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“Speaking for the Contribution of History”: Context and the Origins of the Social Welfare History Group

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The Social Welfare History Group developed in the mid-1950s from a rebirth of interest in historical matters within social work and an emerging concern about social welfare issues in history. Following a brief case study of the interdisciplinary organization, this article examines three contexts that gave rise to and limited the relationship between discipline and profession: the emerging field of social welfare history, the reexamination of social work education occurring at the time, and the conservative political economy of the 1950s. The study underscores the value of historical research in social work and contributes to current debates about knowledge development, intellectual boundaries, and interdisciplinary cooperation.

History holds a marginal place in social work.¹ At certain times and places, however, historical knowledge and historical research methods have been seen as more legitimate and valuable.² The barriers between discipline and profession decline; a more mutual relationship emerges. The Social Welfare History Group (SWHG) developed in the mid-1950s from a rebirth of interest in historical matters within social work and an emerging concern about social welfare issues in history. The history of the SWHG underscores how developments in social work education and the historical discipline provided both openings and barriers to forming an interdisciplinary organization of social workers and historians. Ulti-

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mately, permeating and expanding the boundaries of each proved easier than building long-term cooperation between the two.

Following a brief case study of the early history of the SWHG, this article examines more specifically the circumstances that gave rise to the mutual relationship between discipline and profession. The impact of three contexts is evaluated: the emerging intellectual field of social welfare history, the reexamination of social work education occurring at the time, and the conservative political economy of the era. The intellectual path of social welfare history took it from the margins to the center of the historical discipline, but it never left social work's perimeter. The reexamination of social work in the 1950s produced, for a brief time, more porous boundaries in the profession, permitting consideration of the value of historical research to social work. But professional constraints, most notably narrowing conceptions of research methodology in social work, undercut the modest turn to history. Finally, the era's political economy, hostile as it was to social work and social change, encouraged an interest in the past. As the larger contemporary context constricted for social workers and social problems mounted, some in social work sought knowledge, insight, and progressive models in the past. This history of the SWHG speaks to the value of historical knowledge and research in social work education, as well as to current debates about knowledge development, intellectual boundaries, and interdisciplinary research and cooperation in social work.

The Social Welfare History Group

In 1955, the distinguished social work scholar and administrator Karl de Schweinitz, then at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Social Work, wondered why history was such a neglected subject in social work education. De Schweinitz, among his many credits, was the author of a history of social welfare in England, which traced problems and policy from the fourteenth century to the universal coverage of the Beveridge Act of 1942.³ The "big picture" concerned him; the narrowing of social work education troubled him. In preparing a paper for an upcoming session at the annual meeting of the Council on Social Work Education (hereafter CSWE), he wrote to Ernest Witte, executive director at the newly formed council, about the state of history content in schools of social work. He wrote similarly to Fedele Fauri, who served as dean at the University of Michigan School of Social Work and as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Council for Social Work Education. To Fauri he inquired whether the council had ever considered establishing a committee on the study and teaching of history in schools of social work: "I wonder how far we are going to get in education for leadership unless we do more, than I suspect is now being done, to give social workers historical perspective. I covet for our students more philo-

sophic sweep and a wider knowledge of past experience as background for developing the ability to plan and to conceive social programs and social legislation. We are behind other professions in the attention we pay to history.”⁴

That same day he wrote to Elizabeth Neeley, consultant on program services at CSWE, questioning the profession’s neglect of history in curriculum development and professional meetings. “Since the passing of the Abbott-Breckinridge leadership in social work the subject of history has had little attention in the schools or in the profession.”⁵ A few months later, in Buffalo at the 1956 Annual Program Meeting, de Schweinitz delivered a call to arms on the place of history in social work education entitled “Social Values and Social Action—the Intellectual Base as Illustrated in the Study of History.” As he emphasized, “speaking for the contribution of history in this movement toward synthesis, I hope that social work will increasingly cultivate the long view.”⁶ He outlined how a study of the past could illustrate “the vision of social work as a social force. . . . [and] continue our faith in social change.”⁷ The well-received paper prompted an informal discussion at a later hour that attracted nearly 100 people, 40 of whom signed cards indicating an interest in joining a committee on social welfare history. Thus began the SWHG.⁸

With the assistance of social work academics Verl Lewis (then at the University of Connecticut) and Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey (she then at Russell Sage), de Schweinitz set up an organizing committee. This group, which identified itself as the Preliminary Planning Committee of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare, met in New York City in July 1956 to adopt a program and select officers until a more formal membership body could be assembled. Nathan Cohen, associate dean of the New York School of Social Work and president of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), Walter Townshend of the Pennsylvania Citizens Association, and Boyd Schafer, executive secretary of the American Historical Association (AHA), also attended. Invited but unable to attend were prominent leaders in social work education, including Norris Class, Grace Coyle, Arthur Dunham, Rachel Marks, and Louis Towley. Brian Tierney, a historian at Catholic University working on welfare issues in the medieval era, was also invited. Each person, de Schweinitz noted, demonstrated interest in either teaching, researching, or writing social welfare history.⁹ With representatives from the AHA, the CSWE, and the NASW, the Preliminary Planning Committee concluded that sufficient interest had been expressed at Buffalo to warrant the founding of an organization focused on the history of social welfare. They would call it the Committee on the History of Social Welfare (later renamed the Social Welfare History Group [SWHG]). De Schweinitz was elected chairman. They proposed a twofold purpose for the committee: teaching social welfare history content and encouraging historical re-

search in social welfare.¹⁰ To these ends, the preliminary planning meeting chose to develop an “informal, loose organization” with close relations to the AHA, CSWE, and NASW, but not tied to any one discipline or organization, given that none was sufficiently inclusive of the committee’s potential constituency among both social workers and historians.¹¹

Early Success

Two issues quickly confronted the group: interdisciplinary participation and the CSWE’s curriculum study under the direction of Werner Boehm. Building an interdisciplinary organization was a splendid idea, but no easy task. Operating on the margins of two disciplines, how could an organization tied to an interdisciplinary field survive? How could a shared intellectual interest in social welfare history bring together two disciplines that had a history, more or less, of ignoring one another? The Preliminary Planning Committee, for example, had an obvious lack of historians. Schafer was involved more with administrative matters at the AHA and served this group only as a liaison, choosing not to join the official planning committee. Tierney was the only person on the committee employed as a historian. To remedy this situation, the group proposed the names of distinguished historians who might be interested, among them Merle Curti, Robert Bremner, Richard Shryock, Caroline Ware, Richard Hofstadter, Henry Commager, Eric Goldman, and Oscar Handlin. Commager, for example, was “enthusiastic about the whole idea” and suggested that Curti, Hofstadter, Goldman, Handlin, and others “are vitally interested in this area and that the participation of some of them would help make this truly an interdisciplinary effort.”¹²

Interdisciplinary affiliation with historians seemed not only possible to the founders of the SWHG but cutting edge. Curti, among his many credits, had recently chaired the Princeton Conference on the History of Philanthropy in the United States. In February 1956, representatives from the Russell Sage Foundation and the Ford Foundation met for two days with eight historians including Curti, Shryock, and Thomas Cochran, to discuss the nature, direction, and promotion of historical research in philanthropy.¹³ The Princeton Conference anchored efforts among historians, although the initiative for the conference came from foundations seeking to change the public image of philanthropy. The social issues of the day increasingly interested historians, and foundations and professionals sought through history insight into and validation of their efforts.

Initial efforts of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare were promising. At the 1957 meeting in Philadelphia of the National Conference on Social Welfare, the group put together a session with Rachel Marks presiding and presentations by historians Robert Bremner and Thomas Cochran, and social worker Nathan Cohen. Cohen, picking up

on Bremner's opening remarks that the session was being held on the twentieth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision on the Social Security Act, "brought the meeting alive at a very late hour on a very hot night" with his remembrance of the uncertainties that he, Jane Hoey (also in the audience), and others felt 20 years before as they sat and heard the decision read.¹⁴ "On the spot people began putting forward suggestions for the subject matter and speakers for another meeting."¹⁵ At the AHA meeting held in New York City in December 1957, the connection improved between social workers and historians when 18 historians "devoted to the cause of social welfare history" met with seven social workers to identify common ground and offer suggestions for future work.¹⁶ This interdisciplinary group proposed to secure funds to enlarge the committee's newsletter, encourage social workers to "propose topics for research by historians which social work would find particularly illuminating," use social welfare agency records as historical source material, develop an introductory bibliography on social welfare history, and recognize the "need for more understanding on the part of historians of the content and methodology of social work education."¹⁷ The group planned to put together a session for the 1958 AHA and announced the upcoming session on the history of philanthropy at the April meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association (later the Organization of American Historians [OAH]).

Aware of the value of interdisciplinary work, as well as its pitfalls, the social workers and historians felt "united by a common interest in social welfare history."¹⁸ Natural links developed quickly. Norris Class, chairman of the committee in de Schweinitz's absence in 1957, "has quite a seminar group going among historians and teachers of social welfare" in southern California, Muriel Pumphrey reported, and "Nat Cohen, Professor Hofstadter, and Professor [William] Leuchtenberg here at Columbia are hoping to get a discussion group started next year perhaps including people from New York University and Fordham."¹⁹ In 1958, a panel at the CSWE Annual Program Meeting sponsored by the Committee on the History of Social Welfare illustrated not only the organization's membership growth (nearly 200), but its ability to bring together social workers and historians at a professional social work gathering to discuss social welfare history. The all-day workshop, "Technical Problems in the Teaching of Social Welfare History," reflected "the growing interest in the important area of social welfare history," including "an extension and deepening of the discussion begun at last year's workshop."²⁰ The morning session dealt with student research projects in social welfare history, while the afternoon focused on the use of the professional historian in the teaching of social welfare history at schools of social work.

De Schweinitz knew that history had never been "a first love of social workers" because, as he put it, "the pressure of contemporary events and the urge to learn and teach the skills of practice can make even a glance

at the past seem a waste of time.”²¹ And he knew that disciplinary myopia cut both ways. Frank Bruno, appalled by the disinterest of the history profession, had argued earlier that there was too little information regarding social welfare history because “the processes of human relations, with which social workers must deal, have never constituted the primary interest of any writers of history.”²² Bremner concurred, noting somewhat later that, “the only thing new about social welfare history is the professional historian’s interest in it.”²³ Given this legacy of mutual disinterest, de Schweinitz was especially pleased with the group’s initial progress. As he phrased it, “before the meeting [in 1956] I would have said that social workers, being practitioners and administrators, were interested only in the immediate now and were inclined to feel that the past once past was done with. Two things, however, have happened. First, we have matured to the point of being old enough to have an American history. Social workers have come to realize that they have had a part in the making of history, have been right in the middle of it, and have been influenced by it. . . . Second, at apparently the same time that social workers have been discovering history, historians have been discovering social work and are beginning to research in social welfare. . . . Both historians and social workers are competently represented on the Committee and are finding the interchange which this makes possible stimulating and productive.”²⁴

Admittedly, the committee’s success was quite modest: an informal professional organization with a few hundred members paying annual dues of \$2.50 that published a newsletter and arranged and hosted sessions at a few academic conferences each year. But in 1958 the founders and members of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare were confident in their new project, and they clearly had some basis for optimism. Social welfare history seemed to be growing as an important and legitimate topic of investigation among both social work academics and historians.

Interdisciplinary Tensions

The mixed signals of the social work profession toward history and historical research in the social work curriculum, however, compounded problems for the committee. Initially, prospects looked bright. Boehm, then director and coordinator of the CSWE’s curriculum study, responded favorably to de Schweinitz’s call for the importance of history in the social work curriculum. They talked about it in Buffalo at the Annual Program Meeting in 1956. Boehm enthusiastically outlined to de Schweinitz a tentative plan that had “social work history” as one of the six areas to be covered in his curriculum study. After deliberating with others at CSWE, however, Boehm reconsidered. The curriculum study could not handle the subject of history through its own staff. Perhaps de Schweinitz or the Committee on the History of Social Welfare

would be able to do it.²⁵ At de Schweinitz's invitation, Boehm attended the first meeting of the Preliminary Planning Committee on the History of Social Welfare that July in New York City to discuss the place of history in the curriculum study and who would have responsibility for it. Despite Boehm's support for history and the work of the committee, deliberations did not go well.²⁶ The CSWE proposed that the committee "sponsor the part of the social work curriculum study covering history of social work and provide a panel of people to work as advisors."²⁷ The committee members declined. The committee was too new and not well enough organized to take on such an important task. Even more significant, they told Boehm that "it would be better for the Curriculum Committee to consider history in the same way other subjects were being analyzed, and finance and staff that study as others were being handled."²⁸ The social welfare history committee members did go on record in support of history being included as a subject in curriculum content and informally suggested people likely to be helpful to the study in this regard.

Ultimately, the curriculum study, published in 13 volumes, called for broadening the social work curriculum and for emphasizing the importance of liberal arts and social science content. It covered seemingly every critical issue related to curriculum content. The study, however, included no volume on the history of social work or the history of social work education.²⁹ It made only passing reference to the importance of history, proposing to include content on history only in the policy sequence, and it contained nothing on historical research as a valid method in social work research.³⁰ Boehm had not forgotten history. As he wrote in volume 1 in a discussion of the study's methods and processes, "consideration was also given to the inclusion of a project on the history of social welfare. After due deliberation, it was decided that history of social welfare was not properly an area of the social work curriculum."³¹ It was deemed best to "infuse" it throughout the curriculum. The net result was the neglect of history in the study. Boehm and others liked the idea of history in the curriculum but did not quite know what to do with it and did not take it as seriously as other aspects of social work education. This problem would continue to vex the SWHG.

The writings on social work research methods of Samuel Mencher, the author of the curriculum study's volume on research methods in social work education, reflect further social work's ambivalence toward social welfare history. Mencher supported historical approaches in social work education, and he deplored social workers approaching each issue *de novo*, as if every discovery and project were an original one. "This intellectual isolation hinders systematic scientific growth," he noted elsewhere in 1957. "Teaching by the historical method offers the opportunity to structure knowledge cumulatively and to point up the continuity of themes in social work thinking."³² Yet, in the volume on social work research that he authored in the Boehm study, there is no mention of history as a valid research method for social work except, that is, in a

survey of research specialists, which identified “history and development of social work research” as the least important content to include in a research course, last among 30 subjects.³³ The absence of historical research is striking, given the very significant percentage of historically oriented doctoral theses written in social work in the 1950s. A recent study concludes that historical dissertations composed approximately 13 percent of social work dissertations in all doctoral degree granting programs in the 1950s.³⁴ The neglect of history in the Boehm study continued in the volume written by Muriel Pumphrey, one of the founders and prime movers of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare. In her volume on the teaching of values and ethics, history appears only in the appendix, where a course is proposed on the “historic development of social work.”³⁵ The curriculum study clearly looked to the future, not the past, despite the interest in history of some of the committee’s members and some of the study’s authors.

Although the neglect of history in social work education jibes with its treatment in the past, it is especially noteworthy in the mid-1950s because history was being discussed in varied venues in social work, not only those associated with the Committee on the History of Social Welfare. A number of publications, all in 1957, illustrate the point. In many ways the year seemed like a mini renaissance of interest in social welfare history. In 1957, Ernest Greenwood, another distinguished member of the profession, emphasized in his survey of social work research in the 1950s the existence and importance of historical research in social work education.³⁶ Also in that year, the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* included as a “new feature in this issue” three essays to contextualize the topical articles, beginning with a 26-page essay on the history of social welfare written by Harry Lurie.³⁷ Joe R. Hoffer, executive secretary of the National Conference on Social Welfare, wrote in the 1957 edition of Frank Bruno’s history of the profession: “an understanding of the past and an awareness of social work’s position in the march of events are essential as a basis for charting our future. Karl de Schweinitz made an eloquent plea for the contribution of history to a stronger profession at the 1956 Annual Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education. . . . The National Conference will continue as it has in the past to relate the social work profession to the social welfare field and to build on the knowledge of the past so that we can go forward.”³⁸ These distinguished voices in the late 1950s emphasized history’s value to social work. Nevertheless, the mainstream of the profession never embraced it.

Disciplinary Boundaries Prove Insurmountable

The SWHG (renamed in 1962, replacing the Committee on the History of Social Welfare) did not grow much beyond its early development. It certainly never achieved the success of the Social Work Research Group

(SWRG), a contemporary counterpart that also sought to expand interdisciplinary content in social work education. Nor did it achieve the success of the much later Social Science History Association, another interdisciplinary effort to bridge history and social sciences, albeit minimally to social work.³⁹ Throughout the 1960s a handful of participants took an active interest in the SWHG: Karl de Schweinitz, Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey, Verl Lewis, Clarke Chambers, Rachel Marks, Robert Bremner, and Gisela Konopka among them. The group continued to hold sessions at both history and social work conferences. One of them, a three-session workshop on “Current Issues in Social Work Seen in Historical Perspective” at the 1962 CSWE Annual Program Meeting in St. Louis, resulted in CSWE publishing the papers, written by historians and social workers, including comments by sociologist Dorothy Becker.⁴⁰ In 1964 Chambers, a coleader of the workshop whose contribution was later published in *Social Service Review*, founded the Social Welfare History Archives Center at the University of Minnesota.

Such advances notwithstanding, after a good start the relatively informal SWHG never built a solid interdisciplinary organization. Although de Schweinitz was the driving force, the organization seemed to have the standing in both social work and history and the intellectual interdisciplinary breadth to make it work. Perhaps because he was more interested in big issues than organizational detail and perhaps as a consequence of a heart attack he suffered in 1966, by the late 1960s, the aging de Schweinitz was no longer very involved in the SWHG. No one had as much ownership of the group as he, and most others were too busy to devote enough attention to building the organization. Ralph Pumphrey, on whose shoulders much of the secretarial and coordination tasks fell, including the *Newsletter* and serving as president of the SWHG, got a new job at Washington University in 1960 and was never able to pay sufficient attention to the organization’s needs. He noted that any success of the group resulted from “the natural buoyancy of the craft during the past couple of years than anything I myself contributed.”⁴¹ Rachel Marks declined the presidency of the organization in 1960 but asked Frank Breul to take on the *Newsletter* for a time. When Bremner assumed the presidency from Pumphrey in 1966, the group seemed to gather new energy, especially among historians. It sponsored a splendid workshop at the 1967 Annual Program Meeting in Salt Lake City, which included the participation of Ralph Pumphrey, Bremner, James Leiby, Konopka, Chambers, de Schweinitz, Milton Speizman, and others, but this truly interdisciplinary participation seemed to be more the exception than the rule. The session in 1967 considered why the values presented by de Schweinitz in 1956 “are not being achieved, and what needs to be done.”⁴² The SWHG sponsored a similar session at the OAH in 1969, about which Chambers was not as enthusiastic as Bremner. “May I comment briefly,” he offered at the session and later in the SWHG *News-*

letter, “on what I take to be the self-congratulatory tone of many of these sessions sponsored by the Social Welfare History Group? Mr. Bremner has spoken of the fine cooperation between social work and history. Well, yes. But I suspect we’re talking about token integration of disciplines. Essentially what we have done is to make kindly compliments at professional conventions about each other. Social work conventions usually boast the presence of at least one Mr. Token professor of history. As for history conventions, we are delighted (and surprised) to have any social worker turn up at all. And when they are of the stature of our chairman today (Milton Speizman), we count ourselves fortunate indeed.”⁴³

It may have been true, as Chambers wrote a few years later, that history and social work were “natural allies and partners.” Their core was the same: “the study of individual behavior and the course of human experience in society through the dimensions of space and time.”⁴⁴ But the boundaries between disciplines, always high between social work and history and hardening throughout academia, posed serious barriers for the SWHG. The distinguished sociologist Kai Erickson, when he first began looking at the relationship between the study of history and the study of social life, viewed them as “logically different forms of scholarship.”⁴⁵ So did many others. In the first decade of the organization, the SWHG never caught on among historians, except for the few who strongly identified in the 1960s with “social welfare history.” Most historians, even those interested primarily in social welfare history, remained solidly in their profession and their own professional organizations. In the 1960s, subfields of history were still organized primarily by chronology—Roy Lubove and Allen Davis, for example, began as historians of the Progressive Era, Chambers of the 1930s. Twentieth-century reform efforts interested all of them.

In approximately the second decade of the organization’s existence, and especially after the early 1970s, social welfare history became a much more popular topic among historians, stimulated by the War on Poverty of the mid-1960s and the rediscovery of women’s history. These historians increasingly dominated the organization. For years the annual business meeting of the SWHG was held at either the OAH or the AHA. In 1975 the SWHG officially became an “affiliated society” of the AHA.⁴⁶ Walter Trattner, Leiby, and Blanche Coll, all historians of social welfare, held the presidency successively in the early 1970s, with historian Louis Athey in charge of the *Newsletter*. The 1971 annual bibliography of the SWHG identified 12 books and 28 articles related to social welfare history. In 1975, the bibliography cited 47 books and 145 articles. Two years later, the numbers were 82 books and 92 articles. Social welfare history was a mini boom industry. Membership in the SWHG remained just under 200, but the topics and discussions in the *Newsletter*, the conference sessions, and the leadership of the organization demonstrated a declining

role for social workers as social welfare history became more accepted within the discipline of history.

In the late 1970s, social workers became more active again in SWHG leadership and sought to improve connections between the SWHG and their profession. In 1977 social worker Imogene Young became organizational president, followed in the next year by social worker Speizman. In 1978 social worker Phil Poppo was asked to do the *Newsletter*. In 1978, social workers initiated a policy change to have the annual business meeting rotate between the AHA and CSWE meetings.⁴⁷ More than organizational leadership seems to have affected the group's solvency, however. At about this time, the once-dominant historians seemed to lose interest in the SWHG, and many abandoned it. Curiously, the field of social welfare history was thriving, but the interdisciplinary cooperation between historians and social workers in the SWHG was worse than in the early years of the organization. The effect was clear. The SWHG fell into disrepair for nearly a decade, being resuscitated in 1986 through the efforts of Chambers, Poppo, Paul Stuart, Leslie Leighninger, and others.

Curiously, the SWHG declined as the intellectual field of social welfare history grew. Identification and concern with social welfare issues continued among historians. The subjects of social welfare history, broadly conceived, became the core of the history profession, though not necessarily under the title of social welfare history.⁴⁸ In the 1950s and 1960s, however, the interdisciplinary subfield was in its infancy, and disciplinary cooperation between social work and history developed. Disciplinary boundaries hurt the SWHG from achieving more than it did. Without a leader of the stature of de Schweinitz, the professional issues that divide disciplines came quickly to the fore and were never transcended. Chambers was right. There was little cross-fertilization at conferences. A listing of the 20 participants at a CSWE Annual Program Meeting Workshop in 1958 on "Technical Problems in the Teaching of Social Welfare History" included, among those who signed up, only social workers.⁴⁹ Professional boundaries and disciplinary divisions were too great, and interdisciplinary efforts received too little payoff in the disciplines. Of course, this was not unique to social work and history, but it was terribly evident in this interdisciplinary endeavor.

Social work and history regarded one another with a good deal of hesitance and ignorance. A 1962 article that Chambers published in *Social Service Review* the following year impressed Rachel Marks.⁵⁰ She noted, in requesting to use the piece from CSWE, that "Clarke is an unusual man. I think that he will make important contributions to social work education if we will keep our eyes on him and see that he continues to write."⁵¹ But she quickly added, based solely on his background as a historian, "I do not suggest him as a teacher necessarily."⁵² He might be a first-rate scholar, knowledgeable about the history of social welfare, even

an excellent teacher, but having a historian teaching in a social work program was a different matter. Chambers's colleagues in the history department at the University of Minnesota were equally discipline bound, inquiring during an annual merit review whether *Social Service Review* was a peer-reviewed journal.⁵³ Chambers knew that his publishing in social work journals, his presentations at social work meetings, his role in the social welfare history group, even his founding of the Social Welfare History Archives, all counted for little and had little payoff within history. It was chiefly his historical monographs and the articles in history journals that mattered.⁵⁴

Being skilled in two disciplines was not easy for Ralph Pumphrey, either, who was unique in the early SWHG because he held both a MSW (Columbia) and a Ph.D. in history (Yale). But the advanced degrees in two disciplines seemed little help in either social work or history. In an academic world of increasing specialization and disciplinary barriers, they were more a burden. When he was departing New York University in 1959, looking for another university position, Marks responded to him good naturedly that "although you are not 'one of ours' we certainly would be glad to pass your name along to people who may be hunting for staff."⁵⁵ Not one of ours? Because he had a Ph.D. in history? As his career developed, Pumphrey identified as a social work educator first and foremost. He never felt quite at home among the historians. When asked by de Schweinitz to participate in a session of the AHA, Pumphrey hesitated. "I must say I feel a little diffident about playing the dual role of both historian and social worker that you are assigning me. I think I should feel much more comfortable as a social worker who knows something about history than to be both things at one time."⁵⁶ Examples abound as to how the two disciplines were unable to transcend barriers and how each regarded the other with a good deal of doubt. In a bibliography of articles appearing during 1964 on the history of social welfare broadly conceived and compiled by Roy Lubove, then in history at Harvard, only four of the 35 entries were in a social work journal, and that was *Social Service Review*.⁵⁷

To the credit of the social workers and historians in the SWHG, they sought to forge an interdisciplinary effort, one that would begin to build bridges between disciplines, foster a more informed view of each, and counter the marginal status of social welfare history in each discipline. It took a big-picture person like de Schweinitz to think in the first place that the time was right to transcend these barriers. It took more than an informal effort such as the SWHG, without funding or strong support from professional organizations in either discipline, to pull it off.

Contexts

Context helps explain why the study of history in social work education appears more important and legitimate at some times and places and

almost disappears from sight in others. It also reveals the opportunities and barriers to interdisciplinary cooperation. I view the revival of interest in history in social work education in the mid-1950s and the history of the SWHG in three contexts: the interdisciplinary field of social welfare history, the social work profession, and the larger world of political economy. I proceed from the assumption that both history and social work are disciplines of context. British historian Michael Stanford suggests that “the context of an action is the whole environment—social, physical (or natural), and cultural—within which it occurs.”⁵⁸ Because practices and texts are always specific to particular times, places, and individuals, history must be situated in the varied sites that generate it.⁵⁹ This is certainly no less true in social work, which also places in context individual experience and troubles by relating them to their broader environment.⁶⁰

The Interdisciplinary Field of Social Welfare History

The interdisciplinary intellectual field of social welfare history includes both the knowledge and scholarship on social welfare history as well as the historians and social workers producing it. Like most interdisciplinary fields, social welfare history operated on the margins of its disciplinary mainstreams, whether social work or history.⁶¹ As social welfare history grew in popularity, however, it increasingly became the mainstream of the history profession. This resulted in a decline in interdisciplinary cooperation between historians and social workers in the SWHG.

Interest in social welfare history within social work and history has always had a localized and individualized quality, produced by a few authors at specific institutions at specific times. Thus, Marks, at the University of Chicago, could complain to de Schweinitz in 1956, “as you may know, we have still not worked out our history problem here since Edith Abbott’s retirement.”⁶² Edith Abbott, as well as Sophonisba Breckinridge, made the “history of philanthropy” an integral part of social work education at the University of Chicago, sponsored many Ph.D. dissertations and masters theses in social work of a primarily historical nature, and wrote widely acclaimed social welfare histories.⁶³ With their passing, interest in history declined at Chicago. Similarly, in 1958, Joseph Eaton, at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Social Work, remarked that “Karl de Schweinitz has retired and left Los Angeles to make his residence in Washington. This leaves our school without someone qualified to pursue Karl’s area of interest—the History of Social Work. Some day, I am sure, we will find a person to add to our faculty who can fill this niche.”⁶⁴ Schools of social work, then and now, that have had an interest in history and historical research (beyond the nod to it in social policy courses required by the CSWE since 1962), usually do so because of the interests of an individual such as Abbott and de Schweinitz. From the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, the leading individuals—de Schweinitz,

R. and M. Pumphrey, Lewis, Chambers, Bremner, Lubove, Class, Konopka, and Marks—expanded interest in social welfare history through their teaching, research, writing, editing, and archival work.

Those years saw a significant burst of interest in social welfare history, certainly when compared to preceding decades. Many of the social workers and historians who joined the initial Preliminary Committee on the History of Social Welfare were already actively involved in publishing works on the history of social work and social welfare. Bremner's *From the Depths*, arguably the seminal work among historians in U.S. social welfare history, was published in 1956. Shortly thereafter, other committee members published works in social welfare history, among them Towley's update of Bruno's *Trends in Social Work, 1874–1956* (1957), Cohen's *Social Work in the American Tradition* (1958), and Tierney's *Medieval Poor Law* (1959). Other members of the SWHG published what would become classic works in social welfare history, among them, Konopka, *Eduard C. Lindeman and Social Work Philosophy* (1958); Bremner, *American Philanthropy* (1960); R. and M. Pumphrey, *The Heritage of American Social Work* (1961); Curti, *American Philanthropy Abroad* (1963); Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform* (1963); Lubove, *The Progressives and the Slums* (1963) and *The Professional Altruist* (1965); and Louise Wade, *Graham Taylor* (1964). There were many more books, not to mention articles on social welfare history, especially in the decade that followed.⁶⁵ Thomas Campbell, secretary of the SWHG, estimated that between 1964 and 1970, "more than 200 doctoral dissertations have been registered and 105 books published whose subjects bear on some aspect of social welfare history."⁶⁶ As Bremner noted, the only thing new about social welfare history was the interest of historians in it. Also striking, however, was social work's renewed interest in social welfare history.

It was this rebirth of interest in historical matters in social work as well as the emerging concern about social welfare issues in history that provided openings for the development of an organization such as the SWHG. The SWHG was founded owing to the marginality of social welfare history in both social work and history and was sustained, in part, as an interdisciplinary organization—addressing an interdisciplinary field as well as including interdisciplinary representation—only as long as each needed the legitimation and contribution of the other. From the 1970s onward, the field of social welfare history as written by historians had a history of its own independent, for the most part, from the SWHG. The emergence of the "new social history" in the late 1970s took the historical profession by storm, transforming the discipline and undermining the need for cooperation with the social work profession. Perhaps if the SWHG had been able to build stronger bridges between social workers and historians, the new social history would have enriched the organization as it did the discipline. But most of the barriers that divided historians and social workers never came down in the 1950s and 1960s;

things certainly did not improve when the historians dominated the SWHG in the early 1970s. With the emergence of the new social history and a new group of social welfare historians, unsympathetic with the largely institutional approach and less critical intellectual lens associated with the SWHG, deeper divisions developed both in the field of social welfare history and between discipline and profession.

Ultimately, the new social historians took their interest in social welfare history to their own discipline, helping to make it the center of the historical profession, not its margin. Social welfare history remains important among historians; Michael Katz refers to the late 1980s as a “mini-explosion” in social welfare history.⁶⁷ But that is only one small part of what has become the mainstream of the historical profession. The early SWHG’s definition of social welfare history, if not methodology, was inclusive, covering a wide range of social issues and interests. The field of social welfare history as defined by both the historians and social workers associated with the newly formed SWHG in the mid-1950s was more akin in its range to the new social history—including all the multitudinous subfields related to class, race, gender, ethnicity, age, and community—than to the subjects now defined more narrowly by historians as social welfare history. It is, therefore, not difficult to argue that what was defined as social welfare history in the mid-1950s, and what was then at the margins of the historical profession, has become in the last two decades the intellectual center of the historical profession.

The mid-1950s context of the interdisciplinary field of social welfare history provided openings for social workers and historians, but any interdisciplinary enterprise poses serious hurdles, especially to the junior partner. Social work has always held a somewhat subordinate status and questionable intellectual legitimacy in higher education, certainly not the mainstream status of established disciplines such as history and not the legitimacy, or power, of professional programs such as law and medicine. As social welfare history moved from the margins of the history profession to its mainstream, the historians moved away from the SWHG.

The Social Work Profession

Opportunity structures in the profession of social work helped produce initial interest in social welfare history. Social work education, in its brief existence, has never been fixed and absolute.⁶⁸ Its boundaries and content are revisited periodically and even substantially revised. In periods of envisioning such as the 1920s and revisioning such as the 1950s, the “opportunity structure” in the profession was more open and more hospitable to content from other disciplines and professions. The relative openness of the early years of the profession allowed history a place, as both content and method, at schools where there were an interest and skills in history. The reexamination of social work education in the

1950s indirectly permitted and modestly encouraged the formation of the SWHG. At the same time, the barriers and boundaries within the social work profession kept history minor and marginal in social work education.⁶⁹

The context of the social work profession heavily influenced the rediscovery of social welfare history. The 1950s, conservative in most respects, was a time of restructuring, reexamination, and opportunity in social work curriculum development. On the one hand, the establishment of the CSWE and NASW, in 1952 and 1955, respectively, reflected consolidation in the profession, an attempt to clarify and harden the boundaries of social work. On the other hand, counterpressures called for opening and expanding the profession. The Hollis-Taylor report of 1951, for example, encouraged social work education to be more open, especially when it came to interdisciplinary and liberal arts content. It urged the profession to look at the big picture, not to focus myopically on clinical interventions and technique. It sought to broaden the practice of social work to include more social policy and social change. For example, in its critique of narrow casework and in its call for broadening social work education, Hollis-Taylor included, among many curriculum proposals, a comprehensive course in the first-year curriculum "composed of teaching units that present either in historical perspective, or current sociological cross-section, the theory and practice of social work as a profession, its philosophy and ethics, and its relation to other professions and to society in general."⁷⁰ The Boehm study at the end of the decade furthered this call to expand social work education.

The intellectual boundaries of social work were being stretched.⁷¹ The 1950s offered a professional context seeking change, which for many meant greater intellectual and methodological diversity. This "opportunity structure" offered a context in social work education to renew interest in history. The conservatism of the 1950s occasioned in social work education a mixed response. Although most of the practice profession had to toe the conservative line, there were some in academia, with more safety and autonomy than those employed in the field, who sought to counteract the conservatism by broadening curriculum content.⁷² They sought to extend it beyond a narrow focus on casework to consider more fully the major issues of the day, including issues of social change, social policy, community organization, and even history.

The profession was also seeking consolidation and scientific legitimacy. Prominent members of the profession railed against qualitative, descriptive, and historical research. Certainly as early as the mid-1940s the American Association of Social Work (AASW) called for more quantification, a scientific base, and more social scientific approaches to social work research.⁷³ In a profession in which a narrow version of the scientific method and quantitative techniques became *the* basis of research, historical research was clearly an outlier. This was, after all, the

same era that produced the SWRG. Like the history group, the SWRG benefited from openings in the profession after World War II. The SWRG, however, emphasized social science content, mostly from experimental psychology and sociology. Interest in the social sciences did not include interest in history.⁷⁴ Those promoting the value of history would argue that, like other social sciences, historical research offers “established methods for gathering, weighing, and judging empirical data.” Like all good research methods, historical research is primarily concerned with uncovering, evaluating, and interpreting facts.⁷⁵ But within the social work profession there were powerful forces pushing hard in another direction.

Leaders of the SWRG, for example, were quite clear that historical research was part of social work’s problem. It was a vestige of the past, not a direction for the future. “The conclusions or results of a research project stand or fall on the methodology by which the data were collected and the inferences derived. A document purporting to be a research report which does not contain a full description of methodology can carry no weight except with the gullible or already convinced.”⁷⁶ Another AASW study worried about the large percentage of historical studies, nearly 20 percent when research subjects were agencies, programs, and services. They noted few historical approaches when subjects were children, adults, and personnel. Nevertheless, approximately one-third of all studies were “primarily descriptive or historical.” The authors of the AASW report made clear that there was a sizable number of historical dissertations being written and they were not pleased with the historical-descriptive approach.⁷⁷ “The large proportion of descriptive and history-tracing studies may be thought of as a natural consequence of the newness of social work, and of a stage of development not yet characterized by sufficiently elaborate theoretical structures to stimulate many hypotheses testing studies. For the most part these are the same conclusions drawn from other evidences and only point up again the need for social work research to catch up with the advancing front of social work knowledge and to take its place in advancing that front through better-focused, more penetrating studies.”⁷⁸

There were distinct openings as well as barriers to social welfare historical research in the 1950s, but barriers to historical research in social work proved more significant than the opportunities. As David Austin writes, “the emphasis in research courses was increasingly placed on teaching research methodology rather than on the application of research to social policy analysis. . . . By the end of the 1940s the connection between research and social policy within the curriculum had largely disappeared.”⁷⁹ Focus increasingly rested on two models of research—one from psychology and the other, cross-sectional survey research, from sociology—both of which emphasized procedures of statistical analysis. The connection in schools of social work between research

and history continued but only at select universities, where there was a faculty member interested in it. And even at these programs, history was kept at the margins of the profession.

The Macropolitical Economy of the Era

There have been two moments in social work education with greater interest in history: the first, the initial generation of social work education and, the second, the subject of this study. When searching for answers to when and why history and historical methods appear more legitimate in social work education, the larger context is critical. “Perhaps more than any other profession, social work is affected by the times in which it is practiced,” begins Leon Ginsburg in his introduction to the 1987 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Social Work*. “Each decade of post–World War II America has clearly changed the content and extent of social work services and practice modes.”⁸⁰ The macropolitical economy of the 1950s influenced the modest turn to history reflected in the founding of the SWHG.

The interest in history of the first period, personified by the Abbots and others at the University of Chicago, is more a product of the recognized value of historical knowledge and texts and the openness of the newly emerging profession than a response to the larger context.⁸¹ Many of the “pioneers” in social work were products of liberal education, including the humanities.⁸² James Hagerty’s *The Training of Social Workers*, published in 1931, proposes three primary research methods in social work: statistical, case work, and historical. “The historical research method is of growing importance in social research, especially in combination with the statistical, for planning necessitates prediction and prediction involves the study of past sequences.”⁸³ Even earlier training programs of the Charity Organization Society in England made histories of the disadvantaged classes and English poor laws, many of them written by Fabian socialists, essential texts and knowledge for “scientific” social work.⁸⁴

But the other period illustrates a rising interest in history in response to political economies hostile and limiting to social work. Conventional wisdom has it that in more liberal eras influenced by progressive movements—such as the Progressive Era, the 1930s, and the 1960s and early 1970s—the profession bends toward more social change and economic justice. In more conservative eras—such as the 1920s, the 1950s, and our contemporary context—social work retreats into more conservative concerns and practices.⁸⁵ This is well supported by recent studies, especially of social work practice in the 1950s when the profession was consolidating and liberalism was under attack.⁸⁶ Janice Andrews and Michael Reisch offer that “in this repressive climate, the social work profession

retreated from advocacy for social justice to a focus on the development of professional technique and professionalization.”⁸⁷ Fred Newdom proposes it as a general phenomenon in social work. “Social work’s progressive roots only seem to flourish in the sunlight. When darkness overtakes the land, we hunker down and neither curse that darkness nor light a candle.”⁸⁸

The same pattern has often been suggested regarding historical interpretation. Conservative periods yield conservative historical analysis, as with the “consensus” histories of the 1950s and the neoconservative histories of today. In such eras, conservative interpretations of the past often focus on the horrors of history, in comparison with which the present looks splendid; or they emphasize the limits of life and society; or they concentrate on the limits of social change efforts in the past as a means of undermining them in the present. It is more than cliché that history is written by the victors, not the vanquished. History not only offers an interpretation of the past, it often reflects the state of contemporary social struggle.⁸⁹ It follows that each era sees things differently and asks different questions of the past, depending on the dominant issues and ideas of the day. This is no less true for progressive eras, such as the 1960s and early 1970s, which yielded a “new social history” focused on oppressed groups, social change, and struggles for justice.⁹⁰

The origins of the SWHG add another dimension, however; in conservative eras that dampen the flame of social justice, some interested in progressive social change turn to the past for light.⁹¹ The awakening of interest in social work to social welfare history, modest at it was, reflected a turn away from the 1950s toward eras less constrained by conservative models and politics. In a profession such as social work, in which at least a sizable percentage hold to values of social and economic justice, it was, in part, a clever strategy to look to the past while working and living in a reactionary context.

Of course, the turn to history as reflected in the SWHG should not be packaged so neatly. De Schweinitz’s interest in history, for example, was longstanding and certainly connected as much to the origins of the welfare state in both England and the United States as it was to events in the postwar world. One clear ingredient, however, was his response to the politics of the Cold War in America in the 1950s. As he noted in 1956 at the Annual Program Meeting, the talk that triggered the founding of the SWHG, a sense of history enables a nation to act in a more reasonable and judicious manner. He proposed that a better knowledge of the past might also offer to the United States, as well as “our profession and in education for it,” more security, competence, and vision.⁹² The reactionary hysteria of the late 1940s and 1950s ran counter to de Schweinitz’s “vision of social work as a social force” for social change, and he therefore emphasized the importance of a broadened perspective and train-

ing, including “a fuller use of the past and the discipline entailed in its study.”⁹³

The themes of some of the books written in social welfare history at the time clearly reject the conservative era and a conservative version of social work and seek through study of the past to promote progressive models and “shoulders to stand on.”⁹⁴ As Bremner put it, the growth of interest in social welfare history “mirrors the concerns of our times.”⁹⁵ In a profession with a heritage of social justice values and activism, the concerns refract as well as reflect the conservative agendas and discourse of the time. The context of the 1950s included an attack on social justice efforts and the repression of social activists, social workers included, and this occasioned among some a reaction against the age.⁹⁶ Moreover, there was increasing interest by the mid-1950s in the issues of economic poverty and social justice in the affluent society. In more liberal eras, social work at its best is more preoccupied with the present and future, as it helps create and ride a wave of contemporary interest in social justice and social change. In more conservative eras, such as the 1950s, the political economy turns against social work and thereby encourages some in social work to turn to the past. The history of social work is too young to test the theory in more than a cursory manner. But the evidence from the 1950s seems to indicate that when the skies of political economy become uniformly conservative gray, social workers turn to the past for light and more progressive hues.

Context is a multilayered concept that exists across space and time. The context for the founding of the SWHG includes not only contextual factors from that era, such as the opportunities and barriers in the profession or the larger political economy, but also the history of social work education. The place of history in social work education had always been marginal. From the inception of social work as a profession, history was a bit player, if it appeared at all. To be sure, as Katherine Tyson suggests, the early years of social work were characterized by greater methodological pluralism, and in this context, history had more of a place.⁹⁷ But overall, history has always been tangential. It just didn't seem to fit in the present-oriented, more social science-based discipline of social work. There certainly were exceptions. These exceptions provided a collective memory and legitimacy for the founders of the SWHG. Their effort in the 1950s was not unprecedented. Although others in the past had understood the value of history to social work and social work education, the past weighed in heavily against history in social work education. The profession had developed little understanding, little training, and little place for historical content or research methods. By the mid-1950s, some social workers were beginning to understand that their profession had been around long enough to have a history worth studying. Nevertheless, the boundaries of social work that had excluded history over these years

limited the development of the SWHG and a place for history in social work. It is not much less the case today.

Conclusion

One of the major contributions of historical analysis is the study of a specific problem and specific people in a specific place and time. History may be “the discipline of context,” as E. P. Thompson called it, but being attentive to the uniqueness of context does not preclude the development of generalizable theories.⁹⁸ The modest arguments of this article seem applicable to our contemporary era.⁹⁹ Similar to the era in which the SWHG formed, in the past decade there has been a modest wave of interest in history within social work, a strong “turn to history” in other social science disciplines, and an even stronger turn to social welfare history among historians. The reasons for this are the subject of another article. Nevertheless, it appears the same factors from the mid-1950s are evident today. There is a renewed interest in the field of social welfare history among both historians and social workers, although the former do not define their subject always as social welfare history, and the latter are much more marginal in their profession. The profession of social work (not to mention history) is clearly in flux, being challenged by both feminist and postpositivist critiques of the profession, as well as by a general criticism of the limits of “social scientific” social work research.¹⁰⁰ This professional reexamination provides increased openings for discussion about the content and boundaries of social work, including the place and value of history and historical research. Moreover, this is once again a highly conservative era, comparable to the 1950s, in which social policy, social activists, and the recipients of social welfare programs are again under attack. The very idea and legitimacy of social welfare, let alone social change and social justice, is in serious doubt. In such a milieu, this article proposes, it is not unlikely to have social workers, as well as others, turn to the past.

De Schweinitz and the early SWHG sought interdisciplinary cooperation between social work and history, less in terms of forming a marriage between disciplines and more for the ways that each expanded the other. To address larger social problems, social work needs a broader view of society and the causes of its ills.¹⁰¹ A recent volume devoted to the relationship between history and the human sciences proposes that history’s primary contribution is its willingness to research and debate the big issues that shape our destiny.¹⁰² Whether the current efforts of those interested in social welfare history will be any more successful than those of the early SWHG, whether social work will be affected by the prodigious scholarship in social welfare history currently being produced by historians (most of whom know little about social work), or whether these

developments will help encourage social work to look more at the big picture—and include history in it—remains to be seen.¹⁰³

Notes

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1. Clarke Chambers, "Toward a Redefinition of Social Welfare History," *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 407–33, and "'Uphill All the Way': Reflections on the Course and Study of Welfare History," *Social Service Review* 66 (1992): 492–504; Michael Reisch, "The Uses of History in Teaching Social Work," *Journal of Teaching in Social Work* 2 (1988): 3–16; Bogart Leahore and Jerry Cates, "Use of Historical Methods in Social Work Research," *Social Work Research and Abstracts* 21 (1985): 22–27; Paul Stuart, "Historical Research," in *Social Work Research and Evaluation*, ed. Richard Grinnell, Jr., 5th ed. (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock, 1997), pp. 442–57.

2. One of those places, since its inception, has been the *Social Service Review*. See, e.g., Frank Breul and Steven Diner, eds., *Compassion and Responsibility: Readings in the History of Social Welfare Policy in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

3. Karl de Schweinitz, *England's Road to Social Security: From the Statute of Laborers in 1349 to the Beveridge Report of 1942* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1942).

4. Karl de Schweinitz to Fedele Fauri, September 8, 1955, Council on Social Work Education Manuscripts (hereafter CSWE MSS), box 7, folder 24, Social Welfare History Archives (hereafter SWHA), University of Minnesota.

5. Karl de Schweinitz to Ann Elizabeth Neeley, September 8, 1955, CSWE MSS, box 7, folder 24, SWHA.

6. Karl de Schweinitz, "Social Values and Social Action—The Intellectual Base as Illustrated in the Study of History," *Social Service Review* 30 (June 1956): 119–31, quotation on p. 131.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

8. Newsletter, Committee on the History of Social Welfare, 1 (December 1956), p. 1, de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 38, SWHA.

9. Minutes, Karl de Schweinitz to members of the Preliminary Planning Committee, May 4, 1956, de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 37, SWHA.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*; Muriel Pumphrey, acting secretary, minutes of the Preliminary Planning Committee of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare, July 24, 1956, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 2, SWHA. Norris Class assumed chairmanship of the committee when de Schweinitz, nearing the end of his academic career, went to London for a year of teaching and research.

12. Verl Lewis to Norris Class, November 25, 1956, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 5, SWHA.

13. *Report of the Princeton Conference on the History of Philanthropy in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage, 1956). For additional information on the history of philanthropy and a history quite different from the history of social welfare, see Peter Dobkin Hall, "Teaching and Research of Philanthropy, Voluntarism, and Nonprofit Organizations: A Case Study of Academic Innovation," *Teacher's College Record* 93, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 403–35.

14. Ralph Pumphrey to Norris Class, August 4, 1957, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 5, SWHA.

15. *Ibid.*

16. "Historical Association Get-Together," Committee on the History of Social Welfare correspondence, n.d., p. 2, de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 38, SWHA.

17. Ibid.
18. "Historical Association Get-Together," de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 38, SWHA.
19. Muriel Pumphrey to Gisela Konopka, March 6, 1957, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 1, SWHA.
20. *Preliminary Program Guide*, 1958 CSWE Annual Program Meeting, CSWE MSS, box 6, folder 9, SWHA.
21. Karl de Schweinitz, "Comments and Questions for an Interdisciplinary Committee," Committee on the History of Social Welfare newsletter (November 1957), p. 1, de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 38, SWHA.
22. Frank Bruno, *The Theory of Social Work* (New York: D. C. Heath, 1936), p. 246.
23. Robert Bremner, "The State of Social Welfare History," in *The State of American History*, ed. Herbert J. Bass (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), p. 89.
24. Karl de Schweinitz to John Everton, Ford Foundation, May 1, 1958, de Schweinitz MSS, box 37, folder 5, SWHA.
25. Werner Boehm to Karl de Schweinitz, May 1, 1956, Boehm MSS, uncataloged, SWHA.
26. In 1963, e.g., Boehm was a member of the executive committee of the Social Welfare History Group (hereafter SWHG), along with Clarke Chambers, Gisela Konopka, John Kidneigh, Ralph Pumphrey, Rachel Marks, Frank Breul, Richard Wade, Verl Lewis, Robert Bremner, Roy Lubove, Irving Weissman, Ann Elizabeth Neeley, Margaret Pohek, Dorothy Becker, and Karl de Schweinitz. Lubove, Bremner, Wade, and Chambers were employed in history departments. Neeley and Pohek were associated with the CSWE. Clarke Chambers to Executive Committee, SWHG, April 9, 1963, Chambers MSS, box 16, folder 48, SWHA.
27. Minutes of the Preliminary Planning Committee of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare, July 24, 1956, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 2, SWHA.
28. Ibid.
29. In the second volume of the study, authored by Herbert Bisno, there are a few pages devoted to the history of social work education, primarily serving as a very brief introduction to set the stage for the proposed reforms that followed. Herbert Bisno, *The Place of the Undergraduate Curriculum in Social Work Education* (New York: CSWE, 1959), pp. 5–12.
30. Eveline Burns, in an appendix to Boehm's vol. 1 in the curriculum study, suggests that the social work curriculum include a course or seminar on the historical development of social policy in the United States. Eveline M. Burns, "Social Policy in the Social Work Curriculum," appendix C, in Werner Boehm, *Objectives of the Social Work Curriculum of the Future*, vol. 1 (New York: CSWE, 1959), pp. 265–66.
31. Boehm (n. 30 above), p. 26.
32. Samuel Mencher, "How Can the Basic Curriculum Foster Research-Mindedness and More Effective Utilization of the Research Approach?" CSWE pamphlet, 1957, CSWE MSS, box 7, folder 34, SWHA. Mencher later authored a history of welfare in the United States and Britain, entitled *Poor Law to Poverty Program: Economic Security Policy in Britain and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967).
33. Samuel Mencher, *The Research Method in Social Work Education*, vol. 9 (New York: CSWE, 1959), pp. 59–60.
34. Based on a preliminary study, historical dissertations in social work in the 1950s numbered approximately 13 percent of all doctoral theses in social work. Earlier, and at schools of social work where historical research was legitimate, such as at the University of Chicago, in some years historical dissertations were 30 percent of the total. Robert Fisher and Phil Dybicz, "Historical Research in Social Work," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* (September, 1999), in press.
35. Muriel Pumphrey, *The Teaching of Values and Ethics in Social Work Education*, vol. 13 (New York: CSWE, 1959), p. 129.
36. Ernest Greenwood, "Social Work Research: A Decade of Appraisal," *Social Service Review* 31, no. 3 (September 1957): 311–20. The Greenwood study still serves as a jumping-off point for studies of research methods in social work education. See, e.g., Richard Boettcher, "Content Analysis of Social Work Dissertation Papers: Epistemological Implications," in *Integrating Knowledge and Practice: The Case of Social Work and Social Science*, ed. David Tucker, Charles Garvin, and Rosemary Sarri (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997), pp. 62–74.
37. Harry Lurie, "The Development of Social Welfare Programs in the United States," in *Social Work Yearbook, 1957*, ed. Russell H. Kurtz (New York: National Association of Social Workers, 1957), pp. 19–45.

38. Joe R. Hoffer, "Foreword to the Second Edition," in Frank Bruno, *Trends in Social Work, 1874–1956* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. xi–xii.

39. For a precursor statement to the Social Science History Association, see David S. Landes and Charles Tilly, eds., *History as Social Science* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

40. *Current Issues in Social Work Seen in Historical Perspective* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1962). Contributors included Dorothy Becker; Robert Bremner; Clarke Chambers; Rudolph Danstedt of the NASW; James Leiby; Inabel Lindsay, Dean of Social Work at Howard University; Ralph Pumphrey; and Corinne Wolfe from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

41. Ralph Pumphrey to Karl de Schweinitz, October 12, 1966, de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 37, SWHA. De Schweinitz, in a similar vein, had written much earlier to Verl Lewis: "I too have felt concerned and a bit remiss about the lag in the movement of the Committee on the History of Social Welfare. The meetings seem to have been most successful but the scattering of the little group that started it has been a drawback—that and the pressure of—as in the case of Ralph—a new job." De Schweinitz to Lewis, April 23, 1960, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 5, SWHA.

42. "The Place of History in the Social Work Curriculum" (session abstract of the annual program meeting of the CSWE, 1956), Clarke Chambers MSS, box 7, folder 64, SWHA.

43. Clarke Chambers's comment at 1969 Organization of American Historians meeting, cited in *Social Welfare History Group Newsletter* 29 (hereafter *SWHG Newsletter*) (Fall 1970): 27.

44. Clarke Chambers, "The Discipline of History in a Social Welfare Curriculum," *Journal of Education for Social Work* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 11–22, quotation on p. 14.

45. Kai Erickson, "Sociology and the Historical Perspective," in *Applied History Studies: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Michael Drake (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 13.

46. *SWHG Newsletter* 40 (Spring 1975): 3.

47. *SWHG Newsletter* 49 (Spring 1978): 1.

48. See, e.g., the varied works cited in Clarke Chambers, "Toward a Redefinition of Social Welfare History" (n. 1 above). More recently see Linda Gordon, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (New York: Penguin, 1988), and *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Katherine Kish Sklar, *Florence Kelley and the Nation's Work* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995). Even a cursory look at the "Recent Articles" section of the quarterly *Journal of American History* reveals the extent of research on social welfare subjects, although not listed solely under the category of social welfare history.

49. Sign-up sheet, CSWE Annual Program Meeting session, "Technical Problems in the Teaching of Social Welfare History," 1958, CSWE MSS, box 6, folder 9, SWHA. Among those who signed up were Frank Breul, Wilbur Cohen, Gisela Konopka, Verl Lewis, Rachel Marks, and Charlotte Towle.

50. Clarke Chambers, "Social Service and Social Reform: A Historical Essay," *Social Service Review* 37 (March 1963): 76–90.

51. Rachel Marks (editor, *Social Service Review*) to Anne Elizabeth Neeley (CSWE), July 23, 1962, CSWE MSS, box 6, folder 16, SWHA.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Clarke Chambers, interview by author, tape recording, Minneapolis, Minn., July 26, 1997.

54. History and social work are not unique. This same problem affects most interdisciplinary effort. Regarding the history of philanthropy, one scholar put it: "I wouldn't send my best stuff off to a nonprofit journal. If I did, it wouldn't really reach the people in my discipline—the people who matter when it comes to tenure and promotion decisions. They're only interested in what appears in the mainstream professional journals. The problem is, if I publish in these journals, the people in the nonprofit research community—other than those in my own field—are not likely to be aware of what I have written." Quoted in Hall, "Teaching and Research on Philanthropy" (n. 13 above), p. 420.

55. Rachel Marks to Ralph Pumphrey, June 5, 1959, Rachel Marks MSS, box 13, folder 7, SWHA.

56. Ralph Pumphrey to Karl de Schweinitz, September 29, 1961, de Schweinitz MSS, box 5, folder 37, SWHA.

57. *SWHG Newsletter* 21 (April 1965).

58. Michael Stanford, *A Companion to the Study of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 27.
59. Robert Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
60. David Tucker, "Eclecticism Is Not a Free Good: Barriers to Knowledge Development in Social Work," *Social Service Review* 70 (September 1996), pp. 400–34. Tucker refers to this environmental context as "the multiple levels of analysis in the study of the dynamics of human behavior and human organization" (p. 422).
61. For a concept of the role of interdisciplinary subcultures vis-à-vis mainstream disciplines, in this case the history of philanthropy, see Peter Dobkin Hall, review of "The Transformation of Charity of Post-Revolutionary New England," by Conrad Eddick Wright, *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (June 1977), p. 240.
62. Rachel Marks to Karl de Schweinitz, May 21, 1956, Rachel Marks MSS, SWHA.
63. See, e.g., Edith Abbott, *Some American Pioneers in Social Welfare: Select Documents with Editorial Notes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937).
64. Joseph Eaton to Verl Lewis, March 24, 1958, Verl Lewis MSS, box 13, folder 1, SWHA.
65. See, e.g., Muriel Pumphrey, "The First Step—Mary Richmond's Earliest Professional Reading, 1889–1891," *Social Service Review* 31 (June 1957): 144–63.
66. Bremner, "State of Social Welfare History" (n. 23 above), p. 94.
67. Michael Katz, "Segmented Visions: Recent Historical Writing on American Welfare," *Journal of Urban History* 24 (January 1998): 244–55, quotation on p. 244.
68. Tucker (n. 60 above). Also see Kam-Fong Monit Cheung, "Interdisciplinary Relationships between Social Work and Other Disciplines," *Social Work Research and Abstracts* 26 (September 1990): pp. 23–29.
69. The course of social welfare history in the history profession absorbs less attention here because the major impetus for the origins of the SWHG came from social work academia and because the focus is the place of historical research in social work. However, developments in the discipline of history, especially the impact of social welfare history on the new social history, are equally significant and worthy of more study. See, e.g., Chambers, "Toward a Redefinition of Social Welfare History" (n. 1 above).
70. Ernest V. Hollis and Alice L. Taylor, *Social Work Education in the United States: A Study Made for the National Council on Social Work Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 239.
71. See, e.g., Tucker (n. 60 above); and Cheung (n. 68 above) on the porous boundaries of social work education.
72. On the conservative pressures of the decade, see Janice Andrews and Michael Reisch, "Social Work and Anti-Communism: A Historical Analysis of the McCarthy Era," *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 8, no. 2 (1997): pp. 29–47; Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America* (New York: Twayne, 1994), esp. pp. 66–79.
73. William Gordon, "The Focus and Nature of Research Completed by Graduate Students in Approved Schools of Social Work, 1940–1949, as Indicated by Thesis and Project Titles," report, American Association of Social Work, 1951, in CSWE MSS, box 7, folder 34, SWHA.
74. David Austin, *A History of Social Work Education* (Austin: University of Texas, 1986), p. 37. By the end of the 1950s, statistics and quantification were common components of the research component in social work education.
75. Chambers, "Discipline of History in the Social Welfare Curriculum" (n. 44 above), p. 16.
76. William Gordon and committee, "The Function and Practice of Research in Social Work: A Report to the Social Work Research Group from the Committee on Research Function and Practice," May 17, 1951, p. 11, NASW MSS, box 81, folder 892, SWHA.
77. Gordon, "The Focus and Nature of Research" (n. 73 above).
78. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
79. Austin, *A History* (n. 74 above), p. 17.
80. Leon Ginsburg, "Economic, Political, and Social Context," *Encyclopedia of Social Work*, 18th ed. (Washington, D.C.: NASW Press, 1987), p. xxiii.
81. For discussion of the early period as one of "differences" in social work, rather than the rigid "boundaries" that took hold after World War II, see Andrew Abbott, "Boundaries of Social Work or Social Work of Boundaries," *Social Service Review* 69 (December 1995): 545–63.
82. See, e.g., Mary Richmond, *The Long View* (New York: Russell Sage, 1930).

83. James E. Hagerty, *The Training of Social Workers* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1931), p. 121.

84. "Extracts from the Confidential Report of the Social Education Committee of the C.O.S., submitted June 8, 1903," as appendix 3 in Marjorie Smith, *Professional Education for Social Work in Britain* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), pp. 103–14.

85. John Ehrenreich, *The Altruistic Imagination: A History of Social Work and Social Policy in the United States* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985); Stanley Wenocur and Michael Reisch, *From Charity to Enterprise: The Development of American Social Work in a Market Economy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Barbara Simon, *The Empowerment Tradition in American Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Fisher, *Let the People Decide* (n. 72 above).

86. Andrews and Reisch (n. 72 above); Robert Fisher, "Community Development and the Cold War: Lubricating the Social Machine," *Journal of the Community Development Society* 16 (1985): 107–20.

87. Andrews and Reisch (n. 72 above).

88. Fred Newdom, "Beyond Hard Times," *Journal of Progressive Human Services* 4, no. 2 (1993): 65–77, quotation on p. 72.

89. Take, e.g., the comment by the editors to a volume on public history: "as in the past, both the prospects and potential of the people's history movement are closely tied to broader movements for social change." Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), p. xxiii.

90. See Clarke Chambers, "Toward a Redefinition of Social Welfare History" (n. 1 above). Of course, as discussed earlier, there is more to context than the era or macro-political economy. Factors influencing the writing of history are not one-dimensional; it is not simply tied to whether an era is more conservative or more progressive. The number of factors affecting historical interpretation challenge computation.

91. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. concurs: "while history is not the cure for all that ails us . . . knowledge of what Americans have been through in earlier times will do us no harm as we grope through the darkness of our own days." Cited in Stephen Depoe, *Arthur M. Schlesinger and the Ideological History of American Liberalism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1994), p. x.

92. Karl de Schweinitz, "Social Values and Social Action" (n. 6 above), p. 131.

93. *Ibid.*, pp. 119, 131.

94. Clarke Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963) is about the maintenance of social welfare liberalism in the conservative 1920s. Despite contemporary pressures at that time against progressive efforts, including a Red Scare of only slightly smaller dimensions than its 1950s version, Chambers demonstrated how some social work professionals in the 1920s continued to make impressive progressive contributions during a conservative period, and how the 1920s served as a "seedtime" for reform efforts in the 1930s. Roy Lubove's *Professional Altruist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965) also examined social work in the 1920s, finding reprehensible the conservative turn of much of social work during that decade. Allan Davis's *Spearheads for Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) looked back to an earlier time—the social settlement movement prior to the First World War—and found impressive models of progressive activism.

95. Bremner, "State of Social Welfare History" (n. 23 above), p. 90.

96. Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

97. Katherine Tyson, *New Foundations for Scientific Social and Behavioral Research: The Heuristic Paradigm* (Boston: Allen & Bacon, 1995), esp. pp. 13–100.

98. E. P. Thompson, "Anthropology and the Discipline of Historical Context," *Midland History* 3 (1971): pp. 41–55.

99. W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Boston: Allen & Bacon, 1997), pp. 381–416.

100. For an introduction to the postpositivist critique and to criticism of social work research in general, see Tyson (n. 97 above). For a sample of other broad criticisms of the failure of social work research and training for social work research, see Mark Fraser, Jeffrey M. Jenson, and Robert E. Lewis, "Research Training in Social Work: The Continuum Is Not a Continuum," *Journal of Social Work Education* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1993): pp. 46–62; Mark Fraser, "Commentary: Social Work and Science: What Can We Conclude about the

Status of Research in Social Work?" *Social Work Research and Abstracts* 29, no. 2 (June 1993): pp. 40–44; Mark Fraser, "Scholarship and Research in Social Work: Emerging Challenges," *Journal of Social Work Education* 30 (Spring–Summer 1994): 252–66; and Robert Fisher and Howard Karger, *Social Work and Community in a Private World* (New York: Longman, 1997), esp. pp. 67–89.

101. See, e.g., Fisher and Karger, *Social Work and Community in a Private World* (n. 100 above).

102. Ralph Cohen and Michael Roth, eds., *History and . . . Histories Written within the Human Sciences* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press), esp. p. 12.

103. Bridging disciplinary barriers remains a problem. David Rothman and Stanton Wheeler, *Social History and Social Policy* (New York: Academic Press, 1981) found significant disciplinary barriers between historians and social policy experts, although fewer between political scientists or sociologists, on the one hand, and policy experts, on the other hand. This should come as no surprise, however, as increasing emphasis on specialization and subspecialization and less support for general and integrative studies have been the norm in higher education in the past generation. See the *Daedalus* (Fall 1997) issue devoted to the structures and dynamics of higher education.