



Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ Ibid. Pinker’s interpretation was applied to Britain, Russia, and America.

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

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

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

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

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

⁹ The term to “fare well” in this context means to be successful and to be in good health and spirits.

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

NEW HISTORIES OF WELFARE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ Thane, *Divided Kingdom*, 194.

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

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

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

¹⁵ Ibid. 199.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²³ Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*.

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

²⁵ Worth, Eve. 2022. *The Welfare State Generation: Women, Agency and Class in Britain Since 1945*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 8.

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

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

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

LIVED EXPERIENCE, EXPERIENTIAL EXPERTISE AND HISTORY OF EXPERIENCE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³² *Ibid.* 797.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁷ Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴² *Ibid.* 377.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁸ Hilton et al., 3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DOING HISTORIES OF EXPERIENTIAL EXPERTISE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁶ See Chris Millard’s chapter (‘Justifying Experience, Changing Expertise: From Protest to Authenticity in Anglophone “Mad Voices” in the Mid-Twentieth Century’) in this collection.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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