faith communities has been strong over time, but this is a legacy of conflict and cruelty as well as mutuality and caring. In his account of mankind's stormy journey through time, *Humankind: A Hopeful History*, Rutger Bregman (2020) starts from the intellectual contest between Thomas Hobbes' (1651) version of a perpetual war of each against all before the creation of all-powerful states, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1754) account of the 'noble savage' in primitive societies. Hobbes was, after all, writing in the middle of the most violent period in European history, with almost incessant wars between Protestants and Catholics, whereas Rousseau's century was comparatively peaceful.

Modern anthropological studies tend to bear out the view that hunter-gatherers are egalitarian and peace-loving, at least within their own collective units. Over a period of many millennia, human beings lived in small, mobile communities, splitting up as these grew in size, and moving into new territories whenever resources became scarce. At this stage, they had no formal systems of authority (Service, 1975). When this process ran up against geographical barriers, they were forced to turn to agriculture, the technologies for which they already knew, but preferred their established lifestyles and diets (Cohen, 1965, p. 15).

As larger tribes gained competitive advantage over smaller ones, they evolved institutions for limiting competition and absorbing new individuals without conflict (Boehm, 1982, Bowles et al., 2003). Researchers have suggested that the cultural transmission of norms, such as the sharing of food, the care of elderly and disabled members, and the readiness to sacrifice themselves in battles, gave humans key evolutionary advantages (Boyd & Richerson, 2002; Bowles et al., 2003, p. 135).

These cultural capacities were retained during the transition to agriculture, and later to urban living. But the inequality and competition that accompanied the institutions of private property, law, government and organised religion all contributed to conflict and warfare, and complex systems of social control. Faith represented a collective force for sustaining solidarities and reducing the negative consequences of these struggles.

Social work came into existence as a feature of a century of rapid economic growth, urbanisation and political conflict based more on class and less on faith. As religion receded into a role of adjunct to power, social work was one expression of its continuing usefulness in sustaining

compliance with rule by a new alliance between aristocrats and capitalists, in a system of increased inequality and social control. The attitude to poor people of many of the charitable visitors who called on them was well caricatured by the intolerably patronising Mrs. Pardiggle in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852); the more acceptable face of an emerging new profession was represented by the character of Esther Summerson.

Faith-based social work served the interests of wealth and privilege when religious power was closely linked with class-based government, but state-managed social work could be an even more effective means of oppression, and was just this at times in the twentieth century, as various kinds of authoritarian regime flourished all over the world. The best-known cases of this collusion concerned social workers who nominated disabled people and gypsies for Hitler's gas chambers.

In any future evolution of the profession in a post-pandemic world, it would be important for those who need services involving social work interventions—such as foster care and adoption of children, and the assistance required by disabled people—should receive these in ways respectful of all their rights as fellow citizens. Some of the preconditions for this will be analysed in the remaining chapters of this book.

The revival of religious belief and practice, and the mobilisation of large populations around religious loyalties, have been unexpected features of recent years. Such revivals have occurred in the past, and proved to be of relatively short duration, but in the present case, they have been rallying points for minorities with long-standing grievances (as in the Middle East), or for those who feel threatened by the rise of previously oppressed groups (as in the USA).

In the post-pandemic world, in which recovery from the economic recession could take several decades, it will be important that social work does not become involved in religious mobilisations which exclude and oppress the most vulnerable members of societies. Faith has not proved a reliable basis for practice in past experiences of this phenomenon.

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CHAPTER 4

Family and Feminism

Abstract The situation of social workers in relation to the family and feminism was in some ways similar to that with faith. During the rapid expansion of the profession from the early 1970s, many of the new recruits were young women, influenced by the then new feminist literature and social movement (Greer, *The Female Eunuch*. Penguin, 1970). But their clientele were mostly traditional in their ideas about the family and women's role in it, even if these ideals had little correspondence with their lived experience.

Keywords Women • Cohabitation • Household violence • Parenting

Especially in the USA, where social workers were responsible for social assistance payments, poor single parents (especially black women) were their largest category of clientele. Their numbers were increasing rapidly at this time, and in a period of growing inequality, they were in many ways 'the truly disadvantaged' (W.J. Wilson, 1989).

At the same time, especially in the UK, there was a rapid expansion in new universities, and women were taking up a higher proportion of places on degree courses, especially in the arts and social sciences. From these, many of them went on into professional training and practice; although men still dominated the senior managerial posts in both private and public services, women were increasingly well represented among practitioners.

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In social work, where they had always been a majority, there were opportunities to rise to supervisory and managerial roles.

So predominantly young middle-class practitioners, many with feminist sympathies, were confronted by impoverished mothers of several young children, who were in most ways the most socially excluded sector of the populations of these societies. The latter were also targets for some of the most intrusive and coercive practices of the benefits authorities who supplied their incomes in the UK. Under the notorious 'cohabitation rule', investigative officers would observe their homes, and attempt to gain entry to identify any male visitor, suspected of supplying (or of being under a moral obligation to supply) the sort of material support characteristic of a couple who were married or 'cohabiting'.

Where—as in many cases—this led to the withdrawal of all benefits payments, the mother often turned to the social services department for help. Social workers found themselves involved in many cases where the alternatives, of supporting the mother in an appeal against the benefits decision, looking for some sort of alternative income provision (such as a charity), or receiving the children into care, all had disadvantages and drawbacks.

At the same time, there was a movement, in many cases sustained by feminist social workers, to establish 'refuges' for mothers who were being abused by partners, or even in the kinds of casual relationships which occurred because of their disadvantaged financial and social position. These residential units were often informed by explicitly feminist ideology; unlike their colleagues in fieldwork practice, workers in refuges would have the opportunity for attempting to influence mothers' understandings of their exploited and oppressed situation in society, and in their relationships with men.

The coronavirus pandemic put new pressures on couple relationships of all kinds. Some, who were living and working a long way from each other, found themselves having to socially isolate with no face-to-face contact. More seriously, other couples, with unresolved tensions and conflicts, were holed up together without breaks for weeks on end, and violence began to take place between them.

So the pandemic reinforced existing problems in families, and it seemed certain that these relationships would emerge from it more fragmented than before. But it also pointed to possible changes in the future of these units, which might be brought about if certain other institutions were modified to allow new directions to be discovered.

The Family Unit

The various social policy traditions of the Western democracies have one thing in common; they all seek to uphold the family as an institution for the socialisation of children. Social work has been disproportionately involved in situations where these policies—for income maintenance, education and housing—have somehow failed to achieve this end.

In large part, this has been because the attempt to achieve gender equality in economy and society has been undertaken at the same time as earnings have been stagnating—and actually declining at moments of crisis, such as the financial crash of 2008 and the coronavirus pandemic. Although better-educated women have made important gains in access to labour markets and in earnings, poor households have been particularly adversely affected, and women in these have suffered disproportionately as income inequalities have grown.

In the mid-1980s, women's participation in labour markets in the European Union was still only 45 per cent, largely because of the historical legacy of low rates in Germany, Austria and Italy. By 2017 it had increased to over 66 per cent, and average earnings of women were only 11 per cent lower than those of men, but women still spent five times more time on childcare and household duties than men.

Mary Daly (2020) shows that, although the European Commission promoted measures to eliminate discrimination in employment and welfare benefits in the decades before the financial crash, since 2008, with cuts in income support and the increased introduction of market principles in education and health care provision, measures for equality have largely stalled. This was part of a worldwide pattern of increased inequality; only in Iceland were the poor not most adversely affected by that crisis.

Feminism itself has undergone several mutations over the period since it first began to have an impact on these societies. Nancy Fraser (2013) argued that—in line with wider cultural and political trends—it shifted from a movement for radical social transformation to demands for recognition and identity politics in a period of individualism and the domination of market economics, and that it required reinvigoration in response to austerity.

Maternity has come to be seen as a responsibility to be chosen and managed, in balance with other aims and ambitions (Rottenberg, 2018). Poor and black women supplied the labour to enable professional women's aspirations to be pursued in Europe; right-wing politicians such as

Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders have used feminist goals—such as gender parity—to further their racist, anti-immigrant agendas.

The #MeToo movement for collective action against violence to women has been the most recent feminist mobilisation, using online resources for its campaigns. It was specially valued at a time of increased women's vulnerability during the lock down, and the need for contact and support with other women through the internet when face-to-face meetings were impossible.

The needs of family carers are another field in which women (who live slightly longer than men, although they are often not in good health in later years), are slightly more likely to have this role. Their attention to the needs of a disabled or confused partner isolates them from friends and kin, and from community participation. If, as some authors have argued (Williams, 2001, 2005; Ellis, 2004), an ethic of care is to be seen as the basis for citizenship and mutuality, then carers need social workers and other professionals to help them negotiate a situation in which their responsibilities are shared with kin, neighbours and professionals, for the sake of their own well-being and social justice (Jordan, 2007, pp. 76–7).

Parenting and Children's Careers

One of the major shifts in the cultures of societies such as the UK and USA which took place in the 1970s was an increase in the extent to which parents felt responsible for launching their children on secure careers, with prospects of promotion and pensions, and hence access to the 'housing ladder' through purchase of a home. The post-war welfare state sought to provide benefits and services which would reduce competition between citizens for such 'positional goods', conferring lifelong advantages. The impact of globalisation and inequality of incomes, followed by the stagnation of earnings at every level (as capital's share of GNP steadily grew), left a legacy of personal insecurity, and meant that women were increasingly driven into the labour market by the demands for household income, rather than personal choice (Jordan et al., 1994).

While most social work in public agencies continued to focus on the parenting of poor households, these trends in economy and society also gave rise to an increase in problems in relationships, and in the mental health of women in particular, in middle-income families. The fear that their children might not succeed in gaining access to higher education, and hence to lucrative careers, haunted parents (Jordan et al., 1994), and

rising statistics of women seeking counselling or treatment for anxiety or depression were a feature of these decades.

This seems to have been one of the negative effects from the increase in parental anxiety about their children's academic achievements, not only in the USA and UK, but also all over the world. Research over decades showed more and more time spent on engaging with children, encouraging and coaching them in reading and learning, as well as monitoring them in avoiding risks and staying safe. With the scientific evidence of babies' brain development from soon after conception, mothers became concerned with promoting learning potential and its realisation, with more fear of downward social mobility and its consequences and more extra tutoring. The search for successful schools (in terms of exam results), including relocation to their catchment areas, all reinforced social polarisation by districts in cities (BBC Radio 4, '*Analysis*', 15 June 2020).

This is in line with Rottenberg's (2018) recent critique of 'Neo-Liberal Feminism', as promoting both professional success and intensive mothering, outsourcing routine care tasks, and avoiding collective feminist mobilisations. It is an aspect of the dominance of white, educated, middle-class households, which turn a blind eye to the oppression and precarity of many other women's lives and employments.

Conclusions

The interdependence of members of families and the equal status of women as citizens are both central to social work practice. That they are often in tension with each other has been analysed in this chapter; historically, feminism defined itself in relation to these issues. Social workers must find ways to make the tensions and conflicts in family life and the care needs of vulnerable children and disabled people both accessible for negotiation, and acknowledged as in tension, and sometimes even contradiction (Jordan, 1990, 2007).

Patriarchy is not part of our inheritance from our stone-age ancestors. Archaeologists and anthropologists have shown that hunter-gatherer societies had relatively equal relationships between the sexes (Bregman, 2020); they also lacked structures for power and the enforcement of rules, achieving co-operation by shaming or mocking those who tried to take command, other than in a situation of conflict with other groups (Boehm, 1999, p. 68).

Instead, rather as Rousseau (1754) suspected, property in land, and then in buildings and machinery, came into existence when people settled

in fertile river valleys, such as Mesopotamia, started to grow crops to feed fast-growing populations, and eventually built cities (Cohen, 1965). As the supply of land grew scarce, the invention of money allowed the large-scale landowners (the aristocracy) to charge peasants rents, and the class system came into being.

Whereas the hunter-gatherers had thought all nature was sacred, and valued freedom (Marshall Thomas, 2006; Boehm, 1999, p. 68), and men spent almost as much time with children as women did (Blaffer Hrdy, 2011; Mulloy 1991), after the Ice Age inequality increased, villages mobilised for conflict under their warlord leaders, women were bartered between them, patriarchy and the obsession with virginity and fidelity grew (Van Schaik & Michel, 2016, pp. 50–1). Religion posited an angry, vengeful God, and some religions (notably in South America) practised human sacrifice.

So property, law and money became instruments of oppression, especially by 'civilised' peoples of hunter-gatherers (El Hamil, 2013, Turchin, 2019, Graeber, 2011). The Great Wall of China was constructed to keep subject peoples *in* (Scott, 2017), and by 1789, three quarters of the world's population was in bondaged or forced labour (Hochschild, 2005).

The balance of advantage between the generations has also constantly shifted over time. For example, since the 2008 financial crash, the older members of UK society, already with high proportions of home ownership and paid-off mortgages, were in the best position to withstand the pressures of austerity. Those just entering the labour market from education were worst placed, with fewest opportunities for secure jobs, with prospects of promotions, pay rises and pensions. After the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, their situation was worse still. Young people (aged 16–25) were more than twice as likely as their elders to be working in the hospitality and retail sector, and these employments were closing down at high rates after lock down came to an end (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 8 July 2020).

Yet those near the end of their lives were even worse placed. When the pandemic struck the UK, there were 20,000 deaths of residents of care homes. In a speech in early July, Boris Johnson seemed to blame the owners of these care homes for their deaths, and those of many staff also. But this provoked a furious response from the home owners and the National Care Forum. Mark Adams, the spokesman for the Integrated Care Trusts, said that residents and staff had not had the opportunity to take tests or get PPE until May of that year, and then only to be tested once, which was

useless; only weekly or twice-weekly tests could give adequate protection, he said (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 8 July 2020).

In mid-July 2020, UK employment statistics for the previous quarter showed that 650,000 workers had been laid off, and one third of companies planned further staff cuts. Women had already been more affected by these lay-offs than men, because a higher proportion of them were in part-time or insecure posts (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 16 July 2020).

But there were also reports that some families were transferring their elderly relatives to less expensive care facilities in distant countries. In one reported example, tens of thousands were being moved to care homes in Thailand (BBC Radio 4, *'You and Yours'*, 5 February 2020).

After all this administrative chaos and human suffering, social workers are likely to be faced with a post-pandemic situation which is ambiguous; it might allow new flexibility in co-operation within households and social groups, with women more able to choose their roles and contributions, or it might be more rigid in its authoritarian and patriarchal structures. Social workers have an interest in taking collective action to bring about the former direction for future development.

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CHAPTER 5

Social Control and 'Black Lives Matter'

Abstract If issues of social injustice and social control needed to be made more open and explicit in the USA and UK during an era of more authoritarian leaderships, the Black Lives Matter movement supplied the impetus for exactly this need to reach the top of the political agenda. The death in the USA of the black citizen George Floyd was the catalyst for an uprising of protest marches in both countries, but also a right-wing reaction in the UK, and a distancing from the movement by President Trump in the USA.

Keywords Protest • Discrimination • Anti-racism • Technology

There has been a history of these movements going back to the early 1970s, and they had a strong influence on social work training and practice in all the 'White Commonwealth' countries of the former British Empire. Indigenous movements for protest and reform were suddenly a new factor in their politics, giving social work a much more prominent profile, and putting it on the defensive.

The first of these was in New Zealand, where Maori youth was heavily over-represented in residential care and 'reform schools' for delinquents. These were staffed by white workers, with little understanding of Maori culture, just as the courts which made these orders were. Soon an articulate body of Maori spokespeople was presenting persuasive arguments for

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training in social work to be based on awareness of this issue, and a more positive understanding of Maori culture, and the poverty and exclusion they experienced in this society. Juvenile courts adopted approaches of discussion and negotiation with families which owed much to those traditions.

This was soon followed by similar movements of Native American people in Canada and Aboriginal people in Australia. In these countries too, the residential care and reformatory systems had majorities of young people from these populations, and they were mobilised in protest also. Social work was accused of being racist, either consciously, or through disingenuous lack of awareness in their practice.

In this way, anti-racism training entered social work professional training courses and in-service training in the UK and all over the 'White Commonwealth' world. There were also more recruits to the profession from these groups. Without a radical transformation in practice, this did constitute an important shift, which informed the development of radical alternatives to these responses to juvenile delinquency.

In this chapter, I shall consider how the future of these services might be influenced by the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath. It seems that, in the UK at least, all kinds of property crime reduced during the lock down, though some other criminal activity—especially fraud by telephone or door-to-door confidence tricksters selling fictitious products to old people in lock down—did increase. But the overall decline in incomes, and rise in debt, create a whole new environment for these aspects of social relationships.

It might be supposed that recessions generally lead to increases in property crimes, but this is not always the case. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, crime in the UK was at an all-time low, and prisons were relatively empty. Conversely, during the post-war boom, crime soared. This suggests that these forms of criminality are more related to opportunity and relative living standards than to poverty and need. But the social exclusion experienced by ethnic minorities—or the majority in *apartheid* South Africa—breeds resentment and contributes to increases in criminality, as was illustrated by the South African case (Duval Smith, 1998; Kane-Berman, 1997). In my childhood, when my family lived there, our very modest bungalow was predated for minor thefts almost once a year.

The fact that the whole Black Lives Matter movement was precipitated by an incident in which a white policeman killed a black citizen showed how central issues of social control have long been for aspirations of

equality for the black minority. There have been a series of such incidents, spanning the decades since the 1970s, which have sparked protests, some more serious and enduring in their political consequences. This chapter will consider how social policy generally, and social work in particular, may influence and be influenced by these issues.

Punishment, Social Control and Social Work

The history of social control is dominated by the issue of how the new kinds of commercial societies which first evolved in the cities of the UK in the seventeenth century dealt with the impoverished underclass which inhabited them. In essence (as illustrated by Charles Dickens' novels) these cities' poor faced a choice between survival by unorthodox (petty criminal) street activity, or a constant inability to make ends meet during an economic downturn, with the consequence of family break-up, as members were admitted to different parts of the workhouse. This situation continued right up to the end of the Second World War (O'Neill, 1990), see pp. 9–10.

Because the economic recession of the 1930s was deep enough to affect the middle classes, it brought about the political consensus of the following decade about the need for universal services, creating common interests in a shared citizenship and a social environment which made these evident. But the very small number of poor people (claimants of the residual National Assistance, mainly single-parent women) increased over the next two decades, with divisive effects on communities, reinforced by the Heath government's decision to supply means-tested supplements to the earnings of low-income households (Jordan, 1973, 1974, 1976).

An obvious symptom of the creation of an 'underclass' was the phenomenon of 'working while claiming'. In its determination to turn a blind eye to the evidence of such a class, with no shared interests with the majority, the academic community of social policy researchers and commentators and the pressure group the Child Poverty Action Group studiously avoided all reference to this phenomenon. My colleagues and I were criticised as putting the 'tolerant' social policy community consensus at risk when we published the results of our study of this phenomenon on one council estate (Jordan et al., 1992).

What we found was that, in a community with many in low-paid, irregular or part-time employment, some two thirds of households did some occasional or part-time work which was not declared to the tax or benefits

authorities. Very few did so systematically, or to an extent that allowed them to make substantial gains, but this was a culturally accepted practice, and gave them room for manoeuvre in meeting large bills and 'extras', or surviving periods when the payment of benefits was delayed (through administrative inefficiency), or suspended (through the detection of their activities by the authorities).

Social workers were familiar figures in such districts, and met with some hostility. They had to develop skills in balancing between the supportive relationships which could sustain families through crises like illness or loss of employment, and decisive interventions (such as the removal of children) when situations got out of control, or violence erupted. In recent years, the former role has largely been discontinued; social workers investigate allegations of child abuse, and reach decisions about whether court proceedings are justified.

However, there had been a prolonged period in which social workers were debating the extent to which they could engage with members of disadvantaged communities, in order to minimise the use of court orders to remove children, and coercive conditions around the supervision or detention of those involved in juvenile delinquency. It is worth revisiting these debates and initiatives, since the post-pandemic era might offer an opportunity to reorient practice in these directions, in order to move away from authoritative forms of social control.

The official recognition of the potential of social work to move in these directions was the Barclay Report (1982). Although it was a cautious document, and hedged around with reservations, it acknowledged the movement towards including service users as participants and members of their communities in the running of facilities and in debates about the direction for practice in local teams. It was no coincidence that this debate opened at a time when anti-racist training for students and practitioners was becoming almost universal (Ohri et al., 1982; Dominelli, 1988), and when organisations for people with disabilities (Sutherland, 1981), and mental health issues (Brandon & Brandon, 1987), were becoming more confident, and demanding more influence and participation (DHSS, 1980, 1981; King's Fund, 1982; Richardson, 1983). It also reflected a more confident assertion of the needs and rights of carers (Richardson et al., 1989). A more radical version of all these movements and their demands was asserted by Beresford and Croft (1982, 1984, 1986) in a series of papers from the start of that decade.

All this suggests that the 1980s was a particularly dynamic decade for relations between social workers and service users, and that the period of privatisation of the social care system that started at the end of the Thatcher-Reagan era, and continued in the Clinton-Blair one, did not entirely reverse these processes. There is a reservoir of such experiences on which social work can draw in the aftermath of the pandemic, even though the financial crisis and the austerity which followed it have put these ideas on hold for many years.

Meanwhile, technologies of social control have been transformed. On the one hand, the Chinese regime uses a mixture of digital and crudely institutional means to monitor and imprison its Muslim minority citizens, holding huge numbers in compounds. On the other, Western governments, led by the USA, have developed digital means for mapping their territories in extreme detail, with charts of everything from the inside of buildings to whole continents. Google had a long-term relationship with the US military, a modern echo of the Ordnance Survey, whose detailed maps of the UK grew out of the government's demand for charts to serve the needs of its artillery.

In what Shoshana Zuboff (2018) calls *Surveillance Capitalism*, individual citizens can be observed and their movements charted through systems developed by the tech companies. Although its facilities are mainly used by commercial firms for online advertising, which can be very effectively combined with market research to boost sales, the coronavirus pandemic has now supplied a new potential market in tracking and tracing. In partnership with Apple, Google has designed apps for contact-tracing during the continuing crisis (BBC Radio 4, *'Mapping the Future'*, presented by Jerry Brotton, 30 June 2020).

However, the same technology was also used by security services to monitor, police and control the Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the USA and UK. This was just an extension of regimes such as that under which black people were tasered proportionately ten times more often than white in the UK (BBC Radio 4, *News,* 12 June 2020). In the midst of the protests, the statue of Edward Colston, who was as much a slave-owner as a philanthropist, was toppled and thrown into the harbour in Bristol (BBC Radio 4, News, 6–7 June 2020). Students insisted that a statue of Henry Dundas in Edinburgh should bear a plaque stating that he delayed the abolition of slavery there for 15 years (Channel 4 TV, *News*, 10 June 2020).

These events were seen as a potential turning point in the fates of black people all over the world by the *Guardian* journalist Gary Younge, who thought there would be similar meetings and plans among their communities globally (BBC Radio 4, *Start the Week*, presented by Tom Sutcliffe, 29 June 2020). Social media allowed protests to be called at short notice. But these technologies can easily be switched from commercial to security purposes, and within such a vast network of surveillance, and it is easy to see how social work could readily be deployed to personalise methods of social control focussed on dissident individuals, groups or communities in societies.

Conclusions

The ethical and political dilemmas for social work can be seen to reflect those of liberal democracy in an age of globalisation. A country like the UK (or even more obviously the USA) is made up of a great diversity of individuals, with rights to choose their own lifestyles, careers, houses, holidays and faiths, but seeks to sustain a social order conducive to collective harmony, co-operation, mutuality and justice. In such a society, the state is supposed to use its power to reconcile the potentially conflicting interests of individuals and groups, mainly through education and training for all, but also through the guidance and care supplied by social workers and other professionals (such as psychologists and psychiatrists), and ultimately through the system for criminal justice and its penal institutions, for those who struggle to meet these requirements, or choose to defy them.

In the last resort, if individual citizens do not accept this balance between their individual rights and their obligations to each other, they have many alternative options for employment in and/or emigration to other states all over the world, but—if they stay—they are also required to share their country's facilities with others who arrive to work and live in their society, either because of the economic opportunities it affords or because they are fleeing oppression or violent conflict elsewhere. Democracy also allows them the chance to elect a government that will change the balance between all these elements.

In an ideal world, there would be no tension between the good of the individual and the good of society; but in the real lives of the citizens of a modern liberal democracy there are potentially as many versions of the good life as there are inhabitants (Larmore, 1987, chs. 1 and 2). Furthermore, societies are made up of a diversity of collective

units—LGBTQ relationships as well as heterosexual ones, multigenerational households as well as single-generation couples, interethnic and interfaith families, multi-ethnic as well as mono-ethnic communities, and so on.

As a result of all this diversity of units as well as individuals, many of the decisions about how to earn, spend and invest are shared or joint ones, concerned with the interests of whole social units, and require quite complex negotiations (Jordan, 1990, pp. 44–6). If the interests of each member of such units are so closely linked to those of other members, then it makes sense to think about improving these only in terms of their membership and sharing in some kind of 'common good' (Jordan, 1989).

Whereas the 'ancient professions' of medicine, law and education usually start from the rights, ills and capacities of individuals, and how to enable them to enter or leave relationships most advantageously, most social work starts with relationships, and the ways in which they either ensnare and limit individuals, or potentially enhance their potentials. In a liberal democratic polity, the whole social system, starting as it does from individual rights and unequal property holdings, represents a setting fraught with potential injustices within these social units—patriarchy and racism as well as class division and privilege—so its starting point sets it up against a whole range of structural as well as cultural barriers to successful communications and outcomes.

A convincing case could be made for the idea that all these tasks have been growing more difficult over recent decades, as the real incomes of the vast majority of social units have stagnated, with only the rich growing richer. So the coronavirus pandemic, and the economic recession which has accompanied it, represents a huge challenge to a profession which tries to enable individuals to flourish as members of social units. Women in particular have been adversely affected, as their disproportionately part-time employments have been most vulnerable to falling demand, their child care responsibilities have increased as schools closed, and their susceptibility to domestic abuse has been increased by lock down (BBC Radio 4, *Women's Hour*, 1 July 2020).

For black and minority ethnic people, the situation is far cruder. Always the focus for often violent and discriminatory means of social control, they have come under increased scrutiny and coercive measures in periods of rising poverty and economic crisis such as the one associated with the pandemic. The incident which caused the death of George Floyd was particularly traumatic, and the fact that it was recorded and broadcast made it

iconic for members of these communities. What was distinctive was the extent to which other citizens came out in support of their protests.

In an edition of BBC Radio 4's *The Life Scientific*, presented by Jim Al-Khalili (4 June 2020), a man who had left school aged 16 with no qualifications described how he became involved in multiple protest actions over several years and then decided to do a study of them, under the supervision of the social psychologist Steve Reicher at Exeter University. He considered that the media and the police saw mass demonstrations as 'mindless mobs', but they were in fact purposeful protests about rights which participants had been denied. He thought the police should be trained to be aware of the role of protest in a democracy.

The same may apply to the training of social workers, especially in the circumstances likely to follow in the wake of the pandemic. At very least, it should cause social workers and their managers to re-examine their own practices and policies in relation to black communities, to make a self-critical assessment of whether they provide them with a sufficiently supportive and empathetic service.

In the UK, unemployment had not risen as much as might have been expected. But it was unclear how many of the nine million workers who had been furloughed would continue to be employed, now that companies had the chance to see how they could manage without them. For example, would this mark the moment when more artificial intelligence was adopted? Past experience suggested that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) employees would be among those most vulnerable to such waves of redundancies (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 16 July 2020).

The rise in authoritarianism worldwide (Jordan, 2019) has re-enforced the least promising features of the economic and social environment. Already in the USA, over 60 per cent of prisoners are BAME citizens, and over 60 per cent of them commit further offences within two years of their release (BBC World Service, Newsday, 19 June 2020). In Australia, the Black Lives Matter protests drew attention to the fact that 400 of First Nation people had died in custody in the decade, yet no one had been convicted for any of these deaths. Despite being only three per cent of the population, they made up a quarter of those in prison, and half of those in institutions for juvenile delinquents. They were more likely to go to gaol than to university (BBC Radio 4, *From Our Own Correspondent*, 20 June 2020).

In the USA, the issues have been more stark, as President Trump gives tacit or explicit encouragement to white supremacist pressure groups and

militias. As the date of the presidential election drew near, 13 were arrested for a plot to kidnap the Democrat governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer (Channel 4 TV, *News*, 9 October 2020). Although such actions may alienate some who, like many suburban women, supported Trump in 2015, they reflect a very dangerous polarisation around race and the rights of black people in US society.

The implications of a future of yet more unequal, intolerant and coercive cultures and policies will be the subjects of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 6

Inequality and Coercion

Abstract As was implied in the previous chapter, one of the most important dimensions of citizenship in liberal democracy is the equality of status in relation to liberty and protection from coercion by the state's authorities—the officials of various bureaucracies, as well as the police and security services. Indeed, during the Stalinist period in the USSR, it was the power of state bureaucrats and security officers to direct the civilian populations in the economy and society which was taken to be its most significantly distinctive and objectionable feature. But this is now an issue in all Western developed societies.

Keywords Welfare-to-work • Conditionality • Liberty • Universal Basic Income

This explains the huge popularity of the novels of authors like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Boris Pasternak, in which blameless characters such as *Ivan Denisovitch* and *Doctor Zhivago* were punished or banished for the exercise of a free and critical spirit. The Soviet authorities' anger was aroused by the implicit or explicit criticism of their society's capacity to nurture and enable the expression of human emotions in relationships of love and freedom. Although the publicity given to these authors' persecution by the system was supposed to celebrate the contrasting liberties of the liberal democracies, this largely ignored the phenomena associated

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with the coercion of poor people in the West. In so far as social workers were explicitly or implicitly involved in this, and they were part of the unacceptable face of capitalism.

From the early 1970s onwards, policies for subsidising low wages by means-tested state supplements were adopted, first in the UK and USA, and then all over the developed world. These contained inbuilt disincentives for claimants—to move out of unemployment or to increase their hours of work—since these often resulted in little or no rise in incomes, after taxation and reductions in entitlements to assistance (Jordan, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1982). As a result, from the mid-1980s measures for enforcing work 'obligations' (Mead, 1986) were introduced, and social workers became involved in 'workfare' schemes, often involving tasks which neither commercial companies nor local authorities were willing to undertake, very extensively in the USA, widely in the EU, and in specific projects in the UK.

These were widespread during the recession which followed the financial crash of 2008. For instance, in Italy, Spain and Greece, three of the countries in which the effects of this had the deepest economic and social impacts, professionally trained workers were deployed to ration benefits and enforce conditions on the growing millions who became unemployed as austerity measures bit (Jordan & Drakeford, 2012, p. 56); in the UK, many schemes run by voluntary agencies had been staffed by social workers, who supervised those sent to participate as conditions for receiving benefits.

In the UK, participation in these schemes was enforced through sanctions (benefits cuts and disqualifications, for anything between a few days and a whole year) if claimants did not accept low-paid posts, including 'zero-hours contracts', which had risen to one-and a-half million by 2018. Louise Haagh (2019a) found that these were very numerous by EU standards both in the UK and in Denmark, but that those in the latter pushed claimants towards education and training courses, whereas the UK's enforced employment in a deregulated labour market, thus increasing inequality. Tax credits paid to those in work represented 28 per cent of total transfer spending in 2018, more than double the proportion in Denmark (Haagh, 2019b).

Even though they are not directly involved in such processes, social workers in the UK are predominantly dealing with service users who are actually or potentially coerced in these ways, and are in this sense often complicit in them. The division in the working class, between those who

pay taxes to fund means-tested supplements of this kind, and those receiving them, can be recognised as one important factor in the rise of right-wing populist movements, in support for Donald Trump in the US presidential election of 2016, in the Leave campaign in the UK's referendum on membership of the EU, and in protest demonstrations from 2011 onwards.

These issues have been greatly exacerbated by growing inequality of incomes and wealth, especially in London. There, the top 10 per cent were 280 times better off than the bottom 20 per cent (BBC Radio 4, '*Something Understood*', 12 January 2020). In Barking and Dagenham, outreach workers and volunteers were deployed to contact tenants in trouble with payments of rent to the council, ten per cent of whom were already in debt.

In this chapter, I shall consider these developments in more detail, to trace how they have eroded the rights of claimants, contributed to resentment by taxpayers, and formed an important part of the new political culture of authoritarianism. All of these developments have made the ethical status, independence and self-confidence of social workers more tenuous in a new climate of coercion.

The Origins of the Culture of Enforcement

Early in the 1970s, there was a strong radical movement in social work in the USA and UK, which reflected the youth rebellion in Paris, in California and in the UK, with its demands for greater freedoms and more influence on reshaping the social order. The Heath government in the UK was faced with galloping inflation as a result of the Iran-Iraq war and the huge rise in oil prices, and with the strike by coal miners which brought industrial activity to a standstill. In these circumstances, a crucial decision was made to subsidise low wages through a means-tested system (Family Income Supplements), the kind of measure which had never featured in British social policy since the disastrous Speenhamland System of 1796–1834, which had been widely seen as having brought the political order close to revolution, and created a 'demoralised' working class in Southern England (Webb & Webb, 1927; Jordan, 1973).

Originally confined to a small minority of workers, this scheme, renamed Tax Credits (following the US terminology) in 2003, expanded to the point where it cost £30 billion a year by 2016, despite some cutbacks by the Cameron government in 2011; its US equivalent was costing $78 billion by the same date (Standing, 2017, pp. 109–10). European

countries followed similar paths. As these schemes expanded, the proportion of the population which faced disincentives for increasing their earnings grew, since they all would have a simultaneous impact of income tax deductions and benefits withdrawal as they did so.

Meanwhile, the financial crisis of 2008 had brought widespread unemployment all over the world. The International Labour Office reported on 22 May 2012 that 13 per cent of young people worldwide were out of work (BBC World Service, *News*); on 31 October 2011, it had published a *World of Work Report*, claiming that 80 million new jobs would need to be created to restore employment to pre-crash levels, but only half of these were realistically anticipated, almost all in the developing countries. US median incomes had fallen by seven per cent between 2000 and 2011, and one fifth of US homeowners were in negative equity.

It was against this background that the schemes for 'workfare' and 'welfare-to-work' were introduced, with their attendant sanctions and disqualifications. Yet research showed that they very seldom led to permanent jobs. One large company contracted to implement the UK's Work Programme, A4e, was found to have found its participants jobs lasting more than three months for only three per cent of those placed with it during the first ten months of the scheme (Channel 4 TV, *News*, 28 June 2012).

A new programme, 'Help to Work', was introduced two years later, adding an extra year for some claimants after two years on this scheme, two thirds of whom were still claiming. They were required to sign on daily, do further, more intensive training, or undertake 30 hours a week of unpaid 'community work', mostly with voluntary organisations (see pp. 67–8). More recently, an extra 13,000 'advisers' were recruited for Jobcentres in the UK (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 4 July 2020). This reflected the increase in policies for enforcing low-paid employment or low-quality training courses, under threat of benefit 'sanctions' or disqualifications.

This tightening of the conditions for benefits directly implicated social workers in the coercive features of the 'welfare-to-work' schemes. The latest version bore a remarkable similarity with the 'Community Service Orders' imposed on offenders by courts for criminal offences; both probation officers and social workers in voluntary agencies were thus involved in systems, one explicitly punitive, the other allegedly educative, which revealed the extent to which claimants had come to be seen as having lost the full rights of citizenship. To add insult to injury, only one in five

participants in these new schemes was able to find employment at the end of their 'training'.

Some reassurance about the ethical awareness of these voluntary organisations, staffed as they were by social workers, lay in the fact that several of the leading members of the sector refused to participate in the scheme (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 28 April 2014). This was in spite of the fact that all organisations in the sector had experienced a reduction in state support of 11 per cent between 2010 and 2013 (Standing, 2017, pp. 113–4), and those for children and young people by 18 per cent according to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, with a very prominent one, widely praised by government ministers, Kids' Company, having gone bankrupt in 2015. The temptation to set aside ethical scruples under such financial pressures must have been strong.

It is too early to tell how the pandemic has influenced the hitherto relentless rise in authoritarian policies, based on the fundamental conflicts of interest between taxpayers and an ever-growing minority of those claiming means-tested support, whether in employment or unemployed. The fact that so many more have had to rely on 'furlough' payments for several months, and have felt very threatened as these were reduced or withdrawn, may have made them open to a more inclusive perspective on policy.

After all, the UK government has revealed how responsible it has become of the income levels of citizens during the pandemic lock down, and in the months leading up to the 'second wave' of the coronavirus. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made payments of 80 per cent of salaries below a capped level during the original furlough; then he cut this to 22 per cent for those unable to return to work when lock down ended; and finally put them up to 66 per cent as restrictions were reimposed, and it became clear that a full-blown recession was in progress (Channel 4, *News*, 9 October 2020).

Conclusions

Because public sector social workers are inescapably involved in issues of child abuse and neglect, and in decisions about people with psychotic mental illness, they are inevitably faced with dilemmas of the ethics of power and coercion. These are greatly aggravated when societies contain great inequalities of resources, and deep social divisions (Jordan, 1990).

For instance, there was evidence that looked-after children in local authority care in England, already with far worse educational outcomes

than the average, were falling further behind. In 2010, just over 12 per cent of them got 5 or more A* to C GCSEs, including English and Maths, compared with 53 per cent of other pupils. By 2014, the former had improved to 14.4 per cent, but the latter were up to 55.4 per cent ('Care Leavers: The Achievement Gap is not Closing, It's Widening', by Ann McGauran, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2020).

When the coronavirus pandemic fades, and political leaderships survey a landscape of economic recession and social distress, policy decisions will deeply affect the role of the profession. As was shown in the previous section, this includes those working in the voluntary sector, who can become involved in issues of compulsory power which are as testing as those with statutory responsibilities. Above all, a climate of authoritarianism, and the divisions in the working class, make many encounters with service users fraught with these dilemmas.

On the other hand, social movements of protest about such issues, which have been arising with no obvious warning in the UK since 2011, have now become international through the Black Lives Matter mobilisations. The pandemic has sensitised many leaders, in countries such as New Zealand, to the vulnerability of some sections of their populations; some commentators have pointed out that those with women in leadership roles (Germany and Sweden as well as New Zealand) have been more successful in protecting their citizens than those with macho or blustering men in charge (USA, UK, Russia).

The most overlooked aspect of coercion is the benefits system, and measures for compelling claimants have been in existence for five decades. Some social workers have become advocates for service users who encounter unfair pressures within these systems (most recently Universal Credit in the UK), or worked closely with organisations which specialise in these aspects of advocacy. In so far as the injustices of a society which has institutionalised the social divisions embodied in these systems have provoked mass protests and uprisings, social workers are now challenged to find alternatives to support in future collective action.

It is here that the potential of the Universal Basic Income proposal becomes relevant for the future of social work. I have been writing in support of it since the early 1970s (Jordan, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1982, 1985, 1996) and during the present era (Jordan, 2019, 2020), but it has attracted far more general support in the present crisis. The relevance of this will be explored in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 7

Poverty and Income Security

Abstract During the pandemic crisis, governments were forced to adopt new and untried schemes for income maintenance during periods when workers were furloughed or made redundant. As numbers of new infections began to fall, they faced decisions about whether to discontinue these, or adapt them in some ways, to deal with the recession that followed. But all this could be seen as an acceleration of debates that had been postponed since the financial crisis of 2008, despite growing evidence of the inadequacies and injustices of the income maintenance systems of developed countries. This chapter will examine these events, and the alternative courses now open in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Keywords Furlough • Pilot studies • Universal Credit • Sustainability

One surprising feature of this story is that President Trump proposed a radical response to the crisis—a kind of Universal Basic Income for almost all US citizens—which was modified at the behest of the Democratic opposition in Congress, but still represented an unexpected turn in policy. Without using the term, or conceding the principle for the longer run, this did give a glimpse of how a measure which had been successfully introduced in a few polities, including the state of Alaska, might achieve far more widespread acceptance.

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By contrast, the UK leadership took a mishmash of measures for various groups of citizens, which was superimposed on an already chaotic situation in the field of income maintenance (Jordan, 1974, 1976, 1982). The tragicomic story of the introduction of Universal Credit—an attempt to 'rationalise' and 'simplify' the system by merging six means-tested benefits into one—had already lasted over eight years and was scheduled to take another four. At every stage there had been delays and administrative muddles, with claimants being put into debt and payment arrears in very damaging ways. So the crisis exacerbated an already deeply unsatisfactory situation, and the government chose to make this even worse by introducing a variety of responses for the various categories of claimants affected by the pandemic and the lock down measures it required.

All this took place against the background of a long-term debate about the possible desirability of unconditional Universal Basic Income schemes worldwide (Torry, 2014; Standing, 2011). Although social workers were seldom directly involved in these discussions, they had important implications for the individuals, households and communities which most availed themselves of their help, or were referred to them for statutory interventions.

This was evidenced by the reports on outcomes of Basic Income experiments pilot schemes in Namibia and Mongolia, as well as the Alaska experience. These suggested—as will be shown in more detail in this chapter—that women and children in particular benefited in education, health and well-being from this measure, all of which was of the greatest relevance for social work. New pilot projects in Europe gave slightly different results, but all quite positive in their wider social consequences over the longer term.

The idea of UBI had made a very unexpected entry into world news when President Trump announced his plan to pay out $1200 a month to each adult citizen and $500 to each child, in the face of the pandemic. This was immediately greeted by the former Democratic Party presidential hopeful Andrew Yang, an entrepreneur and CNN political commentator, who described it as 'exactly what a Universal Basic Income is designed to do – offer a way to ensure that Americans make ends meet when they need it most' ('Andrew Yang "Pleased" to See Trump Adopt Universal Basic Income-like Plan to Help Fight Coronavirus', *Daily Caller*, Reporter Christian Datoc, 17 March 2020).

It was also welcomed by Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, and by Democratic Party Representative Joe Kennedy III, and Republican Mitt Romney. If all this seemed too unanimous, the president was forced to

modify his proposal, making it more selective, by the Democrats in Congress, a reversal of what might have been seen as their likely relative positions.

Compared with this, the UK's responses seemed muddled and excessively complicated, revealing the weaknesses of the current system. Errors and delays in payments in those districts where Universal Credit (UC) had been trialled caused crises in household finances, meant that debts were four times higher in these areas than in others (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 12 November 2018), with 20 per cent of those moving onto the system waiting longer than the qualifying period for payments. Advances paid to those in these circumstances to tide them over were reclaimed at up to 40 per cent of their entitlement (BBC Radio 4, *Today,* 21 November 2018).

A United Nations Special Rapporteur on Poverty, Philip Alston, made a study of the introduction of UC, and produced a scathing critique of the process. He said that it caused real suffering to poor people, and that UK levels of poverty were unacceptable in a wealthy, developed nation (BBC Radio 4, 20 November 2018). Despite this, the government pressed ahead with the roll-out.

The goal of the new system was to merge in-work and out-of-work means-tested benefits and introduce an electronically calculated automatic process of payments, responding immediately to changes in working hours, smoothing out rates at which benefits were reduced as claimants started to pay income tax, and with improved incentives to take even a few hours of paid work. But the system would embody a strengthened 'conditionality'—the requirement to demonstrate active 'job-search'.

All claimants were to sign up to a 'Claimants' Commitment', after an interview by an adviser at Jobcentre Plus, in which they agreed to prepare for work and find employment, or seek increased hours if they were in part-time jobs. New sanctions could be applied by Jobcentre staff to those who failed to keep these terms, reducing their UC payments for a fixed period.

This meant that the system was both complex and coercive, and former Prime Minister John Major intervened to criticise its implementation, comparing it with the notorious 'poll tax' (BBC Radio 4, *World at One*, 2 October 2018). By the start of 2019, only 10,000 of the three million claimants of the relevant benefits had been transferred to UC, and the issues of delays and consequent debts had been widely publicised (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 6 January 2019). The plan to stop payments for third and

subsequent children in families was suspended for existing claimants (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 11 January 2019).

Scandals about inefficiency and delay began to emerge a year later, when a series of television programmes (BBC 2 TV, *Universal Credit: Inside the System*, 11–26 February 2020) revealed the extent of muddle and inefficiency within the administration by the Department of Work and Pensions. As with all means-tested systems, its complexity had led to unacceptable administrative problems and delays. This was of all the more significance because the numbers claiming it had increased by 70 per cent between 2015 and the end of 2019, with further substantial increases predicted (Powell, 2020).

Much more seriously, the possibility that 591 suicides by claimants might be linked with benefits withdrawal after 'work capability assessments' was raised by Stephen Timms M.P., Chair of the House of Commons Select Committee on Work and Pensions, who expressed concern about the department not taking these statistics seriously, and having a culture of trying to get claimants off the books (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 7 February 2020).

This issue had been dramatised in the Ken Loach film, '*I, Daniel Blake'*, and highlighted by the publication in January of a House of Commons Briefing Paper, *'Universal Credit and the Claimant Count'*, by Andrew Powell (2020), which charted the rise in claims from people in employment and showed that conditionality would be extended to an additional 300,000 claimants (p. 3), and possibly 150,000 more who would previously have been eligible for Education and Support Allowance.

Meanwhile, even the categories of claimants seen as most 'deserving', people with disabilities, had been strongly affected by this attempted shift in the purposes of benefits system towards work enforcement. In 2010–11, appeals against disqualification for Employment and Support Allowance had increased from 70,000 a year to 240,000, after large numbers had been reclassified as fit for work. These appeals were successful in record proportions.

So the coronavirus pandemic, with its vast increase in sickness, employment suspensions and redundancy, put a huge strain on a system which had already been shown to be failing. This chapter will explore the reasons for the UK's reluctance to adopt a more radical approach, and the implications for the future.

The Rise in Debate About Universal Basic Income (UBI)

Even before the pandemic's impact, there had been a sudden increase in publications (Haagh, 2019a, b; Jordan, 2020a, b), and media stories which explored the idea of unconditional Universal Basic Income. In various forms, the proposal had been around for a century; immediately after the First World War, an engineer, Major C.H. Douglas, had proposed a 'National Dividend', payable to every UK citizen. His proposal was taken up by a social activist, John Hargrave, who founded a political movement for what he called 'Social Credit', and led a uniformed mobilisation, the Greenshirts, which fought against Sir Oswald Mosley's Brownshirts in the streets of cities during the 1930s (Drakeford, 1997). Although the idea was sidelined after the Beveridge Report and the coming of the welfare state in the immediate post-war era, it lived on in various small groups, and was revived by Hippies in California, in the early 1970s, and came to Britain in the form of the Claimants' Union movement soon afterwards (Jordan, 1973).

At that time, the factor which prompted the mobilisation was once more the rise of mass unemployment which followed the 'oil price shock'. Yet in retrospect the really important policy shift was the Heath government's measure to deal with poverty caused by rapid inflation—means-tested Family Income Supplements. It was this principle, the subsidisation of low wages with what later were renamed Tax Credits, which resulted in an ever-expanding number of pauperised claimants (Jordan, 1973, 2019), and eventually to the crisis in the Universal Credit system which was its successor.

Whereas all previous mobilisations to press for unconditional Universal Basic income had been in developed economies, the principle had surprisingly come to be adopted in a number of less developed polities, and was associated with windfall discoveries of sources of mineral wealth. The best-known of these was the state of Alaska, where large oil resources allowed the profits to be used in various infrastructural projects and social services for the previously poor indigenous population, yet still allowed a surplus for redistribution.

It was a paradox of US politics that the governor of Alaska, Jay Hammond, was a Republican, and that one of his successors was the right-wing firebrand Sarah Palin; yet the setting up of the 'Alaska Permanent Fund' allowed UBIs, initially of $1000 per adult resident of more than one year, to be distributed. The success of the scheme may help explain

why Donald Trump felt able to make his proposal for something very similar when he finally recognised the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, the discovery of oil in one district of the largely arid state of Namibia had led to a pilot study by an NGO, in which payments of a modest sum were made to all citizens. The result was a dramatic improvement in school attendance, an increased use of medical clinics, a rise in numbers of HIV patients taking medication, and—above all—an increase in the status and economic participation of women. Crime rates also fell, and income equality increased (*Citizens' Income Newsletter,* 2012, p. 5).

This was followed by a scheme in Mongolia, and another in Kerala, India, where women's access to income security allowed them to become successful entrepreneurs on a small scale. Finally, there were pilot projects in Finland (Lehto, 2018) and in several cities in the Netherlands; none of these was a true Basic Income scheme, but the results were broadly similar to those in the developing economies, and several other projects all over the world have either started, or are planned (Downes & Lansley, 2018, ch. 38).

But it would have been difficult to anticipate the increase in attention to the proposal which was reflected in radio and television programmes, as well as articles in the press in papers with a broad spread of political affiliations, in the UK in 2019–20. The fact that these immediately preceded the outbreak of the pandemic must have reflected an increased awareness and support (from Green Parties) in the UK and all over Europe, which somehow also reached the USA (though this may have reflected back from the success of the Alaska scheme).

Up to that point, the proposal had been largely treated as an academic (philosophical, political or economic) response to the challenges of income insecurity and the decline in the share of wages and salaries in the national incomes in the advanced economies. Leading theorists such as Philippe Van Parijs (1995) had justified its introduction in terms of an abstract thought experiment, while economists like Guy Standing (2011, 2017)—who had influenced the establishment of the pilot studies in the developing world in his role in the International Labour Office—were arguing that it represented the best future response to precarious employment and the dominance of international finance capital.

For social workers, especially in the UK, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic marks a transition from a long period in which the rise in means-testing and work enforcement has increased referrals of households in

distress to one in which there is an enormous tidal wave of destitution, and no foreseeable prospect of any end to mass insecurity and poverty (Torry, 2014). Inevitably, there will be a rapid rise in homelessness, family break-up and mental illness, all of which will result in higher caseloads and more statutory interventions.

So it is in the interests of social workers, their managers and local authority politicians to look for reforms and innovations which allow their populations to make the enormous adaptations which will be necessary in the post-pandemic world. So far, it seems that Boris Johnson's government is dubious about the proposal and prefers the complexities of various ad hoc schemes and minor adaptations to a longer-term vision of the future needs of citizens. It is not as if the Basic Income approach is any longer outrageously idealistic; Green Parties have been advocating it for several decades, and it has been piloted in Dutch cities—Groningen, Tilburg, Deventer and Wageningen (de Roo, 2018) in Finland (Lehto, 2018)—as well as in developing countries.

Most recently it has also been trialled in several cities in the USA and Canada, several of which were supported by business leaders, such as Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk and Angus Deaton ('Benefit or Burden: The Cities Trying Out Basic Income', *The Guardian*, 27 June 2018). Chicago and Stockton, California, were said to be about to launch pilots.

The obvious missing link in the UK is the Labour Party, which has always showed ambivalence towards the proposal. This is probably because the trade union movement has always been deeply suspicious of it; ever since it was first canvassed in the 1970s, trade union leaderships have argued that it was a means towards deindustrialisation, redundancy and the decline in working class living standards. But all these have happened anyway, and the alternative chosen by Conservative governments and vastly expanded by Labour ones with trade unions' support has both divided the working class and enabled the coercion of claimants (Jordan, 1973, 1996, 2008, 2019).

One consequence of the UBI pilot schemes in developing countries, especially Namibia, was that women, who gained economic independence through this income, often became small-scale entrepreneurs, and/or left their husbands to set up on their own (Haarman et al., 2009). This could be seen as a positive result, especially as children also stayed on longer at school, and got better educational qualifications.

Conclusions

Opponents of the unconditional UBI proposal are right in one way; without other measures to conserve the environment and to create services favourable for well-being it could enable an extreme version of a market order. But the great advantage of its adoption by a Labour regime would be to avoid these dangers, and to find ways to balance its potential to abolish economic coercion and enable creativity and freedom with the expansion of employments—with flexible hours and conditions, and in ways that are also supportive of unpaid work such as caring—with a proper regard and reward for professions, crafts and skills.

The fact that it has so far been Green Parties which have been most reliably supportive of the proposal is obviously linked to its potential to accomplish an economic transformation which will save the earth from extinction through over-exploitation of its resources and from global warming.

Yet something over 100 environmental activists have been murdered worldwide, by those with interests in development. The largest number of these were in Brazil, and the victims included members and leaders of indigenous tribes (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 4 February 2020).

It is clearly unfair to expect developing countries including China, India and Brazil, to remain stuck in lower standards of living in order to save the planet, when they have not caused the threat to its survival. The UBI offers a way in which the West and Japan could offer a model of high well-being without economic growth, based on the Basic Income principle.

In a political climate of populist nationalism and authoritarianism, history shows that social work is always in danger of becoming an instrument of an oppressive regime. The coercive conditions for an ever-widening proportion of claimants of means-tested benefits, in the face of a lengthy post-pandemic recession, threaten to involve them in yet more ethically repugnant activities. The UBI will soon have been trialled in a wide variety of economies and societies, and to have had broadly positive consequences.

The problem, of course, is that the measures to offset the pandemic's damage have been very expensive, and public debt has risen alarmingly in many countries. It will take imagination and skill for political leaders to steer a way between the present situation and a more hopeful future. It is to be hoped that these qualities will emerge before more sinister influences are brought to bear on liberal polities.

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CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

Abstract This book has attempted to link the future development of social work to current, somewhat catastrophic, events in global political economy. It approached this task by considering the history of the profession, and its responses to earlier and contemporary cultural, economic and political currents in Western societies. I have argued that it cannot escape from a responsibility to address fundamental issues of authoritarianism in politics, growing inequality in economies and societies, and coercion in social policies. It must also recognise and support policy proposals in other fields which offer opportunities for alternative, progressive developments in future.

Keywords Crisis • Suthoritarianism • Recession • Progressive agenda

One way of recognising the significance of the post-pandemic moment and the economic recession for social work is to contrast the history of practitioners in Germany in the 1930s and in the UK during and immediately after the Second World War. In the former, the Nazis dismantled the whole institutional structure of German democracy at lightning speed in 1933, and then enlisted social workers among thousands of others in implementing its murderous racist agenda. The profession was among

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those groups most culpably compromised by their active participation in the nation's complicity in the Holocaust.

In the UK, social workers, although they seemed largely irrelevant during the Great Depression of the 1930s, made a valuable contribution to the dispersal of children leaving their homes during the evacuation from districts vulnerable to Luftwaffe bombing, both in finding foster homes and settling them in these. This ensured that the post-war welfare state made Children's Departments in particular (Packman, 1975) very important features in a new landscape of equal citizenship, in which stigmatised status and coercive relationships—as under the Poor Laws (Curtis, 1946; Middleton, 1970)—were minimised.

But now the UK's overall situation, both in terms of the global political economy and in its own internal relationships, seems to be a perfect storm. On the one hand, the Brexit vote has isolated it from the European continent, and seems likely to impose higher costs on goods imported from the EU, and make exports there less competitive. But on the other, greater reliance on Donald Trump's protectionist USA creates severe problems in relation to China, an important trading partner.

Ever since the 1990s, the UK's own infrastructure has been increasingly reliant on Chinese-made technology, both overall and in terms of national security. Now a combination of the crisis over power relations in Hong Kong (with the UK still a guarantor of the political processes of transition to Chinese governance), and Trump's hostility towards China have caused a sudden decision to reduce this dependence. The rationalisation for this (that the Chinese government controls the tech giant Huawei, and uses this to spy on the West) is transparently a concession to Trump: Huawei was always known to be an instrument of Chinese foreign policy. The Chinese threaten retaliation (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 15 July 2020).

This may all seem very remote from social work, but it will have a direct impact on its future. Just as the pandemic-related recession has already caused a rise in poverty and inequality, with adverse consequences for families with children, so these events will lead to crucial decisions about social policies. In order to deal with disrupted employment, services and economic security, as well as the influx of refugees from Hong Kong, social workers will have to be deployed more widely, and to find ways to meet more pressing needs.

The kinds of dilemmas posed by the post-pandemic situation will be intensified versions of those which are intrinsic for liberal democracies. Individuals in such societies have rights and freedoms; they also live in

communities with shared resources and common interests, with the ability to participate in political action over collective decisions. Social work practice consists in reasoning with fellow citizens about how to deal with stressful situations in dialogues towards negotiated solutions (Jordan, 1990).

There is nothing new about the injustices faced by many of social work's service users in such societies; the pandemic and consequent recession have simply deepened and intensified these, and hence made such negotiated solutions more difficult. But if social workers cannot embrace the challenges of this situation, they are likely to find themselves replaced by other officials, with cruder ideas about how to handle interpersonal relations.

As the pandemic receded, the continuing massive death rates of care home residents demonstrated how the prolonged postponement of solutions to issues (such as the funding of social care) could make the most vulnerable citizens pay the ultimate price. Social work had largely withdrawn from the political debate about care (see Chap. 4), but its absence from the field did it no credit, as frontline care workers, many of them from overseas, deservedly won high praise for their bravery. Even members of the blameworthy government acknowledged that they deserved both greater recognition and higher pay.

Post-Pandemic Prospects

This book has analysed how the development of authoritarian policies for social control and a divided working class have compromised the post-war role of social work and marginalised its potential contribution to social justice. The post-pandemic society will either see all these features intensified, or a whole new direction in social policy, and a more progressive version of social work's role.

Although unemployment in the UK has not shown a significant increase, economic recession has seen a record 16 per cent decline in the numbers of hours worked (i.e. 175 million hours fewer). Some 65,000 workers came off company payrolls in the second quarter of the year, and one third of companies planned to cut staff in the following quarter (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 16 July 2020). It was therefore unclear how many of the nine million furloughed staff would eventually be re-employed. In the post-pandemic economy, poverty will have increased sharply, with low-income families vulnerable to all kinds of social ills.

In his address to the virtual Conservative Party Conference in October 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson promised a great expansion in home ownership among the younger generation, through a new burst of house-building—despite tight planning regulations and the lack of impetus among developers. This pledge was made in the face of a record of the lowest numbers of new houses built in the past two decades in any since the 1950s. It would require a radical reform of the planning laws, but many of his own party's MPs were critical and sceptical.

Those from Home Counties constituencies were upset by the threat to the countryside in the Green Belt and beyond, while those new members from the 'Red Wall' northern constituencies were dubious whether these plans really applied to their area. One of them, Jake Berry MP, has formed a Northern Research Group, which he described as a 'trade union for Northern MPs', for a consistent set of policies to release the potential of the North (BBC Radio 4, *The Week in Westminster*, 10 October 2020).

At the same time, almost all the homeless 'rough sleepers' on the streets of UK cities had been accommodated in (almost empty) hotels and travel lodges during the lock down. If this was suddenly feasible, why had so little been done for them for the previous many years? At least they were not immediately evicted when lock down was suspended.

In this economic climate, it would be very easy for a government to implement measures for mass schemes of compulsory workfare-style activity, mobilising unemployed claimants to do various forms of service work for minimal wages. Firms could make super profits from projects which harness this workforce to add to the privatised infrastructure, further developing an economy in which the enslaved claiming class is made to serve the requirements of a privileged bourgeoisie. It could be an even more exploitative form of capitalism than Karl Marx ever envisaged.

Alternatively, the post-pandemic surplus of labour offers an opportunity seriously to address the threats of climate change resulting from global warming. Large numbers of workers could take part in schemes of all kinds to save energy, but especially to plant trees to absorb carbon. As fewer farm animals are kept for meat and dairy products, more land would become available for use of this kind.

In conjunction with a Basic Income scheme, this approach to the establishment of an economy for social and environmental sustainability would address all the perils of the authoritarian model, heading off the risks from a divided working class, and from state coercion. In the aftermath of the pandemic, it would no longer be a distant utopia (as in Bregman's [2017]

vision) but an urgent necessity, to ward off the dangers of the dystopian alternative.

Social work's role could then become far more positive. Just as it was able to do straight after the Second World War, it could help those most adversely affected by the pandemic to find positive and constructive roles in the new society, and to share in the common project of reconstruction. Under capitalist globalisation, all these potentially valuable members of their communities have been marginalised, treated as at best requiring surveillance and direction, at worst threats and burdens. In this version of the future, they would have opportunities to show their true worth.

As I have shown in this book, the politics of authoritarianism has been the most extreme form of a direction in social policy which was taken in the 1970s. If at that time the decision had been made to aim towards sustaining earnings at levels sufficient for subsistence, and keeping benefits payments without means-testing, the path of policy might have led directly towards the kinds of progressive future society which now requires a complete reversal of our momentum for its post-pandemic realisation.

Social work has now been sheltering from the controversies surrounding social policy for so long that a more visible public role, as a leading participant in the creation of a new economic and social order, would not come easily; new leaders, unafraid of risking notoriety, would be needed. These seemed to be emerging in the 1970s, but the profession was put back in its box by the developments of the following decade.

Conclusions

With each passing month, the global future seems more uncertain. This is partly because of the unpredictability of President Donald Trump and the veiled power of the Chinese leadership, but it is equally because of factors which are particular to local economies and the decisions of ordinary people, even when they reflect global issues. For instance, on 16 July 2020, it was reported on BBC Radio 4 *News* that 13 UK universities faced insolvency because they were among the 16 receiving over a quarter of their income from their share of the 120,000 Chinese students in the country, whose presence in the new academic year was in doubt as a result of the pandemic.

But of equal concern was the news the same day that huge forest fires were raging inside the Arctic Circle in Siberia. These seemed incontrovertibly related to global warming; record temperatures of 38 degrees

centigrade had recently been registered there. Concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were higher in 2018 than in any times since a period three to five million years ago, when sea levels were ten metres higher, and temperatures two to four degrees warmer (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 25 November 2019).

Establishment figures have become critical of a lack of political leadership on such issues in the UK. Sir David King, an adviser to the government on climate change, said he was 'scared' by such phenomena as melting sea ice in the Arctic, storms, river floods, and risks to cities such as Kolkata and even London (ibid.).

In the same week, a British Academy report found that the UK had the most extreme form of capitalism in the world, with the pursuit of profit for shareholders' returns not mitigated by any other purposes, such as ecological protection or social justice. Professor Colin Mayer said that leading companies should set an example in taking a new course (BBC Radio 4, *Today*, 27 November 2019).

Such national and global issues are well beyond the scope of social work's influence, but they signal the magnitude of the decisions to be taken in the wake of the pandemic. I have argued in this book that it is likely to be deployed in one of two broad policy programme; either it will serve these intensifications of capitalist strategies, including the further coercion of a pauperised class, or it will seek a new direction through policies for sustainability and work-sharing, enabled by an unconditional Universal Basic Income.

There has been enough evidence from its history that social workers could make a valuable contribution to the latter, far more progressive policy programme. It is to be hoped that the opportunity for this comes about. It has long been acknowledged that social work principles include empowerment, challenging oppression and promoting social justice, and that practice involves an engagement with citizens in which they meet 'as interdependent actors within an organic system that is best described as reciprocal in nature' (Shulman, 1999, p. 35). A similar view is advanced by Adams, Dominelli and Payne (2005), who write of a 'transformational' view of their role, designed to change 'current configurations of inequality and diswelfare that prevent people from realising their full potential' and to 'connect our interpersonal interactions with our political objectives' (p. 2).

These are the objectives which I have sought to advance in this book, by identifying both barriers to their achievement and means through which they might be promoted.

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