

“The children of today make the nation of tomorrow”

A Social History of Child Welfare in Twentieth Century South Africa

by
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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
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March 2012

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Declaration

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¹ Cape Town Archives Repository (KAB), File 3/GR 4/1/1/16 16/SD (L) South African National Council for Child Welfare: League of Aid 1938-1945. “Our Children’s Day”. Letter to Government House, Pretoria, from Alice Duncan, 1 June 1938.

Abstract:

“The cry of the children of the needy is bitter and heartrending, and any effort towards stilling it deserves the best support and encouragement of the community... every day it rises in despairing appeal for succour and relief.” So wrote a South African newspaper editor in the early 1900s. This “cry” was answered by the emergence of a fledgling child welfare movement in South Africa, largely under the impetus of private charities mimicking international trends – particularly those of the metropole. The 1913 Children’s Act codified child protection, whilst government policies such as child maintenance grants helped in targeting one of the key challenges of child welfare: (white) poverty. Progressively, state and welfare became ever more entwined, epitomised by the formation of the National Council of Child Welfare in 1924 and the Social Welfare Department of 1937. Whilst the state played a constructive role when the aims of child welfare organisations tallied with its own goals (such as eliminating *white* poverty) it took on a more malevolent form when child welfare organisations did not toe the party-line, by turning their attention from white children to black children in the late 1930s.

The movement towards an apartheid state in 1948 saw the consolidation of *de facto* racial policies into *de jure* government legislation. This thesis explores the delicate balance between maintaining state support, whilst upholding the values of independent welfare, “irrespective of race or class, of politics or creed”. Despite asserting such inclusive sentiments, borrowed from international discourses, child welfare in South Africa could not be removed from its local socio-political context. The 1953 Bantu Education Act and the 1960 Children’s Act consolidated racial separation through the unequal allocation of state resources to black and white children. Despite the muted concerns of child welfare activists, apartheid discrimination towards African children increased as the century progressed, intensifying hostility and necessitating the agency of African youth towards the apartheid government culminating in the Soweto Uprising of 16 June 1976 and its aftermath.

The key aim of this thesis is to illustrate that, while government involvement in welfare brought many benefits to the South African child welfare movement, it simultaneously created a dependence that would make child welfare organisations vulnerable to racialised party politics and bureaucracy in the twentieth century. This is evidenced in the divergence of

child welfare along racial lines with white children receiving care similar to that in the Anglophone west, whilst African children were largely neglected. The unequal allocation of resources according to race served to consolidate white hegemony for generations of South Africans, as the “children of today make the nation of tomorrow”.

Opsomming

“Die geween van die kinders in nood is hartverskeurend en bitter, en enige pogings om hierdie nood te verlig, verdien om deur die gemeenskap ondersteun en aangemoedig te word ... elke dag is daar wanhopige krete tot hulp en verligting.” Só het ’n Suid-Afrikaanse koerantredakteur in die vroeë twintigste eeu geskryf. Die “geween” is beantwoord deur die ontstaan van ’n kinderwelsynsbeweging in Suid-Afrika. Hierdie beweging is grootliks ondersteun deur private welsynsbewegings wat internasionale tendense nagevolg het, in besonder dié van die metropool. Die 1913 Kinderwet het kinderbeskerming gedefinieer en regeringsbeleid soos onderhoudstoekennings het terselfdertyd gehelp om een van die grootste probleme in kinderwelsyn, naamlik (wit) armoede aan te spreek. Die staat en kinderwelsyn het toenemend met mekaar verweef geraak wat uiteindelik gelei het tot die stigting van die Nasionale Raad van Kinderwelsyn in 1924 en die Department van Maatskaplike Welsyns in 1937. Die regering het ’n konstruktiewe rol gespeel wanneer kinderwelsyn organisasies se doelwette met die van die regering (soos om wit armoede uit te wis) gesinkroniseer het. In gevalle waar die organisasies regeringsbeleid uigedag het soos in die geval van die verskuiwing van die fokus van hul aktiwiteite in die 1930s na swart kinders het die regering se rol ’n meer destruktiewe aard ontwikkel.

Met die beweging na ’n apartheid staat in 1948 was daar ’n vereenselwiging van die *de facto* rassebeleid met die *de jure* regeringsbeleid. Hierdie tesis ondersoek die delikate balans tussen die behoud van regeringsondersteuning en die handhawing van die beleid van verkaffing van onafhanklike welsyn, “ongeag ras, klas, politieke oortuigings of geloof.” Ten spyte van die handhawing van hierdie inklusiewe benadering in navolging van internasionale diskoers, kon kinderwelsyn in Suid-Afrika nie sy plaaslike sosio-politieke konteks ontkom nie. Die 1953 Wet op Bantoe-Onderwys tesame met die 1960 Kinderwet het rassesseiding verskans deur die oneweredige toekenning van regeringshulpbronne aan swart en blanke kinders. Ten spyte van kinderwelsyn-aktiviste se gedempte protes, het diskriminasie teenoor swart kinders deur die loop van die eeu toegeneem. Dit het wrewel jeens die regering verdiep wat weerstand onder die swart jeug aangemoedig het en uiteindelik in die Soweto opstande van 16 Junie 1976 gekulmineer het.

Die hoofdoel van hierdie tesis is om te illustreer dat, alhoewel regeringsbetrokkenheid in welsyn vele voordele vir die Suid-Afrikaanse kindersynsbeweging ingehou het, dit terselfdertyd 'n soort afhanklikheid geskep het wat die kindersynsorganisasies in die twintigste eeu kwesbaar gelaat het vir rasgebaseerde party politiek en burokrasie. Die kwesbaarheid word ten beste geïllustreer deur die ontwikkeling van rasgebaseerde kindersyn in terme waarvan wit kinders behandeling soortgelyk aan die van die Engelstalige weste ontvang het, terwyl swart kinders grootliks verwaarloos is. Die ongelyke toekenning van hulpbronne ten opsigte van ras het gelei tot die verstewiging van wit dominansie in Suid-Afrika vir talle generasies, aangesien “die kinders van vandag die nasie van môre is”.

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List of Abbreviations

ACVV – Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging

ANC – African National Congress

BAC – Bantu Affairs Commissioner

ICW – International Council of Women

IYC – International Year of the Child

KAB – Cape Town Archives Repository

NCAW – National Council of African Women

NCWSA – National Council of Women of South Africa

NP – National Party

NSPCC – National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

SANCCW – South African National Council of Child Welfare

SPCL – Society for the Protection of Child Life

UNICEF – United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

WCTU – Women’s Christian Temperance Union

WEAU – Women’s Enfranchisement Association of the Union

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Chapter One

Child Welfare in Twentieth Century South Africa, Introduction and Literature Review

In August 2011 private non-profit child welfare agencies in South Africa confronted the state, describing it as “paternalistic” and “dismissive” in its attitude towards non-governmental child welfare organisations. With non-governmental agencies providing around sixty percent of the services which the government is legally obligated to render under the constitution and as a signatory to international treaties, child welfare representatives accused the state of acting as a capricious benefactor offering occasional financial “awards” to child-related charities, rather than acknowledging its own on-going responsibility towards children.¹ A child in South Africa is legally defined as a person under the age of eighteen.² This status entitles the child both under South African law and in terms of the international Charter on Children’s Rights to a wide range of rights including access to education, health care and the right to a safe living environment.³ Yet the promise of such rights does not ineluctably secure access to them – and this rupture has a history. As this thesis seeks to demonstrate, child welfare in South Africa has been characterised historically by competing pressures between state and local charity, between classes, between races, and between ideology and praxis.

Indeed, this shifting but enduring tension between the state and private child welfare organisations has spanned the twentieth century, from the formation of the very first child welfare organisation in Cape Town in 1907, the Society for the Protection of Child Life, to the present day. Historically, children have been afforded protection by three entities, namely parents, charities and the state, more or less in that order. Child welfare, outside of the ambit of the family originally came in the form of philanthropic interventions by religious charities. It was only at the turn of the nineteenth century that governments around the world began to

¹ A. Crotty, ‘Meeting with government further frustrates NPOs’, *Star*, 30 August 2011, 4.

² As defined in both the Children’s Rights Charter and the South African Constitution. A. Dawes, R. Bray and A. van der Merwe, *Monitoring Child Well-Being: A South African Rights-Based Approach*, (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2007), ix.

³ The full range of children’s rights are available from <http://www.crc-sa.co.za/pages/20733> (accessed 7 October 2011).

take an interest in the welfare of children witnessed in the introduction of child protection laws.

In the South African context, as this thesis illustrates, the growing involvement of the state in child welfare brought with it a number of costs and benefits, and was motivated by changes within the socio-political landscape. The legislative and financial backing of the state gave child welfare activists access to resources beyond their own capacity to effect real change. Yet this ostensible advantage came at a cost: the state was able to control the development of South African child welfare through its manipulation of the purse strings, effectively dictating policy in a political and social environment that was increasingly racially divisive. With the “children of today” making the “nation of tomorrow”, the unequal allocation of resources along racial lines contributed to white hegemony for generations of South Africans.⁴

Literature Review and Theory

Rudestam and Newton have compared writing a literature review to making a movie.⁵ Firstly the director needs to set the scene by using long shots, giving the audience a feel for the background and setting of the movie, creating an ambiance into which more detailed aspects of the film will fit. Next, the director moves into a mid-shot, identifying key characters and themes that will be developed throughout the movie. Finally, there is a close-up which narrows the audience’s view to focus on the specific character whose progression will be followed throughout the movie, illustrating how the unfolding events have shaped the audience’s understanding.

The literature review of this thesis follows a similar path. Firstly, a brief overview of the principal contributors to the history of children and childhood is provided. Building on the findings and conclusions put forward by these academics, the review then moves on to an exploration of literature focussed more specifically on theories of welfare and its development, and how this relates to children. Finally, using the literature on children and welfare, the review turns towards a South African-specific approach, identifying relevant work which has been written on the social contexts in South Africa during the period under

⁴ KAB, Cape Town Archives Repository, File 3/GR 4/1/1/16 16/SD (L) South African National Council for Child Welfare: League of Aid 1938-1945. “Our Children’s Day”. Letter to Government House, Pretoria, from Alice Duncan, 1 June 1938.

⁵ K.E. Rudestam and R.R. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: a Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, (London, Sage Publications, 2007), 68.

discussion, as well as arguments and discussions around South African children and childhood, and the development of child welfare in the twentieth century South African context. Drawing on arguments identified in the literature review, as well as information gathered from primary sources, this chapter will then identify patterns and theories in the explanation of the changing perception of childhood, and more specifically child welfare; themes which will be carried throughout the main body of the thesis and applied and contrasted to South Africa.

Secondary Sources

“And in the beginning was Ariés” reads the first line of the first chapter of Colin Heywood’s influential *A History of Childhood*.⁶ Indeed, Ariés’s *Centuries of Childhood* has become the seminal text for childhood historians, highlighted in many introductory chapters.⁷ Prior to Ariés, the nature of childhood history had been largely institutional in character, focusing on labour legislation and development of school systems, without actually delving into what have become the key issues of children and childhood. For example, Edward Fuller’s *The Right of the Child* published in 1951 gives an overview of the actions of the Save the Child Foundation in Britain without discussing changing conceptual definitions of children and childhood in the historical period surrounding the Foundation.⁸

In contrast to previous literature relating to child history, Ariés in his major work, *Centuries of Childhood*, argues that the concept of childhood is in itself a relatively modern invention. He asserts that up until the end of the Middle Ages, the child, after being weaned, was regarded as a small adult who engaged and worked with adults.⁹ According to Ariés, it was only really towards the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that children became a distinct category, particularly amongst the upper classes where children were imbued with

⁶ C. Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001), 11.

⁷ P. Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, (New York, Vintage books, 1962). Despite his critical status in childhood literature, Ariés was not the first academic to address the historical development of children. Ellen Key, a Swedish authority, published *The Century of the Child* in the early 1900s. E. Key, *Century of the Child*, (New York, G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1909). Centuries earlier than Key, John Locke, a seventeenth century philosopher, developed an argument which challenged the Christian doctrine that children were born in ‘original sin’ and instead postulated that they were born with “blank slates”, able to improve themselves through education and upbringing. See P.N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), 52. Similarly, fellow philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau emphasised the importance of individuality of children, placing weight on the need to nurture creativity. However, as David Archard has argued, the arguments of Locke and Rousseau are scattered in their philosophical writings and do not form a single systematic history of childhood like that forwarded by Ariés. See D. Archard, *Children: Rights and Childhood*, (New York, Routledge 1993), 1.

⁸ E. Fuller, *The Right of the Child: A Chapter in Social History*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1951).

⁹ P. Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, 128.

characteristics of innocence and vulnerability.¹⁰ In the decades following Ariés, numerous other academics have contributed to the on-going debate surrounding the development of a conceptualised definition of childhood, often critiquing and contributing to the arguments made famous by Ariés.¹¹

This theme – that childhood is a construct of the society in which it exists – has since been dominant in the work of childhood historians. Fletcher and Hussey in *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State* have argued that there is no strict definition of a child. In their opinion, “The question ‘what is a child’ must be followed by further questions: in whose eyes? When? Where? What are the implications?”¹² The idea that childhood is inseparable from economic and cultural contexts is valuable when reading histories of children.

Following Ariés, most childhood historians have taken more care in placing their work within a culturally and class specific context. Mainly, this cultural context has been Western in nature. Colin Heywood’s 2001 *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* examined the changing position of children in western societies and the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on the learning processes of becoming an adult.¹³ Similarly, in the *Rise and Fall of Childhood*, John Sommerville also adopts a broad approach to the changing position of children in Western civilisation, looking specifically at the attitudes of adults towards children.¹⁴ Both books forward the argument that childhood is defined by the changing nature of the society in which it exists.

Allison James and Alan Proust build on the idea of childhood as a malleable identity in their collection *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*.¹⁵ The purpose of this book is to illustrate the social construction of childhood by examining how different societies define childhood in their

¹⁰ Interestingly, this period coincides with Locke and Rousseau’s arguments about the innocence of children thereby reinforcing Ariés’ assertion that there was a change at some level in the social perception of children.

¹¹ Numerous books relating to the history of children and childhood use Ariés as a platform to develop their own arguments. Colin Heywood’s *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001), 11-15; Karen Wells’ *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009), 5-6; Peter Stearns’ *Childhood in World History*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), 43-45 and David Archard’s *Children: Rights and Childhood*, (New York, Routledge 1993), 19-24 to name but a few.

¹² A. Fletcher and S. Hussey, *Childhood in Question- Children, Parents and the State*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999), 33.

¹³ C. Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001).

¹⁴ C.J. Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*, (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1982).

¹⁵ A. James and A. Proust, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, The Falmer Press, 1990).

attitudes, philosophies and practices towards children. Each article in the book considers a different subject, but all are linked by the thematic understanding of the impact of changing social discourses on childhood. Martin Woodhead's "Psychology and the Cultural Construction of Children's Needs" and Jo Boyden's "Childhood and the Policy Makers: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalisation of Childhood" are two articles in the collection that provide valuable insights into factors which have affected childhood on an international level.¹⁶

In a similar vein, leading social historian Peter Stearns' *Childhood in World History* forwards the argument that although childhoods around the world can differ "amazingly", there are many similarities relating to the helplessness and special needs of children, regardless of time or place.¹⁷ From this starting point, Stearns reviews the development of childhood from ancient agricultural societies up until the modern context, touching on the impact of colonialism and globalisation on childhood in the world as a whole. However, the approach of the book remains western in focus, often describing children of other societies in terms of how they either conform to or differ from the modern western concept of childhood. For the purposes of this thesis, the most pertinent argument raised by Stearns is the increasingly child-centred approach that developed throughout the twentieth century and the resultant benefits and problems of this approach. According to Stearns, children moved from the periphery of society to centre stage in the twentieth century.¹⁸

In line with Stearns' global and trans-national approach, Karen Wells published *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, a book in which she asks "Is there a global form of childhood?".¹⁹ Wells argues that some clarity can be gained by assessing international legislation and policies towards children. To do so, Wells focuses on the development of policies and practices relating to children on a global scale, such as the growth of child welfare and

¹⁶ M. Woodhead, 'Psychology and the Cultural Construction of Children's Needs', in A. James and A. Prout eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, The Falmer Press, 1990), 60-77 and J. Boyden, 'Childhood and the Policy Makers: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalization of Childhood', in A. James and A. Prout eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, The Falmer Press, 1990), 184-215.

¹⁷ P.N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), 1.

¹⁸ This argument is particularly well-articulated in the Chapter 'Childhood in Affluent Societies, Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries' in P.N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), 93-109.

¹⁹ K. Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009), 1.

children's rights, amidst other issues such as race, class, gender and the impact of politics and war on childhood.²⁰

This growing body of literature relating to the understanding of childhood, has introduced other topics relating to the changing position of children. One of the most pertinent topics in the twentieth century has been the rise and development of child welfare. Smith and Merkel-Holguin co-edited a collection of articles under the heading *A History of Child Welfare*. In it they identify an argument which arches over the chapters, developing an over-all theme for the book relating to the progression of child welfare. Firstly there is the perceived awareness of the need for child welfare. This is then followed by the response to the need illustrated in the growth of child welfare agencies and finally the advocacy for change which such agencies campaign towards.²¹ Similarly, David Archard's 1993 *Children: Rights and Childhood* raises the important argument that how children are viewed by the society in which they exist determines what their perceived needs are in terms of welfare and rights.²² For example, in the western world where children occupy centre stage, child welfare receives much attention and by extension children have a growing array of rights from access to facilities to personal liberties. Conversely, children in impoverished countries are often exploited with very little given in terms of welfare infrastructure and even less in terms of rights.

This brings one to the unusual case study of child welfare in South Africa which, historically, has been home to children of both "first" and "third world" stature simultaneously, astride the racial (and sometimes class) divide.²³ Very little has been written on the historical development of child welfare in South Africa, with the notable exception being Sarah Duff's doctoral thesis, *What will this child be? Children, Childhood, and the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape Colony, 1860-1895*.²⁴ With regards to the twentieth century, there is, however, a body of secondary literature addressing the nature of childhood in South Africa, most of which focuses on the apartheid era onwards. An exception to this is Susan Klausen's 2004 *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910-39* which gives

²⁰ K. Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 3.

²¹ E.P. Smith and L.A. Merkel-Holguin eds., *A History of Child Welfare*, (New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 1996), 2-5.

²² D. Archard, *Children: Rights and Childhood*, (New York, Routledge 1993), 23-25.

²³ The terms "First and Third World" are contested. The "First World" can be understood as those countries with a developed economy and social system with very low rates of poverty. "Third World" countries, on the other hand, are still seen to be developing and are often characterised by impoverished conditions. See A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995), 21-53.

²⁴ S. Duff, 'What will this child be? Children, Childhood, and the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape Colony, 1860-1895', (PhD Thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2011).

a thorough overview of concerns surrounding poor whites and poor white children and motherhood in the early years of the South African Union.²⁵ Erwin Spiro's *The Children's Act 1960* not only gives an overview of the 1960s Children's Act, but also touches on the previous 1913 and 1937 Acts. In so doing he illustrates how the 1960 Act differs from its predecessors in terms of the separation of applied resources along racial lines.²⁶ Muriel Horrell's 1968 *Bantu Education to 1968* provides insight into the impact racially discriminatory laws had on African education, an argument which can be directly linked to African child welfare.²⁷ Walton R. Johnson builds on Horrell's approach adopting a more critical stance in his article *Education: Keystone of Apartheid*, where he argues that racial delineation in education was used by the apartheid government to reinforce white supremacy.²⁸

Sandra Burman and Pamela Reynolds co-edited a collection of articles in 1986 under the title *Growing Up in a Divided Society* which examine various aspects of childhood under apartheid.²⁹ Linda Basson's 2004 Masters' thesis, *Perspectives on the Best Interests of the Child: Developments in the Interpretation and Application of the Principle of the South African Law relating to Children*, provides an informative overview of the legislation which has been introduced in response to the changing perception of children's needs and rights in twentieth century South Africa.³⁰ Similarly, in 2008 Frederick Zaal completed his Doctoral thesis, *Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care: A Critical Evaluation of Selected Aspects of the South African System*, which gives an overview of the various children's Acts passed in the twentieth century and their impact on the judicial system.³¹ Monica Patterson, in her Doctoral thesis, *Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid's Last Decades*, gives a thorough overview of the changing perception of children in the turbulent period surrounding the 1976 Soweto Uprising and its aftermath.³² In addition, there are

²⁵ S. M. Klausen, *Race, Maternity and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910-39*, (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

²⁶ E. Spiro, *The 1960 Children's Act*, (Cape Town, Juta and Co Limited, 1965).

²⁷ M. Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, (Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1968).

²⁸ W.R. Johnson, 'Education Keystone of Apartheid', *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 13, 3, (1982), 214-237.

²⁹ S. Burman and P. Reynolds, *Growing Up in a Divided Society*, (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1986).

³⁰ L. Basson, 'Perspectives on the Best Interests of the Child: Developments in the Interpretation and Application of the Principle in the South African Law Relating to Custody', (Masters Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2004).

³¹ F. N. Zaal, *Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care: A Critical Evaluation of Selected Aspects of the South African System*, (PhD Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2008).

³² M. E. Patterson, 'Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid's Last Decades', (PhD Thesis, University of Michigan, 2009).

numerous reports by organisations such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children Foundation reporting on child welfare and children's rights in South Africa from about the 1980s onwards.³³

The majority of secondary sources relating to children in South Africa have focussed on the second half of the twentieth century. In order to gain a contextual understanding of child welfare in the earlier half of the twentieth century a number of sources have been used. Although they are not directly about children and childhood, they help to provide a historical backdrop against which child welfare developed in South Africa. Saul Dubow's work *Racial Segregation and Origins of Apartheid in South Africa 1919-36* as well as *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* both provide an excellent account of the racial tensions and social climate in early twentieth century.³⁴ Dubow also co-edited a collection with Alan Jeeves titled *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*.³⁵ In the collection Jeremy Seeking's *Visions, Hopes and Views about the Future: The Radical Movement of South African Welfare Reform* and Deborah Posel's *The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family in the 1930s and 1940s* have been particularly useful for this thesis.³⁶

Posel's 1991 publication of *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* offers an in-depth explanation of the social and legislative changes occurring in the early years of apartheid.³⁷ Similarly Dan O'Meara's *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party 1948-1994* and A.J. Christopher's *The Atlas of Apartheid* offer a critical analysis of the apartheid government, which helps provide context particularly with regards to the latter half of this thesis.³⁸

Finally, it needs to be kept in mind that child welfare has been intimately linked to gender, as illustrated in Chapter Six. For this purpose, Cheryl Walker's collection *Women and Gender*

³³ See for example, A. Dawes, R. Bray and A. van der Merwe eds., *Monitoring Child Well-Being: A South African Rights Based Approach*, (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2007).

³⁴ S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36*, (Oxford, MacMillan, 1989) and S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁵ S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, eds., *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005).

³⁶ J. Seekings, 'Visions, Hopes and Views about the Future: The Radical Movement of South African Welfare Reform', in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, eds., *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005), 44-63 and D. Posel, 'The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family in the 1930s and 1940s' in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, eds., *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005), 64-86.

³⁷ D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991).

³⁸ D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The apartheid state and the politics of the National Party 1948-1994*, (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1996) and A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, (London, Routledge, 1994).

in South Africa to 1945 has been valuable in understanding the changing position of women in South Africa throughout the first half of the twentieth century, including work by Elsabe Brink and Linda Chisolm.³⁹ Marijke du Toit's article *The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929* draws an important link between women in the Afrikaans Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV) and the racially skewed nature of welfare in South Africa, whilst Louise Vincent's article *Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s* challenges the perception that the Afrikaner female identity as *volksmoeders* was crafted by men.⁴⁰ Whilst Brink, du Toit and Vincent's work focuses primarily on Afrikaner female identity, Walker gives insight into the political aspirations of women in her article *The women's suffrage movement: The politics of gender, race and class*.⁴¹ The idea that women used welfare as a vehicle to get their voices heard in the male-dominated political climate in South Africa, is central to Chapter six, and as such, Joan Laubscher's 1999 biography of the National Council of Women of South Africa (NCWSA), *Interfering Women*, gives an overview of the organisation from 1909 to 1999, and in so doing highlights the role the NCWSA played in putting child welfare on the National Agenda.⁴²

Primary Sources

As discussed above, very little has been written on child welfare in South Africa, particularly pertaining to the early half of the twentieth century. Thus this thesis focused mainly on previously under-utilised primary sources, including letters of communication, conference reports and newspaper clippings relating to child welfare. For this purpose, the Cape Town Archives Repository has provided a rich seam of sources, particularly with regards to correspondence between government officials and child welfare agencies.⁴³ The Lady Buxton

³⁹ C. Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990). See also E. Brink, 'Man-made women: Gender class and ideology of the *volksmoeder*', in C. Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 273-292 and L. Chisolm, 'Gender and deviance in South African Industrial Schools and reformatories for girls, 1911-1934', in C. Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 293-312.

⁴⁰ M. du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV, 1904, 1929', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1, (2003), 155-176 and L. Vincent, 'Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26,1, (2000), 61-78.

⁴¹ C. Walker, 'The women's suffrage movement: The politics of gender, race and class', in C. Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 313-345.

⁴² J. Laubscher ed., *Interfering Women: National Council of Women of South African 1909-1999*, (Parkview, Masterprint, 1999).

⁴³ Cape Town Archives Repository (KAB), File PAH 24/ H10 Child Life Protection Act, Administration of Act 25 of 1913; File 3/ KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924; File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare 1937-1941; File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949; File 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E. 109/3 and File CDN 126 (II) N7/22/3/1 Bantu Welfare Agencies Section

Centre Archive housed at the University of Cape Town's Archives and Manuscripts collection is a valuable source of information relating particularly to the history of the Society for the Protection of Child Life (SPCL).⁴⁴ The Malherbe Papers at the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban are an important source of information in terms of providing a social context for the early twentieth century, particularly with regards to concerns around increased state welfare and the alleviation of a growing class of poor white South Africans.⁴⁵ Similarly, E.G. Malherbe, an educationalist in early twentieth South Africa, provides great insight into the position of impoverished white children in his contribution to the Carnegie Commission of 1929 to 1932, *Education and the Poor White*.⁴⁶

With regards to the latter half of the twentieth century, newspaper articles accessed from the online *SA Media* archive serve to provide a window into the social climate of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁷ In addition, *The First National Workshop on Child Abuse, 7-9 July 1977* also offers generative data about the changing perception of children in South Africa, with a focus on abuse, rather than poverty, across racial lines.⁴⁸

Theoretical Departures

An analysis of the literature, as discussed above, allows for the identification of certain themes that can be applied to the understanding of the development of child welfare in the twentieth century, the most pertinent of which is the idea that the concept of children as in need of protection is a relatively modern event. Although the theoretical understandings of child welfare and their application to South Africa are fully discussed in Chapter Two, it is necessary to briefly mention them at this point in order to provide a coherent overview of the thesis.

As Viviana Zelizer argues, the past two centuries have led to the creation of the economically "worthless" but emotionally "priceless" child.⁴⁹ Indeed, a number of childhood historians have identified a series of events which have led to a changing perception of children from

48, Children's Act 1960 are few examples of the wealth of resources available at the Cape Town National Archives

⁴⁴ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive.

⁴⁵ Killie Campbell African Library, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Malherbe Manuscripts.

⁴⁶ E.G. Malherbe, *Education and the Poor White*. (Stellenbosch, Pro Ecclesia-Drukkery, 1932).

⁴⁷ <http://search.sabinet.co.za.ez.sun.ac.za/WebZ/Authorize?sessionid=0&next=html/t2/basicsearch.html&active=4&dbchoice=1&dbname=samed> (accessed 11 October 2011).

⁴⁸ *First National Workshop on Child Abuse 7-9 July 1977*, (Johannesburg, Central Printing Unit, 1979).

⁴⁹ V.A.R. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, (New York, Basic Books, 1985), 14.

being labourers and workers to being regarded as innocent, vulnerable and in need of care. These include the Industrial Revolution and increased sympathy for working class children, the standardisation of childhood through the introduction of compulsory education, lower child mortality rates and increased parental economic and emotional investments in their children. Furthermore, this coincided with the rise of philanthropic organisations, such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) aimed specifically at upholding the ideals of an innocent and vulnerable childhood. In essence, the movement of children from being economic earners to economic liabilities turned them into investments for the future, one which both the state and parents sought to protect.⁵⁰

This perceived need to protect the newly invented qualities of childhood, such as innocence and vulnerability brought with it a new aspect to the child-protection debate: that transgression of such qualities was regarded as cruel. As Sara Scott has shown, two key developments accompanied the rise of the concept of “child abuse”: she argues that firstly, “much previously public violence has been outlawed”, and secondly, “philanthropic and later state intervention into the ‘private business’ of families has dramatically increased”.⁵¹ Arguably, the movement to protect children fed upon itself, moving away from just child-labour orientated policies, and intruding ever more on the family sphere. The movement of child welfare, driven primarily by philanthropists in the upper class, began to concern itself increasingly with protecting children from abusive and negligent parents and caregivers. As Heywood demonstrated, prior to the nineteenth century “the idea that the state should intervene in relationships between parents and their children was almost unthinkable” with the head of households having indisputable authority over those living beneath their roofs.⁵² However, by 1889, the British government had passed The Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act, also known as the Children’s Charter. This Act allowed the government to remove children from parents who ill-treated or neglected them.⁵³ Thus it could be argued that the development of the child welfare movement in the late 1800s adopted a two pronged approach: firstly at addressing social conditions such as the poverty which forced children into labour and terrible living standards, and secondly at addressing the perceived mistreatment of children within the family structure. Therefore, the development of child welfare in the west was largely in response to the changing definition of childhood. As

⁵⁰ Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 27.

⁵¹ S. Scott, *The Politics and Experience of Ritual Abuse: Beyond Disbelief*, (Buckingham, Open University Press, 2001), 15.

⁵² Heywood, *A History of Childhood*, 106.

⁵³ Heywood, *A History of Childhood*, 108.

children came to be regarded as a distinctly separate group from adults with specific needs denoted by their vulnerable status, as well as idealised characteristics of innocence and virtue, so too did the need arise to develop special policies and organisations aimed at protecting these perceived characteristics of children.

The changing concepts of childhood in tandem with a changing society can be understood as childhood being a social construction. In other words, a particular society defines what should constitute childhood, who children are, what their responsibilities are and what should be expected of them. Arguably this can even occur within the same society during the same era, with perceptions of childhood being skewed along racial, class and gender lines.

However, Proust and James as well as Archard have underlined the need for caution when using the theory of social construction, particularly as regards the danger of distancing explanations of children and childhood from biological reality.⁵⁴ Archard highlights the need to separate the terminology of child and childhood. Whilst the term “child” is a biological reality referring to physical immaturity, childhood is a social construct, embodying themes unique to each culture, such as vulnerability and innocence in the west. Whilst the biological aspect of the definition remains the same throughout history and across cultures, the social construction is open to change over time and in tandem with the moods of the society. This draws on parallels to feminist arguments of the distinction between sex and gender: whilst sex is biologically indisputable (women are physically different to men and will always remain so, excepting for artificial intervention), gender is more open to social construction.⁵⁵

However, it should be emphasised that the biological and social factors of childhood are not mutually exclusive. For example, physical immaturity may imply inherent vulnerability and, in turn, when something is vulnerable it is often regarded as unthreatening, hence the aura of innocence. Furthermore, as Wells points out, although *childhood* may be a social construct, children living within it are dependent upon the construction. The biological and social factors are in a constant reaction with each other, with children reacting to their environment, either reinforcing the characteristics of the social construction of a “proper childhood” or

⁵⁴ Proust and James, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, 26 and Archard, *Children Rights and Childhood*, 25-26.

⁵⁵ Archard, *Children: Rights and Childhood*, 25. See also, J. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1999), 199-207.

rebellious against them.⁵⁶ This said, a particular society's perception of a child and its behaviour and needs are viewed through the lens of the construction.

Social construction is particularly valuable in understanding child welfare, primarily in that the social constructions of childhood may differ between the givers and receivers of welfare. Historically speaking, givers of welfare often took the form of wealthy, urban philanthropists, whilst the receivers were the rural and urban poor.⁵⁷ This is a situation pertinent to South Africa where there have historically been wide gaps between the social positions of givers and receivers of welfare. As this thesis will illustrate, the first child welfare endeavours were directed from wealthy white (and mostly English speaking) South Africans towards poor white children, who were predominantly from rural Boer (later Afrikaner) families. As the poor white "problem" was largely resolved, white philanthropists and charities turned their attention towards black child welfare.⁵⁸ This thesis will further illustrate that the social construction of white and black ideals of childhood as having separate values and meanings was used by the apartheid government to justify the unequal allocation of resources to the needs of black and white children respectively.⁵⁹

The Child Welfare Pattern

Although traditionally philanthropists have been the drivers behind reform, the achievement of their objectives has largely been dependant on their ability to influence state policies. In a 1947 report addressed to the United Nations by the South African government, it was noted:

The history of the origin of present day social welfare would seem to have followed a somewhat regular pattern. A voluntary body senses the need for a service and starts it, often without state assistance, and when it has demonstrated the need, the state recognises the work officially, subsidises it, and either takes it or extends it, whilst leaving the voluntary agency to continue with its efforts.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 2.

⁵⁷ J. Boyden, 'Childhood and the Policy Makers: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalization of Childhood', in A. James and A. Prout eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, Falmer Press, 1990), 202.

⁵⁸ Interestingly, in its own way the South African government during apartheid used the concepts of Social Construction to justify the notion of separate development seen in the argument that blacks should be responsible for their own social welfare, without whites imposing western ideals upon them. See Horrell, *Bantu Education*, 5.

⁵⁹ As discussed in Chapter four, Verwoerd – one of the pioneers of apartheid – asserted that Africans should not be encouraged to pursue a "European" standard of living. See Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 5.

⁶⁰ KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949 Part 1. Annual report for the year 1947 on child and youth welfare services submitted to the United Nations by the Government of South Africa. UN Reference: SOA 16/01/GN, 25 March 1948.

The idea that welfare follows a certain pattern whereby a problem is identified by independent bodies, followed by calls for reform and ultimately state involvement could arguably be applied to any form of social welfare across the western world.⁶¹ That it is an on-going process implies a progression from one stage to the next. Once the welfare bodies and the state have successfully satisfied a particular social need, they are free to move onto the next problem.

A number of patterns can be identified in child welfare discourses, including the shift from child saving to children's rights and the perceived increase of the agency of children.⁶² As illustrated in the body of this thesis, the development of child welfare in South Africa, and internationally, can be correlated to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The initial concern of child welfare was (and to some degree still is) to combat poverty-related problems that denied children access to their basic needs. In response, organisations lobbied for state laws that would provide children with the means of satisfying their physiological needs, for example through maintenance grants. Once these needs were satisfied, welfare groups moved onto the safety needs of children, emphasising the importance of the family unit in providing security and stability for children.⁶³

After these two aspects had been addressed, child welfare advocates turned their attention towards satisfying the psychological needs of children, signified by the third and fourth rungs of Maslow's Hierarchy: social and esteem needs. Particularly in the west, the 1970s witnessed the introduction of a movement which focused on the psychological welfare of children.⁶⁴ Increasingly, campaigners started placing focus on what the children had to say for themselves and became progressively concerned over both the physical and mental well-being of children. Also during this period the concept of child abuse took centre stage in the western child welfare movement and this occurred concurrently with the rise of children's rights, pushing children towards the pinnacle of the hierarchy: self-actualisation. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century children occupied a peripheral position in welfare, being

⁶¹ Smith and Merkel-Holguin identify a similar pattern see Smith and Merkel-Holguin eds., *A History of Child Welfare*, 2-5.

⁶² Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 30.

⁶³ Maslow argued that the safety level on the hierarchy was the most clear when viewing children as children show visible signs of distress when they do not feel safe. See A.H. Maslow, 'A Theory of Human Motivation' *Psychological Review*. 50, (1943), 375-6. Accessed 5 November 2010 from <http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Maslow/motivation.htm>

⁶⁴ See M. Woodhead, 'Psychology and the Cultural Construction of Children's Needs', in A. James and A. Prout eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, The Falmer Press, 1990), 60-77.

the objects of the actions of others; by the end of the century children were beginning to occupy an increasingly central role in the welfare movement, themselves becoming agents of change.

The idea that child welfare is an on-going development, building upon itself raises the danger of an over-simplified, linear, and indeed dangerously teleological, approach to its history. Rather, as this thesis illustrates, the development of child welfare – particularly in South Africa – was a multi-faceted on-going process, that was not characterised by a single, linear growth, but by numerous levels of divergence.

Methodology

The nature and scale of child welfare in twentieth century South Africa precipitates problems in delimiting and periodising its history. It must be kept in mind that the child welfare movement consisted of individual people, and grouping them together under the term ‘child welfare’ creates the risk of generalisation. For this reason, this thesis has focused on official documents expressing the ambitions and goals of organisations such as the South African National Council of Child Welfare (with the notable exception of Chapter Six which examines the role of individual women in promoting South African child welfare).

This thesis seeks to illustrate how child welfare in South Africa both adhered to and deviated from the above mentioned pattern of the evolution of child welfare. The racial, class and gender divisions in South Africa strongly affected the trajectory of child welfare with the fiscal relationship that developed between private child welfare agencies and the government imposing limits on their ability to operate “irrespective of race or class, of politics or creed”.⁶⁵

In order to build the argument surrounding the tumultuous relationship between the South African government and private child welfare, and the impact this had on creating a racially divergent state, this thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the thesis highlighting the main themes and arguments, an examination of the literature used throughout the thesis and an explanation of the methodology and problems faced when dealing with a topic of this type and scope. The following chapter looks at the initial stages of child welfare in South Africa by examining the birth of independent child-

⁶⁵ KAB, File 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council for Child Welfare 1938-1945. National Council for Child Welfare: Annual report for the year ended March 31st, 1938.

centred charities and their tentative interactions with the government. This culminated with the introduction of a National Council of Child Welfare in 1924 as a collaborative effort between private agencies and the state to alleviate poor whiteism. At the same time the influence of international discourses of child welfare on the South African context are examined.

Chapter three illustrates the consolidation of this relationship, witnessed particularly in the formation of a Department of Social Welfare in 1937. The difficulties which arose for private child charities resulting from increased state involvement in child welfare are specifically examined in chapter four. In this chapter the ironies of increased levels of state sponsored child welfare set against the increased marginalisation of the majority of the country's children in terms of the introduction and enforcement of racist legislation with the introduction of apartheid in 1948 are highlighted. The nature of racial divergence in child welfare illustrated in chapter four is built upon in chapter five, which examines the impact grand apartheid had on child welfare endeavours and the resultant youth unrest of the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter six shifts focus to another important aspect of child welfare: the role of gender. Focusing on the first half of the twentieth century, chapter six encompasses a series of case-studies which illustrate the impact women had as pioneers in bringing child welfare into the political and national agenda of South Africa. The seventh and final chapter provides an overview of the arguments raised in the previous chapters and how they impact our overall understanding of child welfare in South Africa.

The seven chapters are not mutually exclusive; overlaps of necessity occur and are intended to contribute to the development of a central argument relating to the relationship between independent child welfare in South Africa and the political aspirations of the government. They help to illustrate how conceptions of child welfare, and indeed children, have changed over time in relation to a changing social climate in South Africa. Whilst white child welfare was following a similar pattern to that in the first world western countries, the racially divisive nature of twentieth century South Africa meant that “non-white” child welfare was regressing in comparison.⁶⁶ Furthermore, child welfare throughout the twentieth century has

⁶⁶ The term “non-white” is highly problematic, but basically refers to all racial groups other than whites in South Africa. For more on the difficulties relating to racial classification see for example, Mohamed Adhikari, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial in the South African Coloured Community*. (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2005). The term “coloured” refers to mixed race South Africans. Terms such as “non-white”, “non-European”, “Bantu”, and “coloured” are products of South Africa's highly racialised history which witnessed the strict classification of people along racial lines (giving priority to white hegemony) and were used in official documents and papers relating to child welfare throughout the twentieth century

been influenced by international discourses relating to children and childhood, which as this thesis illustrates, have been adopted and modified for the unique South African context.

Conclusion

In 1840, Jeremy Bentham in his *Theory of Legislation* maintained that “The feebleness of infancy demands a continual protection. Everything must be done for an imperfect being, which as yet does nothing for itself”. This is in stark contradistinction to Richard Farson’s claim in *Birthrights* in 1974 that “The issue of self-determination is at the heart of children’s liberation. It is, in fact, the only issue, a definition of the concept”.⁶⁷ Whereas the first statement advocates the protection of children, the latter statement highlights a perceived need for children’s rights to self-determination, a right previously limited to the adult world.

Similarly, Wells has argued, “the era of social reform moved from the provision of private charity to public support and intervention and, in moving child welfare from the private to the public, it changed the status of the child from a subject to a citizen, from a dependent to a semi-legal person”.⁶⁸ Indeed this is a pattern identifiable in child welfare movements across the western world, including South Africa. With child welfare becoming a yardstick of modernity, South Africa was unwilling to be left behind.⁶⁹ Yet the local politics of race dictated to the international politics of child welfare, creating a divergence between black and white that set South Africa on two contradictory and conflicting paths in its treatment of children throughout the twentieth century.

⁶⁷ Archard, *Children Rights and Childhood*, 51.

⁶⁸ Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 30.

⁶⁹ R.A. Meckel, ‘Protecting the Innocents: Age Segregation and the Early Child Welfare Movement’, *The Social Service Review*, 59, 3, (1985), 466.

Chapter Two

“Cries of the Children”

The Politics of Child Welfare in Early Twentieth Century South Africa (1907 to 1924)

The cry of the children of the needy is bitter and heartrending, and any effort towards stilling it deserves the best support and encouragement of the community. It does not always reach us – some of us are too far away to hear, some of us perhaps even shut our ears to it. But every day it rises in despairing appeal for succour and relief. The lives of the children are the most valuable asset the state possesses.¹

The adage “children are to be seen and not heard” both encapsulates an old belief about the role of children in society and serves to highlight a modern dilemma regarding the general absence of children in historical data. Peter Laslett wrote, “crowds and crowds of little children are strangely absent from the written record... There is something mysterious about the silence of all these multitudes of babes in arms, toddlers and adolescents”.² The absence of children in historical writing is attributable to the fact that children, historically, have scarcely featured in the political and economic thinking of state-policy makers. This changed with the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which marked a watershed in the history of the children of the West, by bringing into the public consciousness – and, indeed, conscience – the idea that children should be considered in the social and economic policies of the state. The twentieth century was baptised at its birth by the Swedish authority, Ellen Key, as “the century of the child”.³ Indeed, in the west, the twentieth century has witnessed the transfer of children from the periphery of the social, economic and political spheres of society to centre stage, with child welfare and the protection of children specifically becoming yardsticks of “progress” and “modernity”.⁴ This view was forwarded as early as the mid-nineteenth century. In his 1868 *Children of the State*, Francis Davenport-Hill, an English advocate of child welfare, asserted that the civilisation of a state can best be

¹ KAB, Cape Town Archives Repository, File PAH 24 H/10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913, ‘The Cry of the Children’, *SA News*, 7 September 1912.

² Peter Laslett quoted in S. Burman and P. Reynolds, eds., *Growing Up in a Divided Society*, (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1986), 2.

³ P.N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, (New York, Routledge, 2006), 107.

⁴ C.J. Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*, (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1982), 209.

measured by the extent to which it protected the perceived innocence of its young. This argument soon became widely accepted by social reformist in both Western Europe and North America, and has had a powerful and enduring legacy.⁵

As this thesis shows, this suite of principles also spread from Britain to the Cape, which increasingly began to advocate child protection laws similar in nature to those found in Europe, and its metropolises in particular. This chapter discusses the early development of child welfare in South Africa with emphasis on the introduction of the first child welfare societies in the country.⁶ It further shows how their complex interaction with the state and government legislation ultimately led to the establishment of a National Council of Child Welfare in 1924.

Theoretical debates around the construction of the ‘protected child’

Before one can address the development of child welfare in South Africa it is important to provide an international context. Why did legislative reforms relating to child care occur around the turn of the nineteenth century, rather than earlier or later? The answer can be linked to arguments that the social understanding of what defined children and childhood changed over time. The perception of children as vulnerable, innocent and in need of protection was a product of a changing social climate as this chapter illustrates.

Key childhood historians, including Philippe Ariés, Colin Heywood, Peter Stearns and John Sommerville, have commented on the way in which the social constructions of childhood have changed over time in reaction to societal developments.⁷ The identity of children, as a separate class of citizens deserving of a special protective relationship with the state was the product of historical factors, with the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution being regarded as the watershed. As Sommerville has argued, ironically the “greatest exploitation of

⁵ R.A. Meckel, ‘Protecting the Innocents: Age Segregation and the Early Child Welfare Movement’, in *The Social Service Review*, 59, 3, (1985), 466. In 1919 Miss Mabel Elliot, who would become chairperson of the SANCCW, wrote “It is an acknowledged fact all over the civilised world that child welfare for the conservation of life is of the very greatest importance, and South Africa must be in no way behind if she wants to keep pace with the progress that is being made in other parts of the world”. KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/3/107 E109/3. Undated letter from Miss Elliott to Mr Finch, Town Councillor.

⁶ At the turn of the century “South Africa” was comprised of four different political territories: the Cape and Natal, under Britain and the two Boer Republics: the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. It was only in 1910 that these different regions of South Africa were brought under one leadership with the formation of a Union.

⁷ P. Ariés, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. (New York, Vintage Books, 1962); C. Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001); P.N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History*. (New York Routledge, 2006) and C. J. Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*, (California, Sage Publications, 1982).

childhood coincided with the greatest glorification of childhood”.⁸ The Industrial Revolution became synonymous with the exploitation of children, with images in the press and literature of children being worked to death, their tiny soot-cloaked bodies becoming a symbol of wanton neglect that tugged on the heartstrings of social reformers. Significantly, the end of this period coincided with the adoration of children in the upper classes with characteristics such as innocence and vulnerability being reified as pre-requisites of a ‘proper’ childhood. As most working class children did not fit this stereotype, there was a concerted effort amongst upper class philanthropists to force working class children into the mould.⁹ So they successfully campaigned for legislation aimed at curbing child labour, which together with a decline in child mortality rates and the introduction of compulsory school education, saw a fundamental shift in the way children were perceived by the state and in the family.¹⁰

Significantly, as Proust and James have argued, children do not change, but their parents do; it is adults who are responsible for creating the environment in which childhood is perceived.¹¹ Towards the end of the 1800s, just as public criticism of child labour practices during the industrial revolution was becoming vociferous, there was a shift in the position of children in the family sphere. In response to the condemnation of the conditions of child labour in the Industrial Revolution, both the British and American governments introduced laws limiting child labour. Now that children were being removed from the work place, increasing focus was placed on the education of children. Compulsory education was introduced with the British Education Act of 1870 and put into effect by 1880 for children under the age of thirteen.¹²

Children thus went from being economic assets, able to work and help support their families, to economic liabilities. One result was that many families chose to have fewer children in order to reduce the costs of schooling and upbringing. At the same time, fewer children in a household arguably led to greater parental attention to their children, and by implication, greater attachment. Significantly this period also witnessed a decline in child mortality rates

⁸ Sommerville, *The Rise and fall of Childhood*, 160.

⁹ Sommerville, *The Rise and Fall of Childhood*, 189.

¹⁰ Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, 55.

¹¹ A. Proust, and A. James, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues on the Sociological Study of Childhood* (London, The Falmer Press, 1990), 60.

¹² K. Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009), 29 and Sommerville, *The Rise and fall of Childhood*, 195. Compulsory education in America was first introduced in Massachusetts in 1852, and was made law across the United States by 1918.

in the west due to improved health care, but is also an indicator that children were living less dangerous lives.¹³

The way in which they were perceived altered how they were treated, but equally the changing treatment of children altered the way in which they were perceived. The removal of children from the labour force and their placement in an economically dependent relationship with adults increased the “length” of childhood and arguably, in a sense, increased their levels of vulnerability, over and above that already engendered by their physical and mental immaturity. Notions of vulnerability in turn triggered agitation for protection. This then raised the question of what exactly adults were protecting. Ostensibly the answer was that adults were protecting the characteristics that made children vulnerable: their perceived innocence and immaturity.

The growing public perception of what an idealised “childhood” should consist had crystallised and spread by the turn of the twentieth century. One reason was the standardising effect the abolition of child labour and the introduction of compulsory education had on children.¹⁴ Whilst education had previously been a luxury afforded only by the elite, by the late 1800s philanthropists and social reformers were arguing that it was the right of every child. However, many children were in effect excluded from this newly uniform category of childhood, particularly the children of the very poor.¹⁵

Important here were the arguments related to the “deserving” and the “undeserving” poor. As discourses of childhood innocence became more prevalent in the social thinking of western societies, impoverished children came to be regarded as victims of their circumstances, the so-called deserving poor. As John Spargo, a British-born American socialist and political activist, noted in 1916, there was a growing social view that “Nature started all her children, rich and poor, physically equal” and that each generation should get “a fresh start, unhampered by the diseased and degenerate past”.¹⁶ Conditions of poverty were likened to the creation of criminality amongst children, thereby corrupting the socially constructed perceptions of childhood innocence, vulnerability and dependence upon adults. It thus

¹³ Stearns, *Childhood in World History*, 55.

¹⁴ See Sommerville, *The Rise and fall of Childhood*, 195.

¹⁵ Sommerville, *The Rise and fall of Childhood*, 189

¹⁶ J. Spargo, *The Bitter Cry of the Children*, (London, MacMillan and Co, 1916), xiv.

became imperative to remove children from such conditions, from the demoralising influence of their parents, the “undeserving poor”.¹⁷

The identification of poor children as a separate category of ‘othered’ citizens (for example as seen in their connection with criminality) is central in understanding the complex nature of welfare. In most cases the task of providing welfare came from the wealthy urban classes, whilst the target of their welfare were the poor, under classes often living in rural conditions or of rural origins, creating a schism between the givers and receivers of welfare.¹⁸

Thus, many of the early child welfare campaigns focussed their attention on alleviating child poverty and placing children in conditions which would shape them into “good citizens”, acceptable to the standards of the welfare givers. To do this on a national scale, however, would require more than the championing efforts of private charities and welfare bodies; it would require the collaborative resources of the public and the state.¹⁹

As discussed in the following section, the introduction of state laws were initially aimed at reducing poverty as illustrated by the 1864 British Neglected and Criminal Children’s Act and the Cape’s 1895 Destitute Children’s Act. However, the British Prevention of Cruelty to, and the Protection of, Children Act, passed in 1889 followed by the 1897 Infant Life Preservation Act (echoed in the 1907 and 1908 Infant Life Protection Acts in South Africa), called for more than just poverty relief; it widened the spectrum of state involvement in the family sphere, allowing for the removal of children from conditions that were seen to be harming the well-being and innocence of children along with legal provision for the punishment of their negligent parents.²⁰

The idea that the state had the authority to intervene in the family sphere was relatively new. Previously, care for destitute and neglected children had been the responsibility of religious organisations.²¹ According to Heywood, prior to the nineteenth century, the idea that the state could intervene within the family was almost unthinkable.²² By the mid-1800s in both North

¹⁷ Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 28.

¹⁸ A. J. Boyden, ‘Comparative Perspective on the Globalisation of Childhood’ in A. James and A. Proust, eds., *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, Falmer Press, 1990), 202.

¹⁹ See Sommerville, *The Rise and fall of Childhood*, 192.

²⁰ Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, 108.

²¹ Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 30.

²² Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, 106.

America and Britain there was an increasing awareness amongst social commentators that private initiatives were not enough to bring about large scale reform. Thus, child welfare moved from being the preserve of private charity to that of a public and state responsibility.²³ However, despite increased state involvement many influential private child charities kept their positions in the child welfare movement, seen by the fact that many societies, such as Barnado's (1867) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1889) in Britain, and the Children's Aid Society (1853) in New York have continued to flourish well over a century after state legislation shifted the responsibility of child welfare from the private to the public domain. As this chapter shows, private child welfare charities have since had to act in a collaborative capacity, finding new areas of need to which they can direct the legislative and financial powers of the state. South Africa followed a similar pattern from the early 1900s, with an increasing interaction between private initiatives and the state combining in an effort to resolve the main challenges facing the welfare of children.

The Influence of America and Britain on South African Child Welfare

As illustrated above, Western Europe and North America led the child welfare campaign, introducing a number of laws aimed at protecting children in the late 1800s. As this chapter will show, South Africa has followed a delayed, but corresponding pattern to that of America and more specifically Britain with regards to an increasing perception about the importance of children in the social system, their perceived vulnerability and the best methods to protect them. This is reflected in the legislation that has been passed since the late 1800s with increasing focus on the physical and moral protection of children, along with the establishment of organised agencies specifically directed at the protection of children.

At the turn of the twentieth century South Africa was comprised of four different political territories: the Cape and Natal, under British leadership and the two Boer Republics: the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. With regards to the development of the child welfare initiative in South Africa, the Cape was the forerunner, being the first to introduce child-related legislation and, as this chapter argues, because of the colonial relationship between Britain and the Cape, these laws, initially at least, closely reflected those in Britain.²⁴

²³ Wells, *Childhood in a Global Perspective*, 30.

²⁴ Although this thesis argues that South Africa's colonial relationship with Britain meant that in the early stages of the development of South African child welfare initially reflected that of Britain, the reinforcing influence of America should not be discounted. From the 1870s the USA passed a series of laws empowering courts and welfare agencies with the authority to remove children from undesirable conditions. See R. A. Meckel,

The 1895 Destitute Children's Act introduced in the Cape mirrored that of the Neglected and Criminal Children's Act passed in Britain in 1864. The British Act was related to issues of poverty with the term 'neglected' mostly referring to children found in the streets, begging or frequenting areas such as taverns or other places associated with adults. The prevailing public perception in both Britain and the Cape was that deserted and destitute children were the most likely to turn to crime in a bid to survive.²⁵ It thus became regarded as a social responsibility to remove working class children from the corrupting effects of impoverished surroundings and train them towards leading a "useful" life.²⁶ The act created government sponsored reformatories to deal with such children.²⁷ Similarly, the Cape's 1895 Destitute Children's Relief Act gave the authority to clergymen and justices of the peace to identify poor white children, remove them from their conditions of poverty and if they were under fifteen years old, place them in the care of a public school, or alternatively if they were older than fifteen, in an apprenticeship.²⁸ The aim of this was similar to that of Britain's 1864 Act: to train poor children to become useful citizens rather than a burden on, or danger to, society. As such, child welfare in both Britain and South Africa was partially motivated by the fear that increased child poverty would lead to a growth in the criminal underclasses, seen in the aphorism favoured by social reformists, "Save the child and prevent the criminal".²⁹ Indeed, Investigations into the poor white problem in South Africa by the Carnegie Commission from 1929 to 1932 brought to the fore concerns that "unfit" parents were "breeding a lazy, stupid and criminal type of poor white" as discussed below.³⁰

In 1889, largely in response to campaigning by the independent National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Britain passed the Prevention of Cruelty to, and the Protection of, Children Act, followed by the 1897 Infant Life Preservation Act. The 1897 Act was directly in response to an outcry over the process of "baby farming" that was afflicting British society with working mothers handing over the care of their offspring to

'Protecting the Innocents: Age Segregation and the Early Child Welfare Movement', *The Social Service Review*, 59, 3, (1985), 456.

²⁵ C. Twomey, 'Gender, Welfare and the Colonial State: Victoria's 1864 Neglected and Criminal Children's Act', *Labour History*, 73, (1997), 178.

²⁶ Twomey, 'Gender, Welfare and the Colonial State', 176.

²⁷ Twomey, 'Gender, Welfare and the Colonial State', 178.

²⁸ See S.E. Duff, "'simple, worthless, idle' children: Work, Idleness, and Impoverished Urban Childhood in Late Nineteenth-Century Cape Town" (unpublished paper presented at the biennial conference of the Society for the History of Childhood and Youth, Columbia University, New York, July 2011).

²⁹ L. Chisolm, 'Gender and deviance in South African industrial schools and reformatories for girls, 1911-1934', in C. Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990).

³⁰ S. Klausen, *Race, Maternity and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910-1939*, (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 31.

anyone who would accept them in order to free themselves for work.³¹ In a similar vein, the 1907 Infant Life Protection Act was passed in the Cape in direct response to research conducted by the Medical Officer of Health, Dr Jasper Anderson which revealed high rates of infant mortality resulting from “baby farming”, particularly where poor white mothers were giving their infants to coloured families.³² The idea of white infants being raised by ‘coloured’ families was particularly anxiety-provoking in South Africa’s racial hierarchy.³³ The same Act was passed in the Transvaal in 1908. The 1907 and 1908 Acts were later amended in the 1913 Child Life Protection Act, which sought to apply child protection legislation throughout South Africa after the four provinces had been amalgamated in the Union in 1910.³⁴

The South African Context: The Issue of Poor Whiteism

As with Britain, the child welfare initiative in South Africa was sparked by a need to address the abject poverty that was plaguing a large percentage of the population. South Africa at the turn of the century was confronted with a number of socio-economic, racial and political tensions. Perhaps most pertinent to the question of child welfare was the growing social concern over a class of poor whites that was expanding in number and becoming increasingly visible in the urban context. The changing economy brought about by the mineral revolution beginning in the 1860s saw a separation of a class of whites, unable to adapt to the new capital-based economy of South Africa.³⁵ Their condition was compounded by a number of factors, most notably the South African War (1899 to 1902) with its scorched earth policies and devastating effect on the Boer population which made economic recovery beyond the reach of many.³⁶ Increasing anxieties over the issues of poor whiteism dominated the social thinking of the time and did much to spur on the actions of child welfare reformers. The problem of poor whiteism was particularly politically explosive as the majority of the poor

³¹ F.N. Zaal, ‘Court Services for the child in need of alternative care: a critical evaluation of selected aspects of the South African system’. (PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2008), 41.

³² UCT Archives and Manuscripts, The Lady Buxton Centre Archive BC 1149. A1 History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports. ”Golden Jubilee Report: Development of the Society’s Work 1908-1958”.

³³ This term is problematic and has a history of its own. See for example, Mohamed Adhikari, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough: Racial in the South African Coloured Community*. (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2005). The term “coloured” refers to mixed race South Africans. Terms such as “non-white”, “non-European”, “Bantu”, and “coloured” are products of South Africa’s highly racialised history which witnessed the strict classification of people along racial lines (giving priority to white hegemony) and were used in official documents and papers relating to child welfare throughout the twentieth century.

³⁴ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “The SA Mothercraft and Training Centre History”.

³⁵ E.G.: Malherbe, *Education and the Poor White*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia, 1932), 18.

³⁶ Malherbe, *Education and the Poor White*, 4.3

whites were Boers (or as they later became known – Afrikaners), a reality that fed into existing political tensions between the English and Boers in the wake of the South African War.³⁷

The idea of white impoverishment needs to be contrasted against the impoverishment of the black population. The extreme racial inequality that characterised twentieth century South Africa meant that little concern was given to the position of poor black children, as poverty was the accepted status quo of the African population.³⁸ Fears that a large portion of the white, predominantly Afrikaans speaking, population were ‘degenerating’ to the socio-economic condition of blacks challenged existing notions of white hegemony, making the issue of white-centred welfare all the more urgent in the eyes of state policy-makers.³⁹ This was coupled with the fact that poor whites tended to have large families, leading to fears that they might ‘outbreed’ other white South Africans.⁴⁰ The large population of poor whites motivated sections of the population to bring about reform and relief, seen in the formation of welfare groups such as the Society for the Protection of Child Life.

The Birth of the SPCL (1908)

The “heartrending cry of the children of the needy” was met by the establishment and growth of child welfare organisations across South Africa, beginning in the Cape with the Society for the Protection of Child Life.⁴¹ This organisation would serve as a template for the development of other child welfare organisations across the land, from the metropolis of Johannesburg, to small towns in the Karoo and along the coast of the country, growing in scope and influence throughout the twentieth century.

As mentioned earlier, in 1906 Dr Jasper Anderson, the first Medical Officer of Health in the Cape, published his findings on rates of child mortality.⁴² The results shocked Cape Town’s middle class: for every one thousand births one hundred and ninety-nine white infants were dying before they reached their first birthday, whilst the ratio for coloured infants was three

³⁷ S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166, 175.

³⁸ J. Illife, *The African Poor: A History*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987), 114.

³⁹ By 1932 it was estimated that poor whites made up almost eighteen percent of the white South African population. Carnegie Report, *Joint Findings and Recommendations*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia Drukkery, 1932), par. 9.

⁴⁰ Klausen, *Race, Maternity and the Politics of Birth Control*, 33.

⁴¹ KAB, File PAH 24 H/10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913, ‘The Cry of the Children’, *SA News*, 7 September 1912.

⁴² KAB, File, 3/SMT 4/1/82 P16/2/1 Child Welfare 1937-1944, “Our Children’s Day Pamphlet 1936”.

hundred and twenty four per thousand. No statistics were given for black infant mortality in the Cape. According to Anderson, the main causes of this alarming rate of (white) infant mortality were the poor sanitary and social conditions of the families the babies were born into, and the policy of ‘baby farming’ whereby white babies were given to mostly coloured foster mothers who were paid a small fee to free the biological mother to work.⁴³ In the context of the eugenic fears surrounding the perceived racial degeneration of poor whites, the process of coloured families raising poor white infants was regarded with much public opprobrium.⁴⁴

Thus, the following year (1907), largely in reaction to Dr Anderson’s findings, the Cape Infant Life Protection Act was passed to monitor and control the movement and well-being of infants in an attempt to reduce the high infant mortality rate resulting from practices such as baby farming.⁴⁵ Anderson, however, regarded the Act as lacking the administrative muscle required for its enforcement. So in 1908 he advocated the formation of the Society of the Protection of Child Life, in a bid to take welfare to a level that legislation alone could not. With himself as treasurer, Mrs Beaumont Rawbone as Secretary and Lady Hely-Hutchinson (wife of the Cape Governor) as honorary president, the first child welfare organisation was born in South Africa.⁴⁶

The aims of the Society were threefold: to educate parents and guardians on their responsibilities; to give financial and advisory assistance where there was real need, and to “rescue those who were suffering from want, neglect or cruelty”.⁴⁷ Significantly, these goals illustrate that the Society was far more willing to become involved within the family sphere than previously provided for in government legislation; not only by helping to ensure that the

⁴³ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society’s Work 1908-1958”

⁴⁴ This was an issue that continued to concern child welfare activists years later. As the *SA News* commented on the issue of multi-racial child care in 1912, “There are many considerations, concerned not only with the child itself, but with the large and difficult problem between white and black in South Africa, which makes the association highly distasteful”. KAB, File PAH 24 H/10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913, ‘The Cry of the Children’, *SA News*, 7 September 1912.

⁴⁵ The Infant Life Protection Act was passed in the Transvaal in 1908. See KAB, File 3/SMT 4/1/82 P16/2/1 Child Welfare 1937-1944, “Our Children’s Day Pamphlet 1936”. The Act dealt particularly with the adoption and foster care of children under the age of five years, stating that strict records needed to be kept of foster parents and that notice of the adoption of a child needed to be given to the Cape Magistrate within forty-eight hours. See KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/1/67 (D 67/1) Public Health: Protection of Children 1904-1908. Public Health: Correspondence Infantile Protection Bill 1906. Letter dated 13 July 1906 addressed to the Secretary of the Law Department, Cape Town.

⁴⁶ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society’s Work 1908-1958”.

⁴⁷ KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 5 September 1912.

law was being implemented, but also to change actual familial relationships through their education of caregivers.⁴⁸

“Labour of Love”? The Importance of Independent Charity⁴⁹

The relationship between the state and independent child welfare organisations like the SPCL was complex. At the outset it seemed to be a mutually beneficial alliance: the state had the resources to bring about major change, whilst societies had the mission and motives to give those resources local direction. As the Administrator of the Cape remarked at the seventh annual meeting of the Society for the Protection of Child Life in 1915:

They are doing work which we could not do, and reaching a class of people we could not reach. We are getting done as a labour of love, that for which the state could only pay officials. When a person is doing services which are unpaid the work must necessarily be better done than as a matter of bread-winning.⁵⁰

Indeed, the moral authority engendered by the fact that the SPCL and its associate agencies were acting out of ‘good will’ arguably gave it a level of legitimacy to the public and donors, thereby counteracting potential fears about the encroachment of the state into the familial realm.⁵¹ The development of societies such as the Society for the Protection of Child Life facilitated many changes in the relationship between the government and welfare. The societies sought to ensure the implementation of existing government legislation while campaigning for the introduction of new child-related laws.⁵² The growing influence of the child welfare movement, in terms of the increasing number of organisations, meant that the societies were able to exert increasing pressure on the government for reform, not only in terms of the protection of the youngest members of society, but in campaigning for certain

⁴⁸ One of the major impacts of the SPCL was its role it played in the formation of “Mothercraft” centres aimed at training mothers on how to provide proper care for infants. See UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive “The SA Mothercraft and Training Centre History”. It should be noted that in the early years of the SPCL, very little reference was made to race, with the implication being that funds were focused on white children. Whether this meant that the Society initially ignored black and coloured children is unclear. However, the fact remains that as the twentieth century progressed racial specifications became more and more pronounced, with a large portion of the SPCL’s work being specifically dedicated to coloured children by the 1950s and 1960s. The 1965 Chairman’s Report focused almost entirely on issues like forced removals of coloureds, the need for more coloured social workers and the need for more coloured foster homes. See KAB, File 1/WBG 210 33/2/1/ Social Welfare Protection of children circulars, 1966-1971.

⁴⁹ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/3A, *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

⁵⁰ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/3A, *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

⁵¹ As noted earlier, state involvement in the family was foreign prior to the nineteenth century (see Heywood, *History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, 106.) It is therefore understandable that there would be anxiety about the growing authority of the state to interfere in the family.

⁵² UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society’s Work 1908-1958”.

‘rights’ for children.⁵³ In May 1924 there were thirty three Child Welfare Societies in the Union. By June 1930 this number had increased to eighty-one. The demanded children rights included child grants, the need for a Welfare Department, the need to amend state laws and the importance of recognising the ‘special position’ of children within the legal system.⁵⁴ Although little mention to race is made, it can be assumed that due to the racially exclusive context of twentieth century South Africa, these laws were primarily applied to white children.

However, standing between child welfare and these goals were a number of obstacles. Poverty, not cruelty, was the main problem facing child welfare in the early 1900s.⁵⁵ In 1912 the Society reported that “cases of actual physical cruelty, we believe, are rare, but they are not unknown in Cape Town”.⁵⁶ The majority of the children being dealt with by the SPCL were poor. Whilst government legislation of the late 1800s and early 1900s helped to alleviate child poverty and the associated social evils in white South Africa *de juro, de facto* was another matter. As Anderson had foreseen, the new laws would not bring relief themselves without the direction given by an interested and committed pressure group. Organisations such as the SPCL provided direction for the child welfare movement, identifying areas of need to which resources could be directed.⁵⁷

However, to conduct their campaign, child welfare societies desperately needed funds. In the year of its founding, 1908, the SPCL was entirely dependent upon donations. By 1909 it had a deficit of eighty-one pounds. It soon became clear that the Society could not exist on donations alone, but needed the financial backing of the state. In 1910, the Society received its first government grant of fifty pounds from the office of the Cape Administrator.⁵⁸ This

⁵³ See KAB, File 3/GR 4/1/1/16 16/SD (L) South African National Council for Child Welfare: League of Aid 1938 to 1945. “Our Children’s Day Pamphlet”.

⁵⁴ This is seen particularly in the early calls made for the establishment of a children’s court. See KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 ZA/6/7 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924. Resolutions passed at the Second Annual Child Welfare Conference May 1918.

⁵⁵ S. Burman. and M. Naude, ‘Bearing a Bastard: The Social Consequences of Illegitimacy in Cape Town, 1896-1939’, in the *Journal of South African Studies*, 17, 3, (1991), 392.

⁵⁶ KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 5 September 1912.

⁵⁷ Previously child welfare legislation had been implemented by police officers. However, the police were regarded as “not the person best qualified to discharge the duties of a legislative nursemaid”. Volunteers, doing the work out of love, were seen as better candidates. See KAB, File PAH 24 H/10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913, *SA News*, 7 September 1912.

⁵⁸ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society’s Work 1908-1958”.

new pecuniary relationship between the Cape government and the SPCL marked a critical shift in the autonomy of the society and would soon be a source of friction.

State versus Province

A major stumbling block faced by the Society and its relationship with the Government came with the formation of the Union in 1910. It brought a new question with it: whether the financial support of child welfare was a national or provincial responsibility. The debate weakened the Society in its fledgling years, nearly causing it to collapse before it had even become fully established. Jasper Anderson shuttled back and forth in pursuit of funds, alternating between the Provincial and Union governments.

In response to Anderson's request for funds, Noel Janisch, the Provincial Secretary to the Cape Administrator, replied on 14 January 1911 that it was unable to assist Anderson and the SPCL as the jurisdiction of child protection laws now fell under the Union Government's responsibilities.⁵⁹ Two weeks later, Anderson replied expressing his dissatisfaction with the situation. The Society had been promised financial assistance by the Cape Administrator, on the strength of which it had established a children's home. Withdrawing the funds would leave the Society and its dependents in severe difficulties.⁶⁰

By 1912, Anderson had still received no feedback from the national government in terms of funding. In desperation, he again wrote to the Provincial Government requesting a loan of thirty pounds as without this, the Society would cease to exist.⁶¹ The Administrator agreed to step in and provide funds from the Pauper Relief Fund, a provincial financial reserve for assistance to the poor, in order to keep the Society afloat as the national-provincial debate continued.⁶² In so doing, the Provincial Government was illustrating it had not only the capacity, but the financial resources to assist child welfare endeavours, bringing into question the need for a national versus provincial debate in the first place.

⁵⁹ KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3A. Infant Life Protection Acts. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Letter from Joel Janisch to Jasper Anderson dated 14 January 1911.

⁶⁰ KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3 Infant Life Protection Acts. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Letter from Jasper Anderson to Joel Janisch, dated 30 January 1911.

⁶¹ KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3 Infant Life Protection Acts. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Letter from Jasper Anderson to Joel Janisch dated 29 April 1912.

⁶² KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3 Infant Life Protection Acts. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Memorandum 3/4/12. Although there was some confusion as to whether child welfare was a national or provincial responsibility, so called "Pauper Relief" was the responsibility of the Provincial Administration. It was from these funds that the grant to the SPCL came. See File: PAH 24 H10/3A. Infant Life Protection Acts. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Letter dated 18 August 1915 from the Provincial Secretary to the Secretary for the Interior.

In that same year the “lady health inspector”, sponsored by the SPCL, visited 1 568 homes of children in need, as well as conducting over four hundred interviews in the Society’s office. In total, she personally gave care to three hundred and ninety-two children.⁶³ At the same time the Society was kept busy with the caring of children in the home it had created in 1910 in Tamboerskloof, a suburb of Cape Town.⁶⁴ If the SPCL was forced to close due to a lack of funds it would have had a knock-on effect that would have severely affected numerous families and children in the Cape.

Ironically, the 1913 Children’s Act aimed at protecting and promoting the welfare of children on a national level, set back the endeavours of the SPCL in terms of the bureaucratic red tape it brought with it. Based on the 1907 and 1908 Infant Life Protection Acts, as illustrated above, it closely mimicked the British 1897 Infant Life Preservation Act. The 1913 Act extended child protection legislation, at least for white children, to a national level after the formation of a Union of South Africa in 1910.⁶⁵ Initially the Act was met with great satisfaction by the SPCL as it dealt with a number of issues which the Society regarded as in dire need of state legislation, such as street begging by children, cruelty, neglect, contribution orders that had to be paid to the state by parents whose children had been removed to institutions or foster homes as well as prohibitions on selling liquor, tobacco and cigarettes to children, along with limitations on child performances in public places.⁶⁶ But, without financial backing to ensure the Act was implemented, these laws remained toothless.

At the 1915 annual meeting of the SPCL, the Cape Administrator commented that the 1913 Child Protection Act, which was the first children’s act to be applied to the nation as a whole, “very much safeguarded” and constrained the monies which the Province has previously allocated to the Society. He then went on to state that “when the Union Government passed Act No.20 of 1913 the lawyers had some doubt as to whether it would be competent for the

⁶³ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/3A Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 5 September 1912. Mrs Dyke was initially paid a salary by the SPCL of thirteen pounds a month. By 1915, the Provincial Government was paying fifty pounds a year towards her salary. See KAB, Cape Town National Archives, File PAH 24 H10/3A. Infant Life Protection. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities.

⁶⁴ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “The SA Mothercraft and Training Centre History”.

⁶⁵ L. Chisolm, ‘Gender and deviance in South African Industrial Schools and Reformatories for Girls, 1912-1934’, in C. Walker, C. Walker ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 304.

⁶⁶ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. “Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society’s Work 1908-1958”. The performance of children in public places was seen as a particularly urgent topic due to fears that it would produce a “demoralising effect both upon the physical and mental status of such children”. See KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/1/67 Public Health: Protection of Children 1904-1908 (D 68/1) Letter dated 21 October 1904 to the Acting Commissioner of the Urban District Police, Cape Town.

Provincial Council to give this little annual support which it had done in the past.”⁶⁷ Thus, not only did the 1913 Act fail to solve the provincial versus national debate of financial responsibility, it further limited the authority of the Provincial Government to provide support for child welfare.

Child welfare was hindered by more than just bureaucratic red tape brought about by the establishment of the Union in 1910. The Society for the Protection of Child Life and its fellow organisations across the nation were plagued by an unhappy coincidence of timing: just as they were gaining momentum, the First World War broke out in 1914. In addition to the decrease in public donations attributable to the austerities of war, it was also feared that war-related concerns meant there was declining public sympathy for the work of the societies.⁶⁸

Child welfare became divided along the lines of an urban versus rural problem, with most welfare campaigning being focussed on the cities.⁶⁹ Poor whites, the majority of whom were rural and Afrikaans-speaking, were often branded with negative stereotypes such as laziness, dishonesty, improvidence, lack of ethical conceptions, irresponsibility, ignorance and dependency thereby classifying them the “undeserving poor”.⁷⁰ A journalist commenting on poor whites in 1900 wrote how it was “almost impossible to feel sympathy for them” as the poor whites’ condition was regarded as their own making.⁷¹ Such divisions between the middle classes and poor whites hampered the fund-raising campaign as the middle classes were largely unwilling to support those deemed as “undeserving”. Professor Clarke, from the Education Department at the South African College, commented in 1915 that “The lack of public enthusiasm might do more against the Society than even the lack of funds”.⁷² By “public” Clarke was referring to the white middle classes who had the resources and political voice to bring about legislative and financial reform.

⁶⁷ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/1 Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

⁶⁸ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/3A. Infant Life Protection. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Letter dated 30 April 1915 from the Provincial Accountant to the SPCL.

⁶⁹ Jo Boyden argues that “Statutory welfare bodies are run mainly by the urban wealthy and it is they who are charged with interpreting legislation”. See Boyden, ‘A Comparative Perspective on the Globalisation of Childhood’, 202.

⁷⁰ J.R. Albertyn, *The Poor White and Society*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia Drukkery, 1932), 21. See also S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166, 175.

⁷¹ Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of KwaZulu-Natal, File PAM 305. 5 BOE KCP 2215, “The Boers and ‘Poor Whites’ by a South African Journalist, June 1900”.

⁷² KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/1 Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915. The “public” here referring to the wealthy white class of South Africans who could afford to support charities such as the SPCL.

Although there was a measure of censure directed towards poor whites by the middle classes, which negatively affected fund raising drives, poor white children did receive some sympathy from sections of the population – most notably those involved in organisations such as the SPCL. In many cases poor white *children* (as opposed to the adults) were perceived as the “deserving poor”, the hapless victims of their parent’s mistakes, whose irresponsible behaviour and unwillingness to put their children’s education and needs ahead of themselves perpetuated the cycle of poor whiteism.⁷³ Yet, this argument did not convince the bulk of the middle class and the fact remained that public donations were not enough to keep the Society afloat.

Finally realising that the SPCL’s lack of financial support meant it faced closure the Administrator of the Cape stepped in to provide financial relief. At the seventh annual meeting of the Society in 1915 the Administrator offered to increase donations, the authority for which needed to come from the Union Government, but only on condition that he would gain the power of inspection to ensure that the funds were “wisely spent”. This ultimatum was met with some apprehension within the Society, with fears that it would bring a “straight jacket of officialdom” to the organisation.⁷⁴ However, after reassuring the Society that, although financially backed by the state, it would retain much of its independence, the organisation acquiesced to the Administrator’s offer. The Union Government agreed to this arrangement, and after some paperwork (including numerous letters and visits from Anderson and Mabel C. Elliot, the new secretary of the SPCL, to remind the Administrator of his promise), the Provincial Government agreed to pay a yearly stipend of two hundred and fifty pounds to the Society.⁷⁵

Child Welfare as a National Responsibility?

By 1916 a new energy animated the Society, not only in terms of the funds it had secured from the provincial government, but also in the support and influence of a new personality, Lady Buxton.⁷⁶ Buxton, along with her sister Eglantyne Jebb (founder of the Save the Child Foundation in Britain in 1919), had already received praise for her philanthropic work with

⁷³ Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Malherbe Manuscripts, File 721 (A) KCM 56979 (1328) A, “Some facts regarding the relation of the size of the family”.

⁷⁴ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/1 Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

⁷⁵ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/1 Child Life Protection Act, 1913, Administration of Act 25 of 1913. *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

⁷⁶ Eglantyne Jebb was also author of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924. See E. Fuller, *The Right of the Child: A Chapter in Social History*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1951), 7.

children in Britain. When she came to South Africa as the wife of the Governor General of the Union of South Africa, Charles Roden Buxton, she assumed the role of placing the issue of child welfare on the national agenda.⁷⁷ As Honorary President of both the Cape's Society for the Protection of Child Life and the Children's Aid Society in Johannesburg, she suggested that the first National Conference on Child Welfare to be held in 1917.⁷⁸ The aim of the conference was to promote public awareness with regards to the plight of child welfare "creating national, municipal and individual responsibility towards children".⁷⁹ To achieve greater unity on the issue within white South Africa it was made policy that the resolutions and findings of the conferences be published in English and Dutch (later Afrikaans). It further acknowledged that many of the challenges facing the welfare of children were beyond the scope of the Society and the public and could only be resolved through government action, such as the provision of fresh water, health care and the monitoring of housing conditions.⁸⁰ In doing so, the conference was conceding the fact that it could not exist without state support, making it clear that it had little choice but to co-operate with the government.

By uniting the child welfare societies across the nation, Buxton created an effective pressure force that was able to oversee the implementation of government legislation whilst simultaneously campaigning for new laws. This fitted well with Buxton's ideas of 'practical morality' which asserted that welfare represented the action rather than the ideology.⁸¹ Over the next few years, national conferences were held annually throughout the country. Although the reports and resolutions grew in complexity over time, their overall goals and demands remained consistent. An overarching theme of the conferences was the request for the government to take a more active responsibility in child welfare by providing homes, healthcare and financial aid for children in need. Additionally, the conferences sought to advise the Government on legislative reform. Drawing their inspiration from abroad, the

⁷⁷ The position of "Governor General" refers to the British Representative of the British Crown in overseas territories.

⁷⁸ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924, ZC/6/7. "Draft Circular dated 2 November 1916".

⁷⁹ KAB, Cape Town National Archives, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924, ZC/6/7. "Draft Circular dated 2 November 1916".

⁸⁰ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924, ZC/6/7. "Draft Circular dated 2 November 1916".

⁸¹ Fuller, *The Right of the Child: A Chapter in Social History*, 23. At a meeting held in 1919 at Albert Hall in London, she had stood up, a tin of condensed milk in her hand, and proclaimed "There is more morality in this tin than in all the creeds". Her declaration was met with massive applause and her message was clear: laws and philosophies meant nothing for welfare if they could not give actual relief to suffering. Lady Buxton is discussed in Chapter Six.

conferences advocated the introduction of new laws such as mother and child pensions and children's courts modelled on those found in America and Australia.⁸²

With regards to children's maintenance grants, an amendment to the 1913 Children's Act in 1921 made provision for the payment of government maintenance grants to parents of indigent children.⁸³ The role of child welfare societies was to investigate cases of need and report back to the city magistrate as to which families were deserving of grants. The primary aim of this was to enable children to remain at home with their mothers, rather than having to be removed to an institution, an arrangement which was perceived to be in the best interests of both the child and the state.⁸⁴ Children's courts, on the other hand, would take longer to achieve. Although first advocated at the 1918 Conference, it would take decades before this resolution would be realised, as it finally was in 1937.⁸⁵

Significantly, the conferences also laid the groundwork for what would become the Social Welfare Department in 1937, the concept for which was first introduced at the third annual Conference in Bloemfontein in 1919 by Mr J.P. Logan, the town clerk of Bloemfontein.⁸⁶ Logan highlighted the primary challenge faced by child welfare agents in bringing about large scale reform in emotive terms, describing it as a task which through its enormity was beyond the reach of any organisation other than the state: "the bitterness of poverty comes from deeper sources than the vices of the individual, from sources that can only be reached by industrial and social change".⁸⁷ In his opinion, industrial and social change, attainable only through the structures of the state, needed to be co-ordinated by a unified body, a department of social welfare.

⁸² KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924, ZC/6/7. "Resolutions Passed at Second Annual Child Welfare Conference May 1918".

⁸³ Previous grants had been paid to foster parents for the care of children removed from their biological parents. UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. "Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society's Work 1908-1958"

⁸⁴ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the centre, various accounts and reports. "Golden Jubilee Report: Development of Society's Work 1908-1958"

⁸⁵ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924, ZC/6/7. "Resolutions Passed at Second Annual Child Welfare Conference May 1918". It was only with the 1937 Children's Act that children's courts were finally introduced. The main task of these courts was to deal with cases of adoption and to institute enquiries into child welfare see Cape Town National Archives (KAB), File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949 Part 1. "Annual Report for the Year 1947 on Child and Youth Welfare Services, submitted to the UNITED NATIONS by the Government of the Union of South Africa", (UN Reference: SOA 16/01/GN. Dated 25 March 1948).

⁸⁶ KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. "Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments". By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

⁸⁷ KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. "Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments". By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

Logan's call for large scale social reform in 1919 in the form of a Social Welfare Department was rejected at the time and only instituted in 1937. One reason for this was that middle class reformers, prior to the late 1930s, were unwilling to upset the status quo of class and race based supremacy.⁸⁸ Although they wished to bring relief to the poor white, suffering children, they were unwilling to embrace the revolutionary social reforms that would inevitably accompany the introduction of a Social Welfare Department.⁸⁹

The Formation of the National Council of Child Welfare (1924)

Many of the resolutions adopted by the national conferences, such as the need for children's courts and the formation of a Social Welfare Department, would take years and even decades to reach fruition, primarily because their introduction fell into the scope of government authority and beyond the reach and authority of the private institutions. However, a leap in the direction of increased state and child welfare interaction occurred in 1924 with the formation of the National Council of Child Welfare.

The idea of a National Council of Child Welfare was initially raised at the first National Conference in 1917. It had been hoped that the conferences would lead to the establishment of a standing committee that could act as a co-ordinator between the different child welfare agencies and the government, providing effective advice on the necessary legislation dealing particularly with children.⁹⁰ Seven years later this body was formed:

to act as co-ordinating link between local child welfare societies, to be the official channel of communication between those societies and the Government in all matters of policy affecting child welfare and to carry on propaganda work for the promotion of health and well-being of children.⁹¹

From this moment forward all interaction between the various child welfare societies and the state was conducted through the National Council. Payments to local child welfare societies would be channelled through a communal fund controlled by the National Council, who would act to ensure that the societies operated within the correct legal framework defined by state legislation. Information regarding the correct procedures in conducting child care was

⁸⁸ See D. Posel, 'The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family in the 1930s and 1940s' in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, eds., *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005), 65.

⁸⁹ The formation of a Social Welfare Department in 1937 is discussed in Chapter Three.

⁹⁰ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924, ZC/6/7. "Draft Circular 2 November 1916" (Point three in the circular refers to the goal of establishing a "standing committee to advise upon legislation on questions affecting children").

⁹¹ KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare 1937 to 1941. "Pamphlet: Our Children's Day".

promulgated through publications by the Council such as the monthly magazine *Child Welfare* along with numerous pamphlets on ‘mothercraft’.⁹²

The formation of the National Council in 1924 marked a turning point in the development of child welfare in South Africa by consolidating the relationship between child welfare societies and the state. Significantly, 1924 was also the year that Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the League of Nations.⁹³

The League of Nations was created in 1919 in the immediate aftermath of World War One, with the intent of being an international forum that could facilitate the settlement of disputes without recourse to war. The significance of the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child being adopted by the League of Nations should not be over looked in the South African context. The principles and drafting of the League’s constitution were strongly influenced by Jan Christiaan Smuts, South African statesman and prime minister (from 1919 to 1924 and 1939 to 1948), and a supporter of local and international child welfare initiatives. Smuts, who was a patron of the South Africa National Conferences on Child Welfare, was also the first statesman to align himself with the Save the Child Foundation in Britain.⁹⁴ The idea of child protection and welfare fitted easily with the League’s discourses of universal peace and safety.

The 1924 Declaration was the precursor of other international legislation providing for the protection of children, being followed by the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Drafted by a committee headed by Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the Save the Child Foundation and sister to Lady Buxton, the 1924 Declaration was pithy, promoting five main principles for the protection of children, the general gist of which was the special position of children in society, their vulnerability denoting a specific need for physical protection above that of adults.⁹⁵ This echoed the guiding principles adopted by the National Council of Child Welfare, born in the same year.

Thus at this early stage in the history of child welfare, it would appear that South Africa mimicked international discourses relating to child protection through the key roles played by

⁹² KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare 1937 to 1941. “Pamphlet: Our Children’s Day”. Mothercraft referred to the training of mothers on how to correctly care for their infants.

⁹³ Fuller, *The Rights of the Child*, 74.

⁹⁴ See KAB, File 3/ KWT 4/1/234 ZA/6/7 Child Welfare Society Conference Vol. 2. “Circular number 2 1920: Fourth Annual Child Welfare Conference- Under the Auspices of the Child Welfare Societies of the Union” and Fuller, *The Right of the Child*, 37.

⁹⁵ Fuller, *The Rights of the Child*, 74.

British leaders, such as Lady Buxton, as well as its acknowledgment of international legislation. However, the ideological unity promoted by acts such as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, would soon be put under strain, as the racialised politics of the period leading up to apartheid created tensions unique to the South African situation, causing it to diverge from international principles of child welfare in terms of the black or so called ‘non-white’ portions of the population, whilst adhering diligently to international standards with regards to the white child population.

Conclusion

By 1924 the despairing “cries of the children” in early twentieth century South Africa had been answered, at least for white children, by the establishment and growth of a child welfare movement that soon evolved into a collaborative effort between the state and independent child welfare societies. This initiative took place within the context of the social mores of the times and in consequence the welfare societies’ efforts and concerns, while not deliberately neglectful of black and coloured children, were focussed primarily on the plight of needy white children. To achieve their goals independent societies increasingly turned to the government to provide financial assistance and lobbied for the enactment of new laws aimed at improving and securing the needs of children. It was hoped by members of both government and child welfare organisations that the relationship would be mutually beneficial: the societies were doing as a “labour of love, that for which the state could only pay officials”, bringing a level of moral credibility to child welfare endeavours, whilst the government responded with funds and the required legislation.⁹⁶ The societies, in turn, would continue in their independent role of directing the progress of child welfare to new areas of need.⁹⁷ Yet, in years to come these somewhat Utopian expectations of child welfare would be placed under severe strain.

In the early years of the twentieth century, South Africa had followed international trends in child welfare which had provided a template for its own fledgling child welfare movement. This was seen specifically in the composition of early legislation and the increased interaction between the government and child welfare organisations, ultimately embodied by the formation of a National Council of Child Welfare in 1924. Whilst increased government

⁹⁶ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/3A *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

⁹⁷ KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. “Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments”. By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

involvement did bring large scale relief to the plight of white children in need, the state soon gained a position of power in its partnership with child welfare societies through its control of the purse strings. This gave it a degree of control over the actions of previously independent child welfare activities, a factor which would become a source of friction in the build up to apartheid, as the following chapter illustrates.

Chapter Three

For the sake of the children?

The Ironies of South Africa's Child Welfare Movement, c. 1924 to 1940

Historians love irony because it provides “an excellent descriptive device, by calling attention to anomalies like the gap between the promise and the performance”.¹ The history of child welfare in the period between the early 1920s and 1940s opens up a fertile field for just such an exposition.

In 1937 the South African National Council of Child Welfare (SANCCW) declared “The Council’s propaganda is carried on for the extension of child welfare work in the interests of all children, without distinction of race or creed”.² The year 1937 marked an apparent apogee in the history of South African child welfare. It was in this year that the Social Welfare Department was formed, it was in this year that South Africa became one of the first countries to introduce children’s courts and it was in this year that the South African government introduced the 1937 Children’s Act, an Act perceived as particularly progressive.³

Yet, ironically, the development of child welfare in South Africa was actually regressing with regards to its treatment of African and coloured children. The SANCCW’s slogan of equality in race and creed was adopted almost verbatim from the pronouncements of the British based Save the Child Foundation and the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child.⁴ Its

¹ D.W. Howe and P.E. Finn, ‘Richard Hofstadter: The Ironies of an American Historian’, *Pacific Historical Review*, 43, 1, (1974), 4.

² KAB, Cape Town Archives Repository, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare, 1937-1941. ‘Pamphlet: Our Children’s Day’.

³ F.N. Zaal argues that the 1937 Act placed South Africa ahead of many countries in terms of its child protection legislation as it “established basic features and much of the wording of our care legislation which are still applicable today”. See F.N. Zaal, ‘Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care: A Critical Evaluation of Selected Aspects of the South African System’. (PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand: 2008), 46.

⁴ In 1919 South Africa became the first dominion to establish a committee of the Save the Child Foundation, largely due to an appeal made by Jan Smuts, a South African statesman and intellectual. See E. Fuller, *The Right of the Child*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1951), 34. According to Fuller the Save the Child Foundation consistently ignored the demarcations of race and nationality, declaring itself as having one guiding rule with regards to children “to save them irrespective of all considerations of country, or creed”, later adapting this quote in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child to read, “mankind has an obligation to give every

application to the South African context was an entirely different question. Although the 1920s and 1930s were not characterised by the extreme racism that made collaboration between white and black in welfare illegal, as was to become the case in the 1960s, the ideologies of what was to later solidify as apartheid were already being set in motion, illustrated by the growing body of legislation relating to racial segregation, coupled with the disproportionate allocation of state resources along racial lines.

The period between the establishment of a National Council of Child Welfare in 1924 and the formation of a Social Welfare Department in 1937 marks an interesting defining point in the direction of South Africa's welfare endeavours. The late 1920s witnessed a consolidation of fears centred on the growth of poor whiteism set against the urbanisation of black South Africans. The threat to white hegemony posed by the perceived weakening of the white race in the face of growing black westernisation in the cities, was clearly articulated in the reports of the American-funded Carnegie Commission into the Poor White Problem in South Africa from 1929 to 1932. The Commission found that the poor whites in South Africa represented a large portion of the white population – confirming earlier fears about their growth in number – along with eugenic fears that poor white South Africans were 'degenerating' to the level of Africans.⁵ The prompt government reaction to these findings was to focus state resources on alleviating poor whiteism, at the expense of poor black and coloured communities.

This chapter focuses on the factors which contributed to the government's one-sided allocation of state resources to the welfare of the white population, the consequent formation of a Social Welfare Department in 1937 and the impact these developments had on the child welfare movement as a whole. In so doing it illustrates the irony inherent in the fact that by creating the machinery of a welfare state, the government was setting in place the structures which would be used to consolidate racial separation through the allocation of resources, thereby undermining the welfare of the majority of South Africans.

child...beyond and above all considerations of race or creed...the means requisite for its normal development". See Fuller, *The Right of the Child*, 51, 41 and 38.

⁵ E.G. Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, (Lansdowne, Timmins Publishers, 1981), 119-120.

The Social Climate in 1920s South Africa

Before one can adequately address the developments of the child welfare movement in the increasingly segregationist period leading up to apartheid, it is essential to keep in mind the broader developments in South Africa's socio-political climate in order to periodise and contextualise state policy. The year 1924 marked a crucial point in the consolidation of the relationship between the state and the child welfare movement through the formation of the National Council of Child Welfare. Significantly; 1924 was also the year that the Pact Government, under the leadership of the Hertzog administration came into power.⁶ The largely English speaking SANCCW was thus aligning itself with an unknown government, one that would become known for its introduction of segregation legislation.

As Dubow, McClendon and others have argued, JBM Hertzog's position as Prime Minister of South Africa accelerated the introduction of segregation legislation.⁷ Although racially divisive laws had long been instituted, witnessed in the 1913 Land Act and the 1923 Urban Areas Act, Hertzog's promise to protect the rights of white, "civilised" labour put the process of racial segregation into effect.⁸ The policies first introduced in the 1913 and 1923 Acts were consolidated in Hertzog's Native Bills. Increased segregation was illustrated particularly in the introduction of the Colour Bar in 1926 along with the 1927 Native Administration Act.⁹ The Colour Bar placed strict limits on the earning power of Africans, restricting them to roles as unskilled labourers, whilst reserving higher paying skilled jobs for whites.¹⁰ The 1927 Native Administration Act vastly expanded the powers of the Native Affairs Department (NAD), not only giving it the authority to control the movements of Africans, but also allowing the NAD to appoint and dispose of African leaders and chiefs whilst simultaneously defining their powers and responsibilities.¹¹

These draconian state measures aimed at controlling the African population were in reaction to fears relating to increased black proletarianisation in the wake of industrialisation. As

⁶ T.V. McClendon, *Genders and Generations Apart: Labor Tenants and Customary Law in Segregation-Era South Africa, 1920s to 1940s*, (Cape Town, David Philip Publishers, 2002), 19.

⁷ S. Dubow, *Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, c. 1919-1936*, (London, MacMillan, 1989), 14; McClendon, *Genders and Generations Apart*, 19.

⁸ The 1913 Natives Land Act created a framework of territorial segregation, with blacks being given approximately thirteen percent of the country's land. The 1923 Urban Areas Act placed restrictions on the influx of Africans into urban areas. See D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), 40-41.

⁹ Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid South Africa, 1919-36*, 8.

¹⁰ Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid South Africa, 1919-36*, 44.

¹¹ McClendon, *Genders and Generations Apart*, 36.

Dubow has argued there was an acute awareness amongst the white population with regards to the threat black urbanisation would bring to white social stability; indeed, fears of African rebellion and anxieties over a ‘developing sense of race consciousness’ among Africans were widespread from the beginning of the 1920s.¹²

The apparent threats posed by black urbanisation and mobilisation was made particularly acute by the fact that the white South African identity, particularly that of the Afrikaners, was fragile. South Africa’s white population of the 1920s had long been viewed as a “white aristocracy on a big black foundation of natives”.¹³ Yet, challenging such a notion of an homogenous white nobility was the existence of an ever-increasing class of poor whites succinctly described as the “Skeletons of South Africa’s Social Cupboard”.¹⁴ By the late 1920s, poor whites, the majority of whom were Afrikaners, represented over seventeen percent of the white population; almost a fifth of the total number of white South Africans.¹⁵

The growing class of poor whites represented a challenge to prevailing notions of white racial superiority, a perception that was used to justify discriminatory acts such as those embodied by Hertzog’s Native Bills. In 1926 Sarah Gertrude Millin defined the Poor White as “someone of European extraction who cannot support himself according to a European standard of civilisation, *who cannot keep clear the line of demarcation between black and white*”.¹⁶ As such, the poor whites were felt to be lowering the standard of white civilisation, arguably bringing into question the legitimacy of white hegemony in South Africa. This fear was expressed by E.G. Malherbe’s assertion that the poor whites were “becoming a menace to the preservation and prestige of our White People, living as we do in the midst of the native population which outnumbers us 5 to 1”.¹⁷

The perceived need to protect the white race from “degenerating” to the level of Africans provided the prime motivation for the increasingly racist policies of South Africa’s Pact Government. The protection of racial identity, however, was insisted upon on both sides of the colour line. To ease the consciences of some white South Africans, it was argued that keeping white and black apart would not only serve to preserve the white race, but would also

¹² Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid South Africa, 1919-36*, 12.

¹³ E.G. Malherbe, *Education and the Poor White*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia, 1932), 23.

¹⁴ Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Malherbe Manuscripts: File 477/5 KCM 56979 (250), “Who are the Poor Whites? Rough Draft of Lecture”.

¹⁵ Carnegie Report, *Joint Findings and Recommendations*, par. 9. The Joint Findings are published in the front of each of the five reports of the Carnegie Commission, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia, 1932).

¹⁶ S.G. Millin, *The South Africans*, (London, Constable and Co, 1926), 160. Emphasis added.

¹⁷ Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 119-120.

be protecting the “African” culture. As Dubow argues, “‘culture’ seemed to offer a useful escape from the constraints of various evolutionist theories”.¹⁸ It thus became a politically correct term of the time used to justify and explain the dualistic benefit of keeping white and black apart.

The perception of the poor whites as a social problem was further legitimised and accelerated by the highly publicised findings of the 1929 to 1932 Carnegie Commission. This study, which involved the publication of five different reports relating to different aspects of the poor white problem, reinforced fears that the poor whites were growing in number and deteriorating in nature.¹⁹

It was against this socio-political backdrop that individual child welfare societies and the SANCCW were operating in the 1920s. Initially, the SANCCW and its member societies operated successfully within the framework provided by the state, giving most of their attention to the plight of the poor white child. In 1928 the National Council issued a statement that the main goal of its member societies was to act as “educative agents” preventing the fall of the white “normal child” into the “delinquent and dependent classes”.²⁰ However, by the 1930s, increased government focus and resources applied to addressing the plight of the poor white child, had freed non-governmental child welfare societies to turn their attention to a previously neglected area of need: the poor black child.

An increased awareness of the African child?

By the late 1930s private child welfare in South Africa was in a curious position. It could not be disarticulated from the racialised social climate in which it existed, but at the same time the decline in the needs of the white child, due to increased state intervention in that arena, led to an increasing focus on black children.²¹ The size and scope of child welfare in South

¹⁸ Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid South Africa, 1919-36*, 8.

¹⁹ The study was the brain child of E.G. Malherbe, A South African educationalist and academic. He advocated a five pronged scientific approach. This included an economic report by JFW Grosskopf, a psychological report by RW Wilcocks, an education report by Malherbe himself, a health report by W.A. Murray and finally a combined sociological report by J.R. Albertyn and M.E. Rothmann, who would focus primarily on poor white mothers and daughters. See Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 120-121.

²⁰ KAB, File 3/GR 4/1/1/16 South African National Council of Child Welfare: League of Aid. “Applications for Contributions”, 1928.

²¹ Although greater attention was directed towards African children only in the late 1930s, it should, however, be noted that independent child welfare agencies had in fact concerned themselves with the welfare of ‘non-white’ children, particularly coloured children, long before the 1930s. For example, in March 1917 a call was made at the National Conference on Child Welfare for the provision of homes for coloured children. KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 ZC/6/7. “Report: Homes for Coloured Children”. However, their concerns over the plight of coloured

Africa, both independent and government regulated, as well as that of the SANCCW, makes it difficult to define a homogenous ideology. As illustrated in the latter half of this chapter, independent child welfare organisations in South Africa were divided between adhering to the solidifying government policies of racial segregation – acknowledging the fact that a significant amount of their funding came from the state – whilst simultaneously turning their attention and resources towards African children.

The international influence of Child Welfare discourses, particularly that of the Save the Child Foundation in Britain, should not be overlooked. South Africa was one of the first countries, under the urging of Jan Smuts the South African statesman and president, to align itself with the Save the Child Foundation, forming its own local Committee in 1919.²² Since that time, the ideological influences of the Save the Child Foundation in South Africa have been clear. One of the cornerstones of the Save the Child Foundation was its approach that “a child’s a child” regardless of who the child belonged to, a sentiment which was expressed in a poem written specifically for the foundation by John Galsworthy:

Who cares if it be alien bred,
No less than ours it must be fed;
Against the cold it must be clad
No less than ours! Poor mite it had
As little part in hate – it smiled
As prettily! A child’s a child.²³

In South Africa, outwardly at least, the National Council for Child Welfare was forwarding a similar ideological approach, seen in its 1937 statement that “The Council’s propaganda is carried on for the extension of child welfare work in the interests of all children, without distinction of race or creed”.²⁴ As Posel has shown, South African welfare organisations drew heavily on arguments regarding state welfare from Europe and the USA, asserting that “extreme economic hardship impaired the production of harmonious and stable families”.²⁵ This argument was not only directed towards white families, but was present in African welfare lobbies in the 1930s and 1940s, aimed at improving the conditions of Africans, particularly in urban areas.

and black children increased drastically once the issue of poor whiteism had been largely resolved. Up until this point, African and coloured children had been fairly peripheral.

²² Fuller, *The Right of the Child*, 33-34.

²³ Fuller, *The Right of the Child*, 42.

²⁴ KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare, 1937-1941. “Pamphlet: Our Children’s Day”.

²⁵ D. Posel, ‘The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family 1930s and 1940s’, in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves eds., *South Africa’s 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005), 68-69.

However, this liberal attitude towards African welfare was precariously maintained in a political reality that was increasingly antagonistic towards racial harmony and equality. The National Party strongly condemned the idea of increased social welfare for Africans, arguing that it would “disrupt the social structure and cause urbanisation and detribalisation” of Africans.²⁶ Although it was not yet in power, the NP was articulating concerns that were indeed surfacing within the white South African government. In the same year as the Council issued its statement of child welfare “in the interests of all children, without distinction of race or creed”,²⁷ the South African Government introduced the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act: a stricter version of the earlier 1923 Urban Areas Act, giving the Minister of Native Affairs the authority to remove Africans who were deemed as “surplus” from white, urban Areas.²⁸

Despite the racially dogmatic attitude held by the state, by the end of the 1930s many private child welfare societies were in the process of establishing African child welfare societies as subsidiary organisations attached to existing societies and operating primarily in urban areas.²⁹ Arguably, making living conditions more palatable for African urbanised families went against the government’s ambitions to discourage African urbanisation. This tension between private child welfare agencies and the state would be further exasperated by the establishment of a Department of Social Welfare in 1937. Henceforth budget allocations had to be routed through the bureaucratic network of the state, a state that had illustrated a lack of concern for African Welfare in the content of the 1937 Native Act, particularly as this pertained to African urbanisation. These tensions are illustrated in the following example.

Defending its allocation of funding for a “Non-European” clinic, the King Williams Town Child Welfare Society explained that “the diminishing European need for charity, owing to the government provision of maintenance and other grants, enables the Society to denote more of its funds to the Native Child”. Although the “Native and coloured people” had

²⁶ J. Seekings, ‘Visions, Hopes and Views about the Future: The Radical Movement of the South African Welfare Reform’, in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves eds., *South Africa’s 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities* (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005), 48.

²⁷ KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare, 1937-1941. “Pamphlet: Our Children’s Day”.

²⁸ Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961*, 43.

²⁹ For example, in 1935, King Williams Town Child Welfare Society Established an African branch, which although run by the “Native and Coloured people” came under the directive of the white dominated main branch of the Society. See KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/4/237 ZC/14/12 “Revenues and Expenditures of Child Welfare Society for the year 1935”. The Durban Child Welfare Society formed a similar branch titled “Durban Bantu Child Welfare Society” in 1936. <http://www.childwelfareurban.org.za/history.htm> (accessed 24 July 2011). These ‘African branches’ operated as multi-racial organisations until the increasingly draconian measures introduced in the 1960s by the apartheid government made multi-racial activities illegal.

formed their own society, their finances were under the control of the white dominated King Williams Town Child Welfare Society, a contrivance that was hoped would make them eligible for grants from the SANCCW and, thus, the government. With this expectation, the Society had initially put aside forty pounds in 1935 for the creation of a “Non-European Clinic” in King Williams Town, in contrast to the overall budget for white child welfare of four hundred and thirty two pounds. By 1937, due to pressure from the government, which pleaded poverty, the allocation for the “Non-European clinic” had been dropped to ten pounds, whilst other budget allocations for white children had remained almost stable with a few minor decreases in expenditure.³⁰ Thus, despite the intent of the King William’s Town Child Welfare Society to provide for children regardless of race or creed, its dependence upon government funding meant that its activities were, in essence circumscribed by both race and political creed.

Changing Needs of the White Child

The alleviation of white poverty not only led to increased attention being given to black and coloured children by independent organisations, but also arguably changed the way in which white child welfare was understood.³¹ With a decline in the extent of white poverty with its concomitant physical needs, child welfare societies and the government alike turned their attention to the spiritual and moral welfare of white children.

Nevertheless, fears of white racial degeneration engendered by the poor white problem were still prevalent in the social thinking of the late 1930s, and arguably still influenced the actions of the various child welfare societies, despite the statements of the National Council that welfare was to be conducted outside the constraints of race and creed. This is perhaps best illustrated in the 1937 case study of Sarah Maria Louisa. A case of child neglect in Knysna was brought to the attention to the local magistrate by the local child welfare society, and he in turn referred the case to the police. Sarah Maria Louisa, at the age of sixteen, had passed standard seven and then left school.³² The police report stated that “Although apparently well looked after, she is left to herself and is deteriorating morally, associating with coloured

³⁰ It should be noted that the overall expenses of the Society were now at 360 pounds, a significant drop from that of 442 pounds in 1936, perhaps because the state was now subsidising the cost of the Lady Health Inspector, previously sponsored by the Society. See KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/4/237 ZC/14/12 “Revenues and Expenditures of Child Welfare Society”.

³¹ E.G. Malherbe asserts that by the 1950s the percentage of poor whites was virtually zero. See Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, 169.

³² KAB File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns (1937-1944), Letter dated 30 September 1927 from SA Police, Knysna to Magistrate titled “Cases of Neglect of Children”.

people, because her little brother is coloured". Despite the fact that the mother was described as "hard-working" and financially able to support her family of four (including her eighty-two year old mother), the authorities decided that the best interests of the young girl would be served if she was removed from her home and placed in an institution, the primary rationale being that the mother was "feeble-minded".³³ How this "feeble-minded" single woman was able to keep a steady job and raise two children in addition to looking after her aged mother, is not elaborated upon in the report.

Probably the motive for Miss Roelofse being judged as an incapable mother was the fact that the younger child was the product of an inter-racial relationship. Interestingly (but not surprisingly) it was not seen as necessary to remove the younger, coloured brother, with the report arguing "It is essential that the boy should be left where he is, as he is doing quite well, and his mother would go completely mad if both children were taken away". Instead, "Old Mrs Roelofse and her imbecile daughter would be better able to provide for the child attending school if the [white] girl is taken away".³⁴ Reading between the lines, the circumstances were good enough for a "coloured" child, but not for a child who could be accepted into white society if removed to a different familial context.

The Roelofse case is indicative of a broader process that was unfolding in South Africa. During the 1930s there was a growing dialogue of eugenic discourses, focussing on the upliftment and moral well-being of white South Africans, and more specifically, the Afrikaner 'volk'.³⁵ Although the full panoply of legislative infrastructure to enforce racial segregation had not yet been introduced, the thought politics of what would later become apartheid were already prevalent. The harsh reality of the poor white problem and the associated threat to white hegemony in South Africa, specifically to that of the Afrikaners, created a perceived urgency to protect the white race. This explains why it was deemed necessary to remove the young girl from her family: her whiteness needed to be protected. It was through this kind of process that African children, and children of other races, were marginalised as the state sought to patrol the boundaries of race in the most intimate spaces of the home.

³³ KAB File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns (1937-1944), Letter dated 30 September 1927 from SA Police, Knysna to Magistrate titled "Cases of Neglect of Children".

³⁴ KAB, File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns (1937-1944), Letter dated 30 September 1927 from SA Police, Knysna to Magistrate titled "Cases of Neglect of Children".

³⁵ See S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

The Formation of a Department of Social Welfare in 1937

Another irony of South African welfare history was that the person who became known as the architect of apartheid and all its attendant evils, was also the person responsible for the introduction of the Social Welfare Department in South Africa: Dr H.F. Verwoerd. At the 1934 Kimberly Conference on the Poor White problem, Verwoerd advocated the need for separate development as a means of protecting and uplifting the white South African population.³⁶

Arguably, the seed of what would become the Department of Social Welfare was in fact first planted as far back as 1919 at the Third Annual Child Welfare Conference in Bloemfontein. Mr J.P. Logan, the town clerk and treasurer of Bloemfontein at that time published a pamphlet titled *Child Welfare and the Community: a Plea for a Wider Outlook- the Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments*. In the pamphlet he outlined a proposition for the introduction of a unified Social Welfare Department that would oversee the administration of all forms of social welfare, including child welfare.³⁷

Logan made no claim to originality, but rather acknowledged that most of the principles underpinning his argument for a Welfare Department were based on those found in England and the United States of America. He had merely taken the key arguments and “modified [them] to suit our South African possibilities”.³⁸ According to Logan, the key role of the Department would be to abolish poverty, the root cause of many social evils including child neglect and mistreatment. To achieve this, he contended, the state would need to take over many of the tasks currently performed by welfare charities on the assumption that only the state had the necessary resources and authority to achieve large scale reform.³⁹

³⁶ L. Nicholas, ‘The History of South African Social Work’ in L. Nicholas, J. Rautenbach and M. Maistry, eds., *Introduction to Social Work*, (Claremont, Juta, 2010), 42.

³⁷ Logan made no reference to race in his pamphlet. However, the fact that it was published in 1919, when social concerns were centring around poor whites, it could be assumed that his proposition was directed mostly towards the white population of South Africa. KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. ‘Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments’. By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

³⁸ KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. ‘Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments’. By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

³⁹ KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. ‘Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments’. By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

In response to the concern over how this would affect the power and responsibility of private child welfare organisations, Logan responded, “It is a privilege and function of the societies to suggest and work out the problem involved in any special activity, and it is an obvious advantage that somebody such as the Social Welfare Department is there to carry it on”.⁴⁰ In his opinion, the charities should thus serve rather to identify and develop solutions to social problems, whilst it would be the role of government to provide treatments for any social ill. In other words, the state should provide the financial and administrative infrastructure to solve the problems identified by the charities.

In effect, this relationship already existed between the state and child welfare organisations long before the department was brought into being, seen specifically in the establishment of the National Council of Child Welfare in 1924. The formation of a Department of Social Welfare in 1937 would, however, lead to increased consolidation between the activities of child welfare agencies and the government and shift the relationship towards one of dominance as opposed to mutual endeavour. A key oversight by Logan was that he made no provision for what should happen if the Department of Social Welfare and child welfare agencies differed in their ideological and practical approach to providing relief to children in need.

Although the seed of a Social Welfare Department was planted in 1919, it took almost two decades to reach fruition. Logan’s argument of a social welfare department being needed to break the cycle of poverty, rejected at the time because of the cost it would incur, was re-invigorated by the Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem from 1929 to 1932. H.F. Verwoerd, then head of the newly established department of Sociology at Stellenbosch University, led the continuation programme into the poor white investigation. At the 1934 National Kimberly Conference on the Poor White problem, Verwoerd forwarded his paper *Combating poverty and the re-organization of welfare work*, a document which Lionel Nicholas, an editor of *Introduction to Social Work*, regards as laying the foundations for social work in South Africa.⁴¹ Verwoerd specifically called for the creation of a separate government department that would deal exclusively with issues relating to social welfare, as well as tertiary training for social workers at university level.⁴² According to Nicholas, it was

⁴⁰ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. “Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments.” By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

⁴¹ Nicholas, ‘The History of South African Social Work’, 43.

⁴² Nicholas, ‘The History of South African Social Work’ 43.

the arguments forwarded by Verwoerd and others at the 1934 Conference that ultimately led to the formation of a Social Welfare Department in 1937, with J.H. Hofmeyr as its first Minister designate.⁴³

The creation of the Department of Social Welfare had profound consequences for the National Council of Child Welfare. The Department would in effect be taking over many of the responsibilities previously held by child welfare organisations such as the administration of welfare grants, probation services and the control of hostels and the adoption of children.⁴⁴ Furthermore, partly to co-ordinate the change brought about by the establishment of a Department, a new Children's Act was introduced in 1937, along with Children's Courts created specifically to administer the policies of the Act.⁴⁵ The creation of a Department of Social Welfare would add new impetus to the institutionalisation of Social Work as a formal occupation in South Africa, creating a greater demand for tertiary educated social workers.⁴⁶ The culmination of these factors would change the face of child welfare in South Africa, moving the well-being of children ever more from the private domain, to the province of the state.

The 1937 Children's Act

Building on the legislation incorporated in the 1913 Infant Life Protection Act, the 1937 Children's Act further consolidated the relationship between child welfare and the state. As Zaal has shown, the 1937 Act was in many ways ahead of international trends, specifically in the introduction of children's courts.⁴⁷ The function of these courts was not to try juvenile offenders, but to deal with issues relating specifically to the 1937 Children's Act.⁴⁸ The main purpose of the courts was to hold inquiries into whether or not certain children were in need of care, and if so what the best steps were to provide assistance.⁴⁹

⁴³ Nicholas, 'The History of South African Social Work' 43. And KAB, File: 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council for Child Welfare 1938-1945. "South African National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Report for the year ended March 31st, 1938".

⁴⁴ KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949, Part One.

⁴⁵ E. Spiro, *The Children's Act 1960: Being a Companion Work to Spiro's Law of Parent and Child*, (Cape Town, Juta and Co Limited, 1965), 11.

⁴⁶ Nicholas, 'The History of South African Social Work', 43.

⁴⁷ Zaal, 'Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care', 46.

⁴⁸ Spiro, *The Children's Act 1960: Being a Companion Work to Spiro's Law of Parent and Child*, 11.

⁴⁹ Zaal, 'Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care', 46-47.

It should be noted that the 1937 Act, unlike its successor the 1960 Children's Act, made no overt reference to race.⁵⁰ However, this is not to say that the racialised nature of welfare was not present *de facto*, the reality of which was expressed in the concerns of child welfare campaigners. As Posel has argued, the 1937 Children's Act did not *openly* adopt a two-fold strategy for black and white. However, as it became clear that the allocation of state resources to African child welfare was a source of friction amongst the white South African electorate, the provisions of the Children's Act were increasingly directed towards white children, with it becoming the unofficial, but accepted, policy that African child welfare should be the responsibility of African families and private welfare organisations.⁵¹

The 1937 Act was aimed at protecting children "against neglect, ill-treatment and exploitation".⁵² As such, state involvement in child-rearing was intensified, including tasks such as the inspection and investigation of homes, the prosecution of parents or care-givers who did not maintain children to sufficient standards, and the vestment of officials with the authority to remove children from situations where they were being mistreated or neglected.⁵³

An important aspect of the Act was the increased focus on child grants. Although "Mother's Pensions" had been implemented in 1921 in a bid to prevent the necessity of removing children from destitute mothers and widows, the 1937 Act placed stricter conditions on the issuing and expenditure of grants. The purpose of the maintenance grants was to promote rehabilitation of families that had fallen upon hard times, breaking the cycle of poverty by establishing a sounder foundation for children to be lifted out of their dire circumstances so that they would not follow the same path as their parents. Unlike its predecessor, the Mother's Pension, the Child Grant was to be spent specifically on the child. No so-called "luxury goods" were allowed and each grant holder was allocated a supervisor who would ensure that the grants were not misspent. To discourage abuse of the grants, it was made policy that if the child had a father that was capable of working, the child would not be eligible for a grant. Furthermore, to promote the best interests of the child, and to prevent

⁵⁰ Zaal argues that the 1960 Act was a furtherance of apartheid. Zaal, 'Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care', 50.

⁵¹ Posel, 'The Case for a Welfare State', 70.

⁵² KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949, Part One.

⁵³ KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949, Part One. "Annual Report for the Year 1947 on child and youth welfare services submitted to the United Nations by the Government of the Union of South Africa- 6. Protected Infants".

another generation of “deserving poor”, the grant was conditional on the fact that recipients needed to attend school until school-leaving age.⁵⁴

The high level of supervision required in the issuing and monitoring of grants required a considerable work force. The state was able to afford to introduce the child welfare grant system (which would for all intents and purposes helped put an end to the cycle of white poverty by the 1940s) because the government focussed expenditure on a select portion of South Africans; namely whites.⁵⁵

The racially biased implementation of the Act is illustrated in the following example. Shortly after the introduction of the Act in 1937, there were concerns over the exclusion of parents and guardians from attending children’s courts based on colour. A letter from the Secretary of the Cape Juvenile Advisory Board to the Secretary of Labour and Social Welfare on 30 March 1937 questioned the “legality of the action of the authorities in excluding members of the public from these courts on the basis of colour”.⁵⁶ The response, written a month later, read: “I am reliably informed that no distinction has ever been made between European and non-European members of the public so far as the admission to the court is concerned”.⁵⁷ Yet, people were, in fact, being denied access to children’s courts based on race.⁵⁸

This case highlights an important discrepancy that existed between the subtle racial discrimination that existed in the period leading up to apartheid, and the overt racial discrimination after the introduction of the apartheid state in 1948. The introduction of apartheid laws relating to separate development would indeed deny the access of ‘non-whites’ to children’s courts; however, it appears that the thought policies of apartheid were already being implemented *de facto*, albeit without legislative backing. Although the Cape Magistrate claimed no knowledge of racial discrimination in children’s courts, the fact that

⁵⁴ KAB, File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns 1937-1944. “Department of Social Welfare: Circular No.11 of 1939. Supervision of children in respect of whom maintenance grants are paid under the provisions of the Children’s Act”.

⁵⁵ For example, in Knysna in 1938, one hundred and forty-four grants were given to white children, with one hundred and six being “European”. KAB, File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns 1937-1944. Letter dated January 1939 from the Knysna Magistrate to the Organising Secretary of the National Council of Child Welfare.

⁵⁶ KAB, File 1/CT 420 Children’s Courts (establishment of) 33/10/2. Letter dated 30 March 1937 from the Secretary of the Cape Peninsula Juvenile Advisory Board to the Secretary of Labour and Social Work.

⁵⁷ KAB, File 1/CT 420 Children’s Courts (establishment of) 33/10/2. “Letter dated 1 May 1937 from the Magistrate of the Juvenile Court in Cape Town to the Magistrate of Cape Town.

⁵⁸ KAB, File 1/CT 420 Children’s Courts (establishment of) 33/10/2. Letter dated 30 March 1937 from the Secretary of the Cape Peninsula Juvenile Advisory Board to the Secretary of Labour and Social Work.

this issue had reached the attention of such high powers suggests a level of truth in the claims of racial bias.

Another case, which took place in Schauder Township in Port Elizabeth in 1941, drew on the inclusivity of the 1937 Children's Act (and its lack of racial specifications) to criticise the police treatment of a young coloured boy arrested for theft and placed in an adult prison. Miss DJ Mackenzie, a local church worker, wrote to the local magistrate criticising the fact that the police were dealing with children under the provisions of the Criminal Procedures Act rather than the Children's Act. She protested that the "case in point concerns coloured children, but the principle involved is of importance to European and non-European alike" asserting that the police involved used an "unjust and oppressive abuse of power exercised against an under-privileged class lacking the power to defend itself" further stating that it was a "flagrant disregard of elementary human rights".⁵⁹

Mackenzie and the case of the young coloured boy highlighted the inclusivity of the Children's Act, which through its lack of racial specification, by default needed to be applied across racial lines. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that all child welfare activists were unified in their non-racial stance to child welfare. As mentioned previously, the child welfare movement in South Africa was of such a large scale that it was almost impossible for there to be a homogenous, unified ideological approach to child welfare. Indeed, tensions erupted between different child welfare societies over racial issues.

One particularly significant case concerns a "non-European" mother and child, found on the side of the road in Knysna near death. Sick and weak from tuberculosis, the mother had been refused treatment in George, and along with her baby (also desperately ill), had been placed on a train to Knysna, purportedly by a "non-European nurse" from the George Child Welfare Society. Upon discovering that the woman and her young baby had died shortly after being found on the side of the road in Knysna, the Secretary of the Knysna Child Welfare Society wrote a scathing letter to the Knysna magistrate, condemning the actions of the George branch of the Society.⁶⁰

The response from the George Child Welfare Society was short and to the point:

⁵⁹ KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare 1937-1941. Letter from Miss D.J. Mackenzie dated 5 April 1941.

⁶⁰ KAB, File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns 1937-1944. Letter dated 10 January 1939 from the Secretary of the Knysna Child Welfare Society to the Magistrate. Re: Eva Harris and Child from George.

For your information, and that of the Secretary of the Knysna Child Welfare Society, I have to state the information given to the Magistrate, Knysna, is untrue. The George Welfare Society has had no non-European nurse in its employ for over six months, and therefore disclaims any responsibility for the case.⁶¹

The matter stopped here, the death of a mother and child dropped on the technicality of the nurse's race. Regardless of whether the George Child Welfare Society was guilty or not, this case, along with concerns relating to the inclusivity of children's courts, and calls from a variety of different child welfare agencies for "non-white" child government grants, illuminates a broader concern.⁶² Increasingly, archival reports relating to child welfare by the National Council of Child Welfare were centering on racial debates, the needs of the "non-European". For private child welfare agencies, the poor white child had become mostly a memory of the previous decade thanks to increased government grants and assistance.

However, the spectre of the poor white child would prove a powerful and enduring influence on the racial policies of the state, aimed at protecting and promoting the newly solidified identity of white South Africa as well above the poverty line; well above the line of black and coloured. The children of South Africa were regarded as "the future of our country".⁶³ By securing the position of white children as above that of other races, the South African government in essence sought to secure a future position of white South Africans as superior to other races.

The Professionalisation of Social Work

The third significant impact of the creation of a Department of Social Welfare, in addition to the 1937 Children's Act and the introduction of children's courts, was the effect it had on the development of Social Work as a formal occupation. For all intents and purposes, the archetype of the social worker had long been present in South Africa, seen in the form of the "Lady Health Inspector", travelling across the South African landscape from as early as 1901, and arguably even earlier with regards to church-workers, missionaries and other philanthropists.⁶⁴

⁶¹ KAB, File 1/KNY 8/25 33/9/5 Child Welfare Society Reports and Returns 1937-1944.

⁶² Again, it must be stressed that child welfare agencies had long concerned themselves with non-white children, however this concern was up until the 1930s peripheral to the concerns around poor white children.

⁶³ KAB, File 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council of Child Welfare 1938-1945. "Our Children's Day Pamphlet 28 June 1939". Appeal made by Alice Duncan.

⁶⁴ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/1/67 Public Health: Protection of Children 1904-1908. D 67/1 Public Health: Correspondence Infantile Protection Bill 1906.

What set Social Workers apart from these previous social welfare entrepreneurs was the fact that they were formally and specifically trained to work and operate within the context of government legislation and they were doing it in a professional capacity. Social work as an occupation had begun in South Africa in the 1920s, with the University of Cape Town introducing a diploma programme in social work education in 1924. The University of Stellenbosch followed, introducing a degree course in 1932, whilst Pretoria University had introduced a department of Sociology, promoting social work, in 1931.⁶⁵ These programmes were pioneering initiatives in South Africa as up until this point in South African history, there had been no official call from government for trained social workers. Interestingly, while social work had originally been limited to women as “Lady Health Inspectors” and was a job regarded as best for “women who have time to spare”, the professionalization of social work masculinised the field to an extent.⁶⁶

The Carnegie Commission, discussed above, made the first official call for trained social workers, stating that social welfare had to be undertaken in a scientific fashion, with trained officials needed to address “the complicated problems of genuine poor relief”. It was seen by the Commission as “necessary to develop a well-equipped department of social studies at a South African university where this type of study can be undertaken and social workers can be trained”.⁶⁷

By 1938 the government, through the Department of Social Welfare, was subsidising around seventy-five percent of social workers, on the condition that they had a tertiary education.⁶⁸ This was met with mixed emotions from the National Council of Child Welfare. On the one hand, government subsidisation took a financial burden from the shoulders of child welfare societies in terms of paying the salaries of social workers. However, the fact that Social Work was a relatively new discipline taught at universities, meant that welfare agencies would be employing people fresh from university. In defence of potential criticism at hiring young inexperienced social workers, the National Council warned that “maturity is not always measurable by age”. Although it lamented the potential loss of previous workers “who have

⁶⁵ J.V. Rautenbach, and J. Chiba, ‘Introduction’ in L. Nicholas., J. Rautenbach and M. Maistry, eds., *Introduction to Social Work*, (Claremont, Juta, 2010), 20.

⁶⁶ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Z6 6/7 Report of the Mayor as Council’s Delegate attending the Child Welfare Conference held in Johannesburg from 28th to 30th May 1918. By 1938 White men and women were the highest earners on the Social Work Salary Scale KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949. “Subsidised Social Workers”.

⁶⁷ Quoted from Nicholas, “The History of South African Social Work”, 45.

⁶⁸ KAB, File 3/GR 4/1/1/16 16/SD9L) South African National Council for Child Welfare: League of Aid 1938-1945. The government, however, reneged on part of its deal, decreasing the subsidies the following year.

given many years of valuable services and for whom the advantages of training in this field were not available when they took up the work”, it also acknowledged the reality that lack of funding meant that in many cases the new, university educated social workers, would have to replace the old in order to secure state subsidisation.⁶⁹

The subsidisation of Social Workers also served to further enforce divisions along racial lines. By the early 1940s the training and payment of social workers was delineated along racial and gender categories, particularly as the formal introduction of apartheid drew nearer. Interestingly, white men and women were paid the same amount, the highest earners in the racial hierarchy of social workers, followed by Indian men, then Indian and coloured women with black men only earning slightly more than black women, who were at the very bottom of the pay scale.⁷⁰ The salary scales were further divided along the lines of degree versus diploma qualification, with degrees in Social Work fetching higher salaries. Black Social Workers were not given the degree option, only being able to gain a diploma from the Jan H. Hofmeyr School of Social Work in Johannesburg, opened in 1945.⁷¹ Africans would have been able to study at so called “open” universities such as the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town prior to the opening of the Jan Hofmeyr School, but this would have been an expensive and inaccessible option for most.⁷²

The impact of this was that throughout the latter half of the twentieth century in South Africa there was a severe shortage of black social workers with over eighty percent being white.⁷³ Whilst the National Council of Child Welfare did not deny the benefits the Department of Social Welfare brought in terms of the increased government subsidisation of child welfare, along with a direct channel through which it could communicate with state policy makers, these benefits came at a cost.

⁶⁹ KAB, File 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council for Child Welfare 1938-1945, “South African National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Report for the year ended March 31st, 1938. Employment of Trained Social Workers”.

⁷⁰ It should be noted that no salary scale was given for coloured men. KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949. “Subsidised Social Workers”.

⁷¹ KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949. “Subsidised Social Workers”. The Jan Hofmeyr School was closed in 1960 when the Homeland system came into being and “Homeland Universities” were set up. See M. Gray and F. Mazibuko, ‘Social Work in South Africa at the dawn of a new millennium’, *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 11, (2002), 198.

⁷² M. Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, (Johannesburg, South African Institute for Race Relations, 1968), 14-15.

⁷³ L. Nicholas, ‘The History of South African Social Work’, 46. This situation would become even more urgent once the government introduced the process of separate development by the 1950s and 1960s, making it legal policy that only black social workers could work with black cases. The 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, along with the 1950 Group Areas Act called for the complete separation of races. See Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961*, 1. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

In his early advocacy for a Department of Social Welfare in 1919, Logan had asserted that child welfare agencies would continue to play a central role in directing the resources of the state to areas of need whilst the burden of implementation would shift to the more robust municipal, provincial and national shoulders of the state.⁷⁴ However, in exchange for its financial and legislative support the government, and more specifically the Department of Social Welfare, required strict compliance from child welfare societies, particularly in terms of budget allocations. Different societies belonging to the National Council of Child Welfare were required to submit annual expenditures for government approval. Furthermore, by 1937, in order to receive government support a society needed to be certified. Certification required that the society had a proper office, proper records and at least a part-time secretary.⁷⁵ Such strictures would allow the Department to keep a watchful eye on the activities of child welfare agencies, ensuring that they did not embezzle funds, but also ensuring that they toed the party-line of the solidifying racist policies of the state.

Conclusion

In 1938, one year after the Department of Social Welfare was formed, the National Council for Child Welfare proclaimed “The Council is organised in the interests of the welfare of the children of South Africa, irrespective of race or class, of politics or creed, and excludes from its programme party-political and religious questions of a controversial nature”.⁷⁶ Yet, the reality of South Africa’s socio-economic and political context differed somewhat from these egalitarian ideals of the Council; a context from which the Council could not be removed.

Initially state resources provided child welfare agencies with the effective ability to tackle one of the most urgent issues in 1920s South Africa: the plague of poor whiteism. However, once the structures of the state had implemented the series of measures, such as child maintenance grants, which would for all intents and purposes provide a ‘cure’ for the poor white problem, child welfare agencies turned their attentions to the African child.

⁷⁴ KAB, File: 3/CT 4/1/3/107 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference, E 109/3. “Pamphlet: Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook- The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments”. By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA. Town clerk and treasurer, Bloemfontein.

⁷⁵ KAB, File 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare. 1937-1941. Letter addressed to “All probation officers” with regards to the “certification of a child welfare society as an approved agency”.

⁷⁶ KAB, File 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council for Child Welfare 1938-1945. “National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Report for the year ended March 31st 1938”.

Herein lays the key irony that came to define the nature of child welfare in South Africa.⁷⁷ The SANCCW adopted an ideological approach similar to that adopted in the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child which sought to protect the child “beyond and above all considerations of race or creed”.⁷⁸ Yet, adopting such policies on paper did not mean that they were practised in reality. In accepting the financial and legislative assistance offered by the state, the various child welfare agencies lost a high degree of autonomy. Through its fiscal power over the National Council of Child Welfare, the state gained the right of inspection, demanding that all societies holding grants submit annual estimates of their expenses. Through its control of the purse strings, the government effectively had control over the various societies, as well as the National Council, which were now dependent upon government subsidies for their existence.

Thus, despite their proclamations of independence from “politics”, the National Council was in effect a puppet of the state, unable to remove itself from the socio-political conditions in which it existed. The government, by vetoing certain expenditures could tightly control the activities of the various child welfare societies. Perhaps the clearest example of this came with the Social Welfare Department’s subsidisation of social workers; the uneven nature of payments and grants to social workers along racial lines created a severe shortage of African social workers, one that would hamper the development of African child welfare for decades to come.

This chapter illustrates how the nature and development of child welfare in South Africa was fissured by ironies. The creation of a Department of Social Welfare: the very organ of state that was meant to bring relief to the disadvantaged people of South Africa; was under the absolute control of a state, which in turn, through its racialised policies ensured that the majority of the country remained disadvantaged. As Posel has argued, South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s was gearing towards the creation of a welfare state. However, the size and scope of the task of uplifting Africans was hampered by financial and political concerns.⁷⁹ As such, even though the Department of Social Welfare and the 1937 Children’s Act did not overtly mention race, the manner in which resources were allocated encouraged the maintenance and further entrenchment of white supremacy by directing resources primarily at

⁷⁷ It must, however, be kept in mind that the size and multitude of members of the National Council of Child Welfare makes it impossible to identify a single guiding ideology that defined the movement as a whole. This said, by and large, most child welfare agencies were characterised by the discontinuity between policy and practice discussed above.

⁷⁸ Fuller, *The Right of the Child*, 38.

⁷⁹ Posel, *The Case for a Welfare State*, 66.

the white population. The unequal nature of child welfare along racial lines would only deepen in the decades between the 1940s and 1960s, as discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

“Children in the Shadows”¹

The Divergence of Black and White Child Welfare in South Africa c.1940 to 1965

But the revolt of the black is not the Afrikaner's only fear. Integration of black and white whether into political, economic or religious orders means that the Afrikaner will disappear as a separate identity in the modern world... The Afrikaners are seldom completely articulate about this painful possibility. But it lurks beneath a great deal of otherwise incomprehensible behaviour.²

Apartheid entrenched legalised segregation between the races. With whites occupying the top rung of the social hierarchy, a suite of laws ensured that blacks would remain at the bottom. This was applied through a process of unequal allocation of resources which sought to re-enforce separation between the races, particularly in the areas of education and welfare, ultimately seeking to protect Afrikaner identity and white hegemony as a whole. Child welfare in South Africa could not escape the socio-political context of its construction. Apartheid promoted “separate development” between race groups and ethnicities. Although Child welfare policy made continued reference to being above “race or creed”, this chapter will show that despite such protestations, it was compelled to adopt the same Janus-faced racialised nature that characterised the state in which it existed in the years leading up to apartheid.

As chapter three has illustrated, the creation of a Department of Social Welfare in 1937 saw many of the tasks initially administered by child welfare agencies transferred to the state. As early as 1941 the Cape based Society for the Protection of Child Life reported that it was “being pressed by the Department of Social Welfare and the South African National Council of Child Welfare (SANCCW) to relinquish some of its activities”.³ By the 1950s, the South African Government had a strong hold over the structures that could be used in the

¹ Title of speech given by Nellie Swart, President of the South African National Council of Child Welfare. KAB, Cape Town Archives Repository, File 1 TSM 25 33/9/2 Child Welfare. Constitution and Committee, 1963.

² B.W. Rose, ‘Bantu Education as a facet of South African Policy’, *Comparative Education*, 9, 2, (1965), 208.

³ KAB, File 3/ALC 4/21/21 C10 Child Welfare 1951-1958. Pamphlet: “Society for the Protection of Child Life, Cape Town, thirty-third Annual Report 1941”.

socialising process of racial segregation, particularly in terms of those relating to the social welfare and education of the population.⁴

Indeed, the 1947 Welfare Organisations Act required all charitable institutes to register with the government if they wished to collect funds publicly, allowing the government to keep a close eye on their activities.⁵ Furthermore, most educational facilities, even those previously run by missionaries, were placed under state control after the introduction of apartheid.⁶

The increased state control over child-related socialising mechanisms was not immediately met with suspicion by child welfare agencies. As indicated in the previous chapters, one of the initial goals of the child welfare movement had been to promote increased state responsibility for the country's children. However, it soon became apparent that the intentions of the apartheid government differed from the majority of child welfare organisations in terms of the allocation of resources which were disproportionately meagre in respect of African child welfare and education. By 1960 white children received an average of R114.5 per year, whilst African children received R13.50.⁷ The limitation placed on state resources available to Africans, together with a ban on co-operation between white social workers and black communities would become a grave source of concern for child welfare by the 1960s. This stringent enforcement of separation between the races took place against the back drop of a long history of social engineering, seen particularly in the nature of South African education and welfare.

Whilst African child welfare was stunted through the introduction of racial legislation, such as the 1945 Urban Areas Act, the 1950 Group Areas Act and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, white child welfare was following a similar pattern to that of Western Europe and North America. This was seen in terms of the introduction of increased social security measures and a growing focus on the mental well-being of white children in particular. The alleviation of poor whiteism, which had plagued South Africa in the early 1900s, meant that state officials and welfare workers alike were turning their attention towards the

⁴ O'Meara argues that the National Party (NP) established complete control over South Africa by the 1950s, "becoming, in popular parlance, virtually synonymous with the state". D. O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party 1948 to 1994*, (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1996), 64.

⁵ KAB, Cape Town National Archives, File: 1/WVE 38 33/19/1 Welfare Organisations Circulars. 1947- 1963. Circular No. 77 of 1962.

⁶ L.M. Eades, *The End of Apartheid in South Africa*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1999), 13. And Horrell, M.: *Bantu Education to 1968*, (Johannesburg, South African Institute for Race Relations, 1968) ,12.

⁷ Johnson, W.A.: "Education: Keystone of Apartheid", *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 3, 3, (1982), 221.

psychological and moral well-being of white children. In a report addressed to the United Nations in 1947, the South African government wrote: “Modern psychology teaches us that the foundations of character are laid in the early years of childhood. The average parent does not possess the requisite scientific knowledge to guide and train the young child”.⁸ The increasing obsession with the preservation of the moral integrity of white South African children over and above their physical needs – with the assumption that normal parental care was not sufficient in itself – would form part of the Christian National ideology that came to characterise the apartheid state. It is this state of divergence within child welfare, of black subordination and white moral preservation (both of which point to an Orwellian state of extreme state control), that this chapter will explore.

“The Duty of the State”: Child Welfare and the Dawn of Apartheid

It is the fashion to proclaim that the provision of these [child care] facilities is the ‘duty of the state’. But until our legislative and administrative machinery actually provide these things for children of all races in the Union, and special services for those who fall by the wayside and, suffering from physical, mental or social handicaps, need extra help, we cannot cease in our endeavours.⁹

This statement, issued in a pamphlet by the South African National Council of Child Welfare in 1945, illustrates the multifaceted concerns faced by the child welfare movement. The concern over poor whiteism in the 1920s and 1930s had resulted in the implementation of state social welfare of such an extent that Louis Leipoldt, a South African doctor and writer from the early twentieth century, asserted that poor whites were being placed in “cotton wool incubators” by the state.¹⁰ The ‘coddling’ of poor whites manifested itself in the limitations placed on African urbanisation along with the introduction of the colour bar, which saw skilled labour being reserved for whites.¹¹ Simultaneously there were increases in child maintenance grants, unemployment insurance, family allowance and disability grants amongst a range of other social security measures aimed primarily at benefiting the white population as fully discussed in chapter two of this thesis.¹²

⁸ KAB, File SWP 11 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949, Part 1. “Annual Report for the year 1947 on child and youth welfare services, submitted to the United Nations by the Government of the Union of South Africa. UN Reference: SOA 16/01/GN, 25 March 1948”.

⁹ KAB, File: 3/STD 4/1/28 G/2/6 South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1939-1953. Pamphlet, “Our Children’s Day”, 31 July 1945.

¹⁰ C.L. Leipoldt, *Bushveld Doctor*, (London, Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1937), 343.

¹¹ S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid South Africa, 1919-36*, (Oxford, MacMillan, 1989), 44.

¹² Grants such as the child maintenance grant had been in existence as early as 1921. However, in a report to the UN in 1947, the South African government wrote that in the post war climate, it had significantly increased the

The fact that these concessions were principally aimed at uplifting the poor white population, points to the reality that the position of white South Africans was protected at the expense of Africans. Thus the SANCCW was faced with a double concern: the care of poor white children had increasingly become the “duty of the state”. By fulfilling this duty, the consequential effect was that most African children fell by the wayside. With their parents confined to low wage work by the Colour Bar and with little in the way of state support African children were by and large destined to follow in the footsteps of their parents.

Motivations behind Apartheid

In order to achieve a better understanding of the inter-racial relationships in South Africa and how these affected child welfare, it is necessary to briefly examine the driving factors behind the introduction of apartheid. According to A.J. Christopher, the process of protecting and promoting white hegemony was the main driving force behind the introduction of apartheid. This was a particularly burning issue in the context of rising Afrikaner nationalism versus the growing political aspirations amongst Africans after the Second World War in an international socio-political climate gearing towards decolonisation and African independence.¹³ Despite fears of African unrest and the threat this posed to white hegemony, O’Meara and Horrell both assert that Jan Smuts, the prime minister of South Africa from 1939 to 1948, was willing to “liberalise” the government policy towards Africans believing this to be the best way forward for South Africa.¹⁴ An Afrikaner by birth, Smuts had been praised for his brilliance as a statesman, as a member of the British War Cabinet and as a founder of the United Nations. However, a dramatic change of events occurred when the United Party government under Smuts was ousted by DF Malan’s Afrikaner dominated National Party (NP) in 1948.

Apartheid, a term that has become a catch-all for all types of racial discrimination and separation, was the central pillar in the NP’s campaign.¹⁵ Fuelled by anxieties over poor whiteism (the majority of poor whites being Afrikaners), the apartheid policies were aimed at protecting white South Africans in general, and uplifting Afrikaners in particular. A number of influential members of the Afrikaner intelligentsia, including H.F. Verwoerd, Werner

level of state support offered to those in need. KAB, File SWP II 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949. Part 1. Annual Report for the year 1947 on child and youth welfare services, submitted to the United Nations by the Government of the Union of South Africa.

¹³ A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, (London, Routledge, 1994), 1.

¹⁴ M. Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 2. and “O’Meara, D, *Forty Lost Years*, 32.

¹⁵ Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, 1. and O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 64.

Eiselen and Geoffry Cronje argued that Afrikaners needed to create a cultural-political space that was free from the influence of the British, Africans, coloureds and Indians that would allow the races to develop independently without fear of cultural annihilation.¹⁶

However, to say that the NP introduced racial segregation into South Africa would be an unfair statement. Rather, it implemented apartheid policies in a state already shaped by a colonial heritage of racial discrimination. By 1946, two years before the NP came to power, the white population represented about a fifth of South Africa's population, but controlled around two-thirds of the country's wealth.¹⁷ This status quo was the product of a long colonial history which had seen Africans occupying positions as slaves, indentured labourers and other economically exploitable stations in society. However, the stance adopted by the apartheid government was more aggressive in nature, expanding upon the oppressive policies seen originally in the Urban Areas Acts, eventually reaching its way into the most intimate facets of life, seen particularly in the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts of 1949 and 1950, which made interracial relationships illegal.

Whilst apartheid policy was couched in terms of self-preservation, it also portrayed the image of being in the best interests of Africans as well. Indeed, as late as 1956, members of government were arguing that

The Afrikaner's Christian beliefs and civilised ethical code will not allow him to tolerate the one-sided application of apartheid to the advantages of Whites only. Apartheid implies that each individual racial group will be able to develop into a separate, national, political, cultural and social unit, according to its own identity and inherent capabilities... To-day South Africa is justifiably proud of the fact that she spends more on the welfare of the Bantu than does any of the colonial power in Africa.¹⁸

The paternalistic attitude towards Africans is particularly well illustrated in a comment by Rhodie and Venter in 1959 that "The civilised, more highly developed White man took the uncivilised, undeveloped Black man under his protection, and began to educate and uplift him."¹⁹ This statement, applied to African child welfare, could not be further from the truth.

The "duty of the state" to provide for its citizens, as noted above by the SANCCW, was very one-sided in character. Traditionally, the nature of African welfare had been complicated, with tasks such as education falling between the State, Provincial authorities and

¹⁶ P.E. Louw, *The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, (Wesport, Praego, 2004), 29.

¹⁷ Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, 1.

¹⁸ J. N. Rhodie, and H. J. Venter, *Apartheid*, (Cape Town, Haum, 1959), 34.

¹⁹ Rhodie and Venter, *Apartheid*, p. viii.

missionaries. Prior to 1945, the resources made available for African education were meagre, with an average of just over thirty percent of African children between the ages of seven and sixteen attending school. Although Smuts made a number of concessions to the “growing aspirations of Africans” towards the end of World War Two, with a school feeding scheme being introduced across the races in 1943 and the transfer of education costs from African taxation to the State held Consolidated Revenue fund in 1945, these reforms fell away with the change of power in 1948.²⁰

Similarly, concern over African child welfare had been present ever since initiatives aimed at child protection began in the early 1900s. The scale and centrality of African welfare, however, paled into insignificance in comparison with concerns over poor white children, often being mentioned as an afterthought at the tail end of a report or list of resolutions.²¹ However, as the century progressed, poor whiteism became largely an issue of the past and child welfare agencies turned their attention in earnest to African child welfare. Yet, in light of the above events – a long history of African deprivation combined with the introduction of what would become a notoriously racist government – the road towards promoting African child welfare would be a rocky one.

“The Children in the Shadows”²²

In an address given in 1963, Nellie Swart, President of the South African National Council for Child Welfare presented the audience with a scenario pertinent to South Africa,

If I ask you to think about children, you will probably think of your own – or the children of friends. Healthy, strong-limbed youngsters laughing and playing in the South African sunshine. You will have to stretch your imagination a little to see those other children. The ones standing deep in the shadows. Silent. Mistrustful. Their eyes darkened by a premature knowledge of suffering. The innocent victims of poverty or ignorance or disability or neglect. At the moment these children have no future. But we of the South African National Council for Child Welfare are working to give them

²⁰ Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 1-2.

²¹ For example, in the resolutions passed at the first Annual Child Welfare Conference held in Cape Town in 1917, out of twenty-two resolutions not a single reference is made to race. However, attached to the resolutions is a separate report titled “Homes for Coloured Children”, illustrating that the needs of coloured children were seen as separate. The report which called for the provision of orphanages for coloured children asserted that “There is reasonable hope that most religious agencies nearly concerned with coloured work would provide the necessary accommodation if a subsidy per child from the government were available”. This claim serves a dualistic purpose, firstly in that the Council shifts the responsibility of coloured children to religious organisations, but also that it does regard coloured child welfare as a responsibility of the state. KAB, File: 3/KWT 4/1/234 ZC/6/7. Resolutions passed at the child welfare conference in Cape Town, March 1917.

²² Title of speech given by Nellie Swart. KAB, File 1 TSM 25 33/9/2 Child Welfare. Constitution and Committee, 1963.

one, working to give them the hope and security that every child deserves- *regardless of race or creed*.²³

Swart's assertion of child welfare "regardless of race or creed" made at the height of apartheid may seem somewhat ironic, especially given that the Groups Areas Act of 1950 and the Separate Amenities Act of 1953 had made race a defining factor in the interaction between the white dominated SANCCW and African child welfare. That Swart was promoting welfare of "those other children" fifteen years after the introduction of such discriminatory policies aimed at grouping people into separate categories, suggests that her sentiments were not insincere.

This said it also needs to be kept in mind that South African child welfare, throughout its history had been strongly influenced by international policies, particularly those of Britain as illustrated in Chapter Two. The South African child welfare movement had strong connections with the British based Save the Child Foundation, which established a South African based committee in 1919 under the urging of Jan Smuts, a South African statesman and president.²⁴ The catch phrase "regardless of race or creed" had been adopted almost verbatim from the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child's clause that "the child must be protected beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed", a document which the Save the Child Foundation had been central in drafting.²⁵

However, the slogan was not merely a collection of empty words, solely adopted to bring a patina of internationalism to the South African child welfare campaign (although this was definitely an aspect of it). Many member societies of the SANCCW had long since established African branches aimed at providing specific care for African children, of which the Kimberly African Child Welfare Society is a case in point. By the early 1940s a large percentage (compared to the 1920s and 1930s) of the SANCCW's resolutions consisted of concerns relating to "non-European" children. Of particular concern to the Council were the questions of government provision of maintenance grants to African children and free compulsory education for Africans.²⁶

²³ KAB, File 1 TSM 25 33/9/2 Child Welfare. Constitution and Committee. 1963.

²⁴ Fuller, *The Rights of the Child*, 34.

²⁵ Fuller, *The Rights of the Child*, 74.

²⁶ KAB, File 3/CT 4/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 3 Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare. 1946-1954." South African National Council of Child Welfare, Kimberly, 1953: Memorandum and Council Meeting".

The influences from abroad, particularly with the growth of social welfare concerns in the aftermath of World War Two, made a significant impact in South Africa. In 1948 the SANCCW advocated the adoption of the United Nation's Charter of the Rights of the Child. Significantly the resolutions of the UN Charter were, for the most part, contradicted by existing South African legislation. For example, point five on the charter asserts that children should be brought up within a united family.²⁷ However, the 1945 Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act stipulated that only domestic workers could live in so-called "white areas". This meant that should they return to work (a choice which poverty meant many did not have) they would have to leave their new-born babies behind. The SANCCW condemned the Act, arguing that babies separated from their mothers were twice as likely to die as those who remained in motherly care.²⁸

The Charter further asserted that children needed to be provided with the training that would equip them with the necessary skills to earn a livelihood and protect them from exploitation. In the South African context, at the dawn of Apartheid, this right was denied to most African children. The majority of African children did not receive an education, and those who did were often limited to supportive positions in a white hegemonic state.

Socialisation through Education

Even if the dark cloud gathers about you, work hard and show the European that the African is progressive. In this country all other nations have a home to go to, but we Afrikaners and the native people have none. So you must do what you can for this country. Let us live side by side as friends.²⁹

This statement was made by Mr Muller, the Mayor of Klerksdorp, in 1946 at a gathering of the National Council of African Women. Whilst his proclamation preaches co-operation, the reality, which hindsight provides insight into, was to be an increasingly divisive relationship between Afrikaners and Africans – a mere two years later apartheid was introduced as state policy. For many, this chance to "prove themselves progressive" was denied by the reality that Africans had little access to the resources which could facilitate their perceived need to

²⁷ KAB, File 3/CT 4/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 3 Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954.

²⁸ KAB, File: 3/ Kim 4/1/265 S40/2 SA National Council for Child Welfare 1960-1967. "Resolutions, 1959 Annual Child Welfare Conference".

²⁹ KAB, File 1/ MFK 49 N1/14/3 (9) Native Organisations: National Council of African Women. *Brochure: National Council of African Women: Coming of Age Conference 1937-1958*.

progress.³⁰ As mentioned above, African access to education had traditionally been severely limited with just over thirty percent receiving a primary education.³¹ Although education for Africans increased on a numerical level under apartheid, the quality of the education and resources provided per pupil decreased significantly.³²

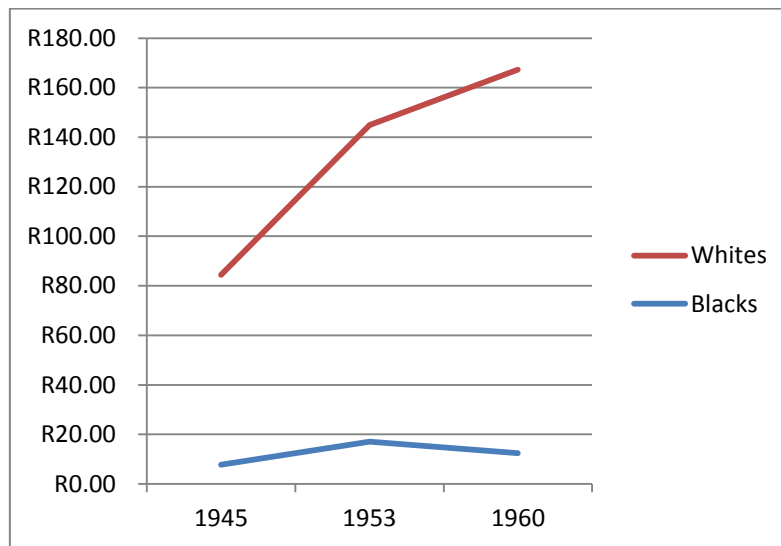


Fig. 1: The amount spent in Rands on education per capita between 1945 and 1960³³

The above graph illustrates the spending on white and black children's education per capita between 1945 and 1960. Significantly, whilst white children were receiving greater and greater government subsidies, those for African children decreased after 1953 thereby reinforcing the superior position of white children in society. Although overall expenditure on African children increased from R 4 637 962 in 1945 to R 18 457 830 in 1959, the growing number of African children entering the school system meant that the per capita allocation continued to decline.³⁴

Prior to and during the Second World War there had been some debate as to whether Africans should be assimilated into Western society, or segregated into separate communities allowing them to maintain their cultural heritage.³⁵ The Eiselen Commission of 1951 reached the

³⁰ In a 1918 paper titled *Education of the African*, T.F. Victor Buxton wrote that the education of the African would have been non-existent if it had not been for missionaries. See T.F.V. Buxton, "Education of the African", *Journal of the Royal African Society* 17, 16, (1918), 216.

³¹ Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 1.

³² P. Christie and C. Collins, 'Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology or Labour Reproduction?', *Comparative Education*, 18, 1, (1982), 70-73.

³³ This graph illustrates data taken from Christie and Collins, 'Bantu Education', 74.

³⁴ Christie and Collins, 'Bantu Education', 73.

³⁵ Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 4.

conclusion that Africans had different needs and therefore needed different education.³⁶ From this argument came the introduction of the 1953 Bantu Education Act. The central tenet of “Bantu Education”, as the Minister of Bantu Education remarked in 1954, was that “The Bantu must be educated so that they will want to remain essentially Bantu”.³⁷ However, the reality that Africans had been assimilated into the South African economy could not be ignored. Johnson argues that a compromise was reached in that African education during apartheid was specifically tailored to create a socialising process that would promote white hegemony, whilst simultaneously preparing Africans for a subjugated position to whites.³⁸ This tied in with the assertion by HF Verwoerd, the then Minister of Native Affairs, that Africans should not be given false expectations and that “Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life [and realise that there is] no place for the Bantu in the European Community”.³⁹ He further argued that Africans educated in missionary schools to the same level as whites had been misled “by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze”.⁴⁰ This was a process which Verwoerd wished to reverse through Bantu Education, which would educate the African to occupy a position in society created for him or her by the government.

Separation was thus consolidated through education in South Africa. It was argued that Bantu Education would allow Africans to develop within their own community. However, as one academic commented at the time, “it remains a puzzle how a people, amongst whom education has been a ‘failure’ and who are mostly illiterate, can provide the personnel capable of controlling a modern education system”.⁴¹ Not only was African education severely limited by lack of funding and experience, the government also gained increased control over the content of school syllabi allowing them to propagate apartheid ideologies.⁴² Whilst schooling for English and Afrikaans-speaking children under apartheid was entirely state sponsored, it was argued that the massive increase in the African population meant that African communities had to contribute to their own education, primarily through the taxes they paid. Whilst schooling for white children under apartheid was compulsory, schooling for African children was not. Furthermore, government control over the education of children

³⁶ Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 5.

³⁷ H.F. Dickie-Clarke, “Education in Plural Societies”, in H. Adam, ed, *South Africa: Sociological Perspectives* (London, Oxford University Press, 1971), 224.

³⁸ W.A. Johnson, ‘Education: Keystone of Apartheid’, 217.

³⁹ Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 5.

⁴⁰ Christie and Collins, ‘Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology or Labour Reproduction?’, 68.

⁴¹ R.H.W. Shepard, ‘The South African Bantu Education Act’, *African Affairs*, 54, 215 (1955), 141.

⁴² Christie and Collins, ‘Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology or Labour Reproduction?’, 66.

was so extreme that “Bantu Education”, which centralized African education under the national government, made it illegal for anyone to establish a school for Africans without government supervision.⁴³ In addition, the state illustrated that it was prepared to reduce the schooling facilities for Africans, such as the ones run by missionaries, rather than allow them to operate outside of government control particularly if they were not certain that the schools would toe the apartheid party line.⁴⁴ In effect, the limited access of Africans to education automatically relegated them to the lowest paid positions in the South African economy.⁴⁵

The content of apartheid education was just as stifling as the financial restraints. Johnson asserts that during apartheid education acted as a socialising agent, reinforcing existing stratification by passing the values, myths and beliefs of apartheid as fact in the classroom, painting whites as superior and Africans as primitive and backwards.⁴⁶ Whilst Africans were being socialised as subordinates, white children were being indoctrinated in the ideology of Christian Nationalism. Basically, Christian Nationalism offered a form of moral justification for the racial assumptions of apartheid, likening the Afrikaners to the chosen people (or the *volk*) who had the right to rule in South Africa.⁴⁷

Le Roux comments that stereotypes were created in the process of Christian National Education which “unashamedly” promoted the ideals of Afrikaners above other groups.⁴⁸ Interestingly, this process of indoctrination again contradicts the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child which asserts that “The child must be accorded respect for its individuality so that it may grow up to exercise independent thought and judgement”.⁴⁹

A State of Divergence: Black and White Child Welfare

A similar process of socialisation and stratification along racial lines can be seen in the nature of child welfare after the introduction of apartheid. In 1948, Dr. A.J. Stals, the then Minister of Education, Health and Social Welfare stated at the annual National Council for Child Welfare held in Durban that the “Overlapping of activities must be avoided and methods

⁴³ Johnson, “Education: Keystone of Apartheid”, 219-221.

⁴⁴ Christie and Collins, ‘Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology or Labour Reproduction?’, 66.

⁴⁵ Johnson, “Education: Keystone of Apartheid”, 220-221.

⁴⁶ Johnson, “Education: Keystone of Apartheid”, 222-223.

⁴⁷ O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 66; Louw, *The Rise Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, 29.

⁴⁸ P. le Roux, ‘Growing Up an Afrikaner’, in S. Burman, and P. Reynolds, eds., *Growing Up in a Divided Society*, 187-188.

⁴⁹ KAB, File 3/CT 4/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 3 Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954.

could never be the same for children of all races in all areas. The non-Europeans must be aided to undertake work for their own racial group under European guidance”.⁵⁰

Such an argument became a legally enforceable practice in South Africa by the 1950s and 1960s. Whilst the 1950 Group Areas Act stipulated that different races had to live in different residential areas, the 1953 Separate Amenities Act segregated all aspects of social life whereby restaurants, sports, cinemas and so forth were separated according to race.⁵¹

The idea that all races should be left to develop in their own way was beset by problems. To begin with, the South African economy was dependent on African labour, making complete separation unviable. So rather than having complete separation, Africans were allowed into European areas, but only in the position of workers, for which they had to obtain permission from the government. The 1949 Urban Areas Amendment Bill elaborated on the existing pass law system making it mandatory that all municipalities apply the policy that no African could remain in an urban “white area” for more than seventy-two hours without permission from the urban local authority.⁵²

The legal enforcement of racial separation posed a number of challenges to the South African child welfare movement. As mentioned previously, a number of white controlled child welfare societies had established African sections during the 1930s. These African child welfare societies were run as a collaborative effort between whites and Africans, the reality of which was driven by the fact that the majority of the country’s wealth, together with training in child care, lay in the hands of the white minority.⁵³ The Acts introduced in the 1950s would make this collaborative endeavour illegal.

Already heavily dependent upon the government for financial assistance, the SANCCW was placed in a difficult position if it was to uphold its slogan of child welfare “regardless of race, nationality or creed”.⁵⁴ Having to navigate between the Scylla of state wrath and the Charybdis of cynicism, the SANCCW adopted a cautious campaign that publically conformed with apartheid policies. However, internally the annual meetings of the SANCCW concerned themselves primarily with African children, and in some cases were openly critical of the government’s policies. Throughout the 1950s, the conferences of the SANCCW concerned

⁵⁰ KAB, File 3/CT 4/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 3 Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954.

⁵¹ Eades, *The End of Apartheid in South Africa*, 13.

⁵² D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 199), 95.

⁵³ Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, 1.

⁵⁴ KAB, File 1 TSM 25 33/9/2 Child Welfare. Constitution and Committee. 1963.

themselves with topics such as “Non-European Child Welfare”, “Free Compulsory Education for Native Children” and “Non-European Maintenance Grants”, together with practical issues of procuring permits to enter “non-European Areas”.⁵⁵

Despite the internal focus on African children, a pamphlet issued in the late 1950s only featured white children. On the cover are two doe-eyed children, the little boy’s chubby cheek pressed against the girl’s shoulder, her curly blonde hair tied together with a bow, a look of slight surprise on her face with her lips parted a few millimetres.⁵⁶ They are the ideal apartheid children, healthy and glowing against a light blue background. Next to their heads reads the slogan “Who’s going to help?” and on the right hand bottom corner, the guilt-inducing suggestion: “If you don’t?”⁵⁷



Fig. 2 SANCCW Pamphlet from 1959⁵⁸

Opening the pamphlet, one reads

Heirs to our world... Healthy, wilful scraps of humanity – quick to laughter and to tears – utterly dependent on the grown-up world for their every need... The needs of

⁵⁵ KAB, File 1/ LBE 46 c.27: Permits to enter Native Areas and KAB, File 3/CT 4/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 3 Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954.

⁵⁶ Interestingly, whilst South Africa was using the image of healthy white children to pull on the heart and purse strings of the public, in decades to come there would be an international movement (Driven by the Save the Child Foundation) towards depicting children as in distress and in need of help. See Wells, K.: *Children in a Global Perspective*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009), 40-41.

⁵⁷ KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S 40/1 SA National Council for Child Welfare, 1960-1967.

⁵⁸ KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S 40/1 SA National Council for Child Welfare, 1960-1967.

these unlucky, unhappy children must be met if they are to grow into good citizens... They are your responsibility! What are you going to do about it?⁵⁹

Again, the slogan “without distinction of race or creed” appears in the pamphlet, although it is not backed up and there is no other reference to the race question – it appears a harmless catch phrase echoing international child welfare agencies. Whilst the public image of the SANCCW toed the party line, outside the scope of the public eye, the SANCCW was concerning itself increasingly with the impact apartheid was having on child welfare.

At the 1959 conference on child welfare a large percentage of the agenda, if not the majority, concerned itself with the welfare of “Bantu” children under apartheid. For example, as mentioned above, the effect of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 on separating black mothers working in white areas from their new born children was strongly condemned as a “threat to child life”. Concern over the inequality of maintenance grants between the different races also received much attention, whilst the government’s forced closure of the Jan Hofmeyr School and the Stofberg Memorial School, both tertiary institutes for training black social workers, also received criticism. Although the government intended to re-open the training centres in “Bantu Areas” the Council feared that the gap between the closure in 1958 and the re-opening in 1959 would have disastrous effects on the already limited availability of black social workers. The process of racial classification caused numerous headaches for the Council. There was the “anomaly” where a child’s parents could be classified as white, whilst the child was classified ‘non-white’ and barred from attending white schools.⁶⁰ Furthermore, there was the question of what to do with children awaiting classification as until such time they had no place in South Africa and in some cases were stigmatised as “children of doubtful colour”.⁶¹

Further criticisms of apartheid came in the introductory speech made by the Chairman of the Council, Mrs H Stent at the 1959 Conference. Although less blatant than the above criticisms of the direct effect of apartheid on black welfare, the claims made by Stent cast a shadow on the broader and long term political implications of apartheid. She identified three major problems facing the country, two of which were directly related to the racial policies of the state. Firstly there was the difficulty of adapting to the growth of a new nation, characterised by racial division. Stent advocated the need for “unity, mutual respect, universal love and

⁵⁹ KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S 40/1 SA National Council for Child Welfare, 1960-1967.

⁶⁰ KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S 40/1 SA National Council for Child Welfare, 1960-1967.

⁶¹ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 3. Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954.

faith, deep Christian principles” which would allow South Africans to “emulate the good and beautiful in their fellowmen and in the nation in which they belong”.

Secondly, Stent identified the awakening of Black Nationalism:

Parallel with the growing pains of the white nation a feeling of nationalism is being awakened among the Bantu, not only in South Africa but throughout the African continent. In this connection the greatest awareness, objectivity and realism must be brought to bear. The youth are also vitally concerned. The future belongs to the youth because the progress of a nation depends on its children. They are looking for leadership. All factors which can give rise to a feeling of uncertainty and instability, lack of faith and self-reliance must be removed. It is, I think, clear to everyone by observation that the old order is passing and yielding place to the new.

Arguably, Stent was issuing the government and broader South African society with a warning: unless the conditions of black children and youth are improved, they will grow up a resentful generation, looking for a means to escape their designated position in South African society. The third challenge facing the nation, identified by Stent in her introductory speech, was the process of industrialisation and the resultant cramped living conditions in the cities, which would have a negative effect on children.⁶²

Significantly, it was in this same year that the SANCCW was offering critique of government policy, that the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations. The 1959 Declaration built upon the earlier 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, incorporating principles from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights thereby implying that children were entitled to all human rights in addition to further extraordinary rights denoted by their vulnerable status.⁶³ Whilst South Africa had openly accepted the 1924 Declaration, promoted by the UN’s predecessor the League of Nations, by 1959 South Africa had become the polecat of the world, condemned by the United Nations for its apartheid policy.⁶⁴

Seemingly unperturbed by the UN’s recent condemnation, the South African government introduced a new children’s act in 1960. Zaal refers to the 1960 Act as not much more than a

⁶² KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S40/1 SA National Council for Child Welfare, 1960-1967. Annexure 1 of 1959 Annual Child Welfare Conference: : Introductory Remarks by Chairman of Council, Mrs H. Stent.

⁶³ L. Basson, ‘Perspectives on the Best Interests of the Child: Developments in the Interpretation and Application of the Principle of South African Law Relating to Custody’ (Masters’ Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2004), 44-45.

⁶⁴ “South Africa Condemned by the UN”, *Time Magazine On-line Edition*, 30 November 1959. Available from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,825981,00.html> (accessed 28 August 2011).

“furtherance of apartheid”.⁶⁵ Indeed, whilst the 1913 and 1937 Acts had given little reference to race, the 1960 Act placed emphasis on aspects such as the creation of separate “Bantu children’s courts” and the separation of administration between “Europeans”, “Coloureds”, “Asiatics”, “Indians” and “Bantu” persons.⁶⁶

Zaal further argues that the racist agenda of the 1960 Act was somewhat hidden by the fact that in other aspects, the Act was in step with international trends relating to child welfare. For example, there was an increased emphasis on the psychological as opposed to just physical welfare of children, with the term “mental neglect” becoming grounds in court for alternative care.⁶⁷

With official government policy promoting the perceived mental and moral welfare of white children along Christian National lines, child welfare organisations were also turning their attention towards the moral standards of the youth.⁶⁸ The growth of psychology as a discipline was felt significantly in South Africa, at least with regards to the white population. By 1957, the Society for the Protection of Child Life, the first child welfare organisation in South Africa established in 1908, set up the Parent Guidance Office. Concerned with the growth of “juvenile misbehaviour” it asserted that many parents were unable to cope with their children and needed “specialised attention” by social workers.⁶⁹

Concerns over the moral degeneration of the white youth were arguably stimulated by the ‘ducktail and flick knife’ subculture that permeated amongst white South African youths in the 1950s, echoing international youth rebellion movements imported through the cinemas and rock and roll music.⁷⁰ Regarded as the products of broken homes, “the sons of mothers who thought only of having a good time”, they took to the streets flagrantly disregarding Christian national practices with their sexual promiscuity, aggressive behaviour and complete

⁶⁵ F.N Zaal, ‘Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care: A Critical Explanation of Selected Aspects of the South African System’, (PhD Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2008), 50.

⁶⁶ E. Spiro, (Cape Town, Juta, 1965), *The Children’s Act 1960*, 95 and 138.

⁶⁷ Zaal, ‘Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care’, 50.

⁶⁸ This was seen particularly in the school syllabi and cultural organisations such as the “Voortrekkers” aimed at promoting the practices of how to be a “good Afrikaner”. See P. le Roux, ‘Growing Up an Afrikaner’, 189-190. The Dutch Reformed Church was equally prevalent in the childhood of many Afrikaners. Interestingly, whilst all other Churches in South Africa disagreed with the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the Dutch Reformed Church promoted it. See Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, 12.

⁶⁹ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/10/14 E4/1 Vol. 4. Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954. SA National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Meeting and Committee, Port Elizabeth, August 1959. “Report by the SPCL on New Service”.

⁷⁰ C. Glaser, ‘Managing the Sexuality of the Urban Youth: Johannesburg 1920s-1960s’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 38, 2, (2005), 322.

‘otherness’ with brylcreemed hair and rock and roll apparel.⁷¹ Kate Mooney has argued that the reason why the Ducktail movement received so much attention was because the deviant and idle behaviour evinced by these youths had always been associated by the apartheid government with Africans, thus bringing the idealised white Christian identity into disrepute.⁷² By 1958 adherents to the Ducktail culture could be found throughout South Africa. Denounced by the Dutch Reformed Church as the “anti-Christ”, the Ducktail movement received much attention from welfare workers and the state alike, with four commissions into the problem of delinquent white youth being conducted between 1955 and 1960.⁷³

Thus by the late 1950s in South Africa, child welfare policy was characterised by a dichotomy. On the one hand, it echoed international discourses on the psychological welfare of white children on the other hand it was fighting a battle to promote the material welfare of African children whose conditions now paralleled those of the poor whites in the 1920s and 1930s. Child welfare in South Africa was both progressing and regressing at the same time with regards to white and black children respectively. Despite criticisms by the Council of the impact racial policies, such as the 1945 Urban Areas Act, had on children, they could not operate outside the system of the state. By 1961 South Africa had become a Republic, declaring itself independent from British colonial rule. As the code of separate development became more stringent the government withdrew funding to black child welfare and became critical of white involvement, denying recognition of organisation that involved whites and blacks working together to promote child welfare. This is illustrated in the following case study in Kimberley.

The Kimberley Child Welfare Society – African Section

The African section of the Kimberley Child Welfare Society was established in the mid-1930s, with a sub-committee of black and white members. The primary function of the African section was to provide care in crèches for children whose parents were unable to look after them, mainly because of work. In 1964 the society was met with a severe challenge when the state withdrew funding, arguing that “the Society does not fully comply with the

⁷¹ K. Mooney, ‘Ducktails, Flick-Knives and Pugnacity’: Subcultural and Hegemonic Masculinities in South Africa, 1948-1960’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4, (1998), 754.

⁷² Mooney quoted in Glaser. Glaser, ‘Managing the Sexuality of the Urban Youth’, 322.

⁷³ Glaser, ‘Managing the Sexuality of the Urban Youth’, 322.

requirements of the Department... The management committee consists of Whites and Bantu, which is of course contrary to policy and cannot be approved".⁷⁴

Mary Owens, chairwoman of the African Section of the Kimberley Child Welfare Society, desperately begged the state to reconsider, arguing that the society was attempting to reconfigure the management of the society to be all African, but that the lack of skilled blacks interested in child welfare made this task near impossible.⁷⁵ In addition, Owens' attempted to play on the conscience of the government arguing that the crèches were necessary to the state as mothers needed a place to leave their children somewhere safe whilst filling their position in the labour force of the country.⁷⁶

Owens was backed by the acting Bantu Affairs Commissioner in 1964 when he argued "The quality of the work done... would appear to justify recognition", further asserting that there was no way the Africans could afford to run the crèches on their own, and without assistance, they would be forced to close.⁷⁷ As illustrated later in this section, his permanent replacement in the position of Bantu Affairs Commissioner was less sensitive to the plight of the African Section.

Owens was advised that in order to keep the crèches and soup kitchens up and running, the society needed to increase the subscription fees of mothers from two and a half cents to ten cents per child per day. Owens replied that this was impossible and that they already had to turn children away because their mothers could not afford two and a half cents. In a desperate turn, she wrote to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner asking whether some of the funds raised from selling liquor to the blacks at the locations could be used to assist the crèches. She was told that the funds were already committed elsewhere.⁷⁸

Despite Owens assertions that the female labour force of Kimberley depended upon mothers having a crèche to leave their children whilst working, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner (BAC) wrote in a letter to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, "I cannot advance a single

⁷⁴ KAB, File CDN 126 (II) N7/22/3/1 Bantu Welfare Agencies Section 48, Children's Act 1960. Response from Secretary for Bantu Administration with regards to application for recognition. 21 August 1964.

⁷⁵ There was a severe lack in trained Social Workers across the races. However, the limited resources of Africans to tertiary education meant that Africans were the worst off in terms of access to social workers. KAB, File 3/ALC 4/1/21 C10 Child Welfare 1951-1958.

⁷⁶ KAB, File CDN 126 (II) N7/22/3/1 Bantu Welfare Agencies Section 48, Children's Act 1960. Letter from Mary Owens to the Native Commissioner, 10 July 1964.

⁷⁷ KAB, File CDN 126 (II) N7/22/3/1 Bantu Welfare Agencies Section 48, Children's Act 1960. Report by Acting Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 3 June 1964.

⁷⁸ "Elsewhere" is never defined.

cogent reason why the Department should be requested to depart from its policy of ceasing to pay subsidies in respect to crèches for Bantu children with effect from 1st April 1964". The BAC continued in a moral evaluation that

Between 3 000 and 4 000 illegitimate Bantu children are born annually within the urban area of Kimberley, which may cause one to wonder whether the crèches and soup kitchens do not to a certain extent encourage immorality in that the unmarried mothers can "dump" their children at a very cheap rate and continue working, and may also rely on the soup kitchens to provide food for some of their offspring if they are too lazy to work.

The BAC further backs his argument with the following:

It has frequently been brought to my notice not only here but at other centres that it is not uncommon for unmarried Bantu mothers to state quite openly about their illegitimate children that they do not worry because "the Government will look after them", and one cannot avoid the fact that while one keeps on spoon feeding the Bantu he will not make any effort to help himself.

Scrawled at the bottom of the letter in red ink is a note "I find some of the BAC's arguments somewhat naïve!"⁷⁹ Although the signature is illegible, this seems to be the response of the Chief BAC. Despite his criticism of the arguments made in the letter, the Chief BAC seems to be at a bit of a loose end as the state policy enforced that payment to Bantu crèches had to be stopped. It is this frustration at the incongruities of black welfare under apartheid and the sense of helplessness that would serve to foster feelings of antagonism and frustration that would culminate with the youth uprisings of the 1970s which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Conclusion: "We are living in times of challenge"⁸⁰

Child welfare in the embryonic phase of the initial stages of apartheid was torn between two positions. In one corner stood the international ideals of child welfare independent of issues surrounding race seen in the SANNCW's catch phrase of in the interests of children "regardless of race or creed"; in the other stood reality. The ideology of the SANCCW was predicated on international policies imported from Britain and America which in the post war period favoured a racially and culturally inclusive approach. Yet the South African child

⁷⁹ KAB, File CDN 126 (II) N7/22/3/1 Bantu Welfare Agencies Section 48, Children's Act 1960. Letter from the Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Kimberley, to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, 22 July 1964.

⁸⁰ KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S 40/1 SA National Council for Child Welfare, 1960-1967. Message from the Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions at the 1959 Annual Child Welfare Conference.

welfare movement was economically dependent on a government that was for all intents and purposes defined by racial discrimination.

The increasingly racist policies seen in the 1945 Urban Areas Act were heightened after the NP came into power in 1948, bringing the apartheid ideology to the forefront of social development. Although racial separation had a long history in South Africa, the process of socialisation according to race intensified after the introduction of apartheid, creating an even clearer binary between white and black. The introduction of the Group Areas Act in 1950, along with Bantu Education Act in 1953 and the Separate Amenities Act of 1953, amongst numerous others, forcefully altered the trajectory of child welfare in South Africa dividing it into two contradicting directions.

Whilst white child welfare was progressing at a rate similar to that of the rest of the Western world, black child welfare was regressing in comparison. International discourses, particularly after World War Two, were highlighting the importance of a “proper childhood” in individual human development, contending that poverty denied children just this.⁸¹ Whilst the South African government was rigorously applying this argument to white children in South Africa, black children were placed in a different category.

Initially, welfare actors and the state alike had focussed their attention on poor white children whilst black children were placed on the backburner. However, as the needs of white children lessened with the introduction of social welfare policies, child welfare agencies turned their attention in earnest to the African population by the late 1930s. Already dependent upon government subsidies at this stage, child welfare agencies were faced with a dilemma: to uphold the international slogan of child welfare “regardless of race or creed” or to toe the party line and secure the income needed for their existence.

In some cases both could be achieved, through the outward compliance to apartheid, with an internal focus on inter-racial support for African children. The case of the African branch of the Kimberley Child Welfare Society illustrates a situation whereby the panopticon eye of the state stared down upon the Society, effectively putting to an end a thirty year collaborative effort between white and black.

⁸¹ A. Davin, ‘What is a Child?’ in A. Fletcher, and S. Hussey, eds., *Childhood in Question: Children, Parents and the State*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999), 24.

Chapter Five

“Society’s Shame”¹

The Nature of Child Welfare in Apartheid South Africa between 1965 and 1983

By the 1970s in South Africa, black children and teenagers had become increasingly politicised, engaging in protests, confronting police violence and teargas, and fighting for the right to better education and facilities.² This was the culmination of a long history of black oppression where, despite the muted concerns of child welfare agencies, black child welfare had been side-lined whilst white child welfare was making large strides, in line with international developments in the first world.

In the 1960s there was a shift in international child welfare discourses. As Western European and American families had fewer and fewer children “below the poverty line”, the material well-being of children became increasingly eclipsed by concerns around their psychological well-being. This was further fuelled by a growing anxiety regarding the perceived rise in child abuse.³ Arguably white children in South Africa, having been spared the burden of poor whiteism which had troubled their predecessors, occupied a position similar to that of children in first world countries. A 1965 report by the Society for the Protection of child life read: “The problems which affect family life, and therefore, children – divorce, alcoholism, chronic illness or psychiatric disturbance are no respecter of persons”.⁴ The emphasis on such factors, rather than issues such as poverty and physical neglect, illustrates South Africa’s adherence to international developments in child welfare, at least in respect of white children.

Yet, this progressive aspect of child welfare in South Africa was strongly contradicted in terms of the highly racialised nature of child welfare as a whole. In the previous chapter it

¹ The headline of a newspaper criticising the number of abused *white* children in South Africa. ‘Society’s Shame’, *The Daily News*, 25 January 1979, 14.

² This was seen specifically in the 1976 Soweto Uprisings and its aftermath, to be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

³ S. Scott, *The Politics and Experience of Ritual Abuse: Beyond Disbelief*, (Buckingham, OUP, 2001), 13. And K.J. Swift, “An Outrage to Common Decency: Historical Perspectives on Child Neglect”, in S.P. Smith and L.A. Merkel-Holguin, eds, *A History of Child Welfare* (New Jersey, Transaction Publishers, 1996), 75.

⁴ KAB Cape Town Archives Repository, File 1/WBG 210 33/2/1 Society for the Protection of Child Life: Fifty Seventh Annual Report.

was established that a divergence developed between black and white child welfare in the early years of apartheid. This division along racial lines was consolidated with the growth of an autocratic state and the entrenchment of racially divisive laws from the 1960s onwards. In 1966, the South African National Council for Child Welfare (SANCCW) amended its constitution to bring the practices of the Council into line with government policy. Proclaiming that it operated outside the sphere of politics, the Council went on to stipulate that it would no longer consist of a unified body, but would be divided into White, Indian, Coloured and “Bantu” Groups – membership for which would be restricted to the different racial groups thereby directly adhering to apartheid policies.⁵

Whilst white child welfare followed a similar trajectory to Britain and the United States of America, African child welfare was hampered by both discrimination and poverty. It remained grossly underfunded and focused on material issues such as poverty, access to education and the impact of separate development. A key concern for child welfare agencies was African labour laws which forced divisions in the family unit, particularly the separation of African mothers from their children.⁶

The oppressed position of the African child culminated in the Soweto Uprising in 1976 and its aftermath. This witnessed African school children taking to the streets to protest the biased nature of Bantu Education as well as the broader apartheid policy. Arguably the events of 1976 would have a dual effect on the way in which African children were perceived. Whilst some media reports created the perception of African children as victims of an autocratic state, robbed of their childhood by the racist policies of apartheid; other discourses fed into fears of the ‘black peril’ and the threat black youth posed to white South Africa.⁷

Despite increased international and national criticism, the reaction of the state was to introduce even stricter restraints on blacks in a bid to alleviate concerns of the white electorate that the apartheid government was losing its hold on white hegemony. This is well illustrated in the 1983 Children’s Act which, far from being reformist, mimicked the code of

⁵ KAB File 3/CT 4/1/10/15, E 4/1 vol 5. Constitution as amended at the Annual Meeting held in Pretoria on the 19th, 20th and 21st October, 1966.

⁶ KAB, File 1/WBG 210 33/2/1 Society for the Protection of Child Life: Fifty Seventh Annual Report.

⁷ M.E. Patterson, ‘Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid’s Last Decades’, (PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2009), xxii. See also, B. Bowman, ‘Children, pathology and politics: a genealogy of the paedophile in South Africa between 1944 and 2004, *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40, 4 (2010), 452.

racial division found in the 1960 Act, offering little respite even in the face of international condemnation.⁸

This chapter analyses the growing schism between white and black that, having been fostered through the first half of the twentieth century, climaxed in the period between the 1960s and 1980s in the form of grand apartheid. Previous chapters have shown how children were regarded as passive recipients of welfare, but this chapter will show that by the 1980s children were imbued with agency.⁹ This agency was vividly illustrated in the Soweto Uprising with black schoolchildren taking the lead in demanding better rights.

Preoccupations with the needs of the white child

Martin Woodhead has shown that attention to the psychological needs of the child became perceived as a benchmark of a progressive and enlightened society.¹⁰ Not wanting to be seen to be left in the dark ages, the South African child welfare movement was strongly influenced by international discourses related to the psychological welfare of the child.¹¹ In a 1968 appeal for public participation in “Our Children’s Day” – a national day where the interests of children were promoted – Mrs J.J. Fouché, the state president’s wife asserted that although the physical welfare of South Africa’s children had been met, they were still faced with dangers as regards their psychological welfare:

We build functional schools, we are constantly improving our educational system, we are concerned about the child’s physical condition and make free services available to safeguard him against disease. Yet sociologists, psychologists and social workers have long warned that the climate of modern society is unfavourable for the successful functioning of today’s parent and consequently also for the child.¹²

⁸ F.N. Zaal, ‘Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care: A Critical Evaluation of Selective Aspects of the South African System’, (PhD thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2008), 66.

⁹ L. Basson, ‘Perspectives in the best interests of the child: Developments in the interpretation and application of the principle of the South African law relating to custody’, (PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2004), 37.

¹⁰ M. Woodhead, ‘Psychology and the Cultural Construction of Children’s Needs’, in A. James and A. Prout, eds, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, (London, The Falmer Press, 1990), 60.

¹¹ The emphasis placed on keeping with international trends in child welfare was not a new development. As early as 1919, Miss Mabel Elliott (who would later become the chairperson of the SANCCW) wrote “It is an acknowledged fact all over the civilised world that child welfare for the conservation of life is of the very greatest importance, and South Africa must be in no way behind if she wants to keep pace with the progress that is being made in other parts of the world”. KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/3/107 E109/3. Undated letter from Miss Elliott to Mr Finch, Town Councillor.

¹² KAB, File 2/OBS 3/1/663 N7/22/3 Agencies Section 48 of the Children’s Act 1960: “Our Children’s Day”, Appeal by Mrs JJ Fouché, state president’s wife, 3 July 1968.

The society referred to by Fouché was white society, solipsistically omitting the black majority.¹³ It was a society in which both husband and wife increasingly worked.¹⁴ This posed a twin dilemma for child welfare activists. On the one hand white children – the much vaunted “future of South Africa” – were being raised by Africans in an ironic and direct contradiction of the apartheid policy of racial segregation. Simultaneously, African mothers were forced to leave their children at home in the townships or homelands where they were looked after by extended families or care-givers.¹⁵

Fears over the disintegration of the family unit were heightened by societal changes in South Africa between the 1960s and the early 1980s. Divorce rates amongst the white population soared, challenging the Christian national ideals that cherished the white nuclear family.¹⁶ Furthermore the impact of globalisation in the 1970s and 1980s challenged the position of government as the primary socialising agent, allowing for cultural discourses to filter into the South African conscious, particularly after the introduction of television in 1976, in some cases leading to a direct questioning of the authority of apartheid.¹⁷

A major consequence of global discourses feeding into South Africa was the impact it had on the youth. As discussed in the previous chapter with regards to the ‘ducktails and flick-knives’ subculture that permeated white youth culture in the 1950s, there were growing concerns over the moral degeneration and delinquency of white South African youth, with punk and rock and roll cultures being transmitted to South Africa through the medium of radio, magazines and later television.

The perceived growth in juvenile delinquency was seen by social commentators, and the SANCCW, to be a construct of modern western society. Not only were the youth being influenced by ‘undesirable’ cultural discourses, their parents were losing authority. In their opinion the scientific and technological revolution “made of man a cog in an impersonal machine”. So busy were fathers and mothers in the workplace that they were absent in the

¹³ This is not to say that black children were entirely excluded from receiving welfare reforms. Indeed the apartheid government had provided education and health care services for African children. However, the quality and quantity of such services were far from the level of those received by white children.

¹⁴ The number of white women in the work force increased by four fold between the 1930s and 1970s in relation to a white population that had doubled during the same period. See D. Gaitskell, J. Kimble, M. Maconachie and E. Unterhalter, ‘Class, Race and Gender: Domestic Workers in South Africa’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 27/28 (1983), 102; A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, (London, Routledge, 1994), 2.

¹⁵ ‘Homelands Hindering Family Life’, *Post*, 28 September 1978, 8.

¹⁶ S. Burman and R. Fuchs, ‘When Families Split: Custody on Divorce in South Africa’, in S. Burman and P. Reynolds eds, *Growing up in a Divided Society*, (Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1986), 115.

¹⁷ A. Grundlingh, “‘Rocking the Boat’ in South Africa? Voëlvry Music and Afrikaans Anti- Apartheid Social Protest in the 1980s’, *The International Journal of South African Historical Studies*, 37, 3 (2004), 486, 490-491.

process of their children's education and upbringing "in accordance with a specific set of values".¹⁸ Divorce was also regarded as a contributing factor in the perceived moral decline of the youth. In the 1963 opening address of a SANCCW council meeting, given by the wife of the Administrator of the Orange Free State, Mrs Du Plessis identified divorce as the biggest challenge facing child welfare in South Africa, comparing it to a "cancer eating up our social life" and that the "parent committing such a crime against his child will always have the blemish on his conscience".¹⁹

Such arguments contributed to fears of the moral degeneration of white South African youth. In contrast to the Christian National ideals of the NP government, promoted particularly in the 1950s, of an idealised *volk*, there were continuous reports of rising concerns over increased drug abuse, suicide, homosexuality, theft and pregnancy amongst juveniles.²⁰ Their mobility and the fact that they would soon constitute the electorate was arguably of great concern to the state and this encouraged stricter government controls in a bid to save the morality of the white youth, as seen in the strict censorship of books and entertainment material that was introduced in South Africa during apartheid.

"An unnatural liking for blacks" Fears of social miscegenation²¹

In tandem with fears about the disintegration of the family unit, a great deal of concern was placed by the state on the potential psychological impact being raised by African domestic workers would have on white children. Fears of cultural miscegenation hark back to early colonial days and were illuminated in the Carnegie Commission of 1929 to 1932 which investigated the poor white problem in South Africa. One of the major concerns that the Commission raised was the fear that too much interaction between white and black would lead to a blurring of racial lines; in other words, the poor whites would become like blacks. This fear reverberated throughout the twentieth century. African women moved increasingly

¹⁸ KAB, File 2/OBS 3/1/663 N7/22/3 Agencies Section 48 of the Children's Act 1960: "Our Children's Day", Appeal by Mrs JJ Fouché, state president's wife, 3 July 1968.

¹⁹ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/10/16 E4/1 Child Welfare, South Africa.

²⁰ 'Buro vir probleem nou in groter organisasie', *Die Vaderland*, 12 March 1979, 3. Juveniles were and still are classified by welfare groups as children. However, the term usually refers to older children in their early to mid-teens who arguably have more agency than the infants and young children also dealt with by child welfare organisations.

²¹ Zaal, 'Court Services for the Child', 67.

into positions as domestic workers in white families: in 1911 they comprised less than a third of all servants, but by 1970 they represented well over three quarters.²²

As employing African domestic workers had become an accepted norm for generations of white families, there seemed little likelihood of changing this situation, particularly given the increased movement of white mothers into the workforce: in 1936 approximately 131 593 white women were in the work force, by 1970 this number had risen to 447 983, a significant increase even though the white population had increased marginally during this period.²³ The dogmatic fears around such racial mixing are well illustrated in the following case study: By the early 1980s a white single mother was taken to court because she left her children at home with an African domestic worker on a daily basis. By having her white children raised primarily by an African woman, the court was concerned that her children might develop “an unnatural liking for blacks” thereby challenging the apartheid chain of being.²⁴

Although not all child welfare agencies agreed with government anxieties, some wished to alleviate concerns that African women were unable to raise ‘proper’ white children. As late as 1984 a workshop was thus held by the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society which offered training to domestic workers on “emotional stress caused by leaving a family, the importance of nutritional foods, and above all how to give children love and warmth – making sad children happy”.²⁵ Somewhat ironically, while showing white children in white suburbs love and warmth, domestic workers were forced to leave their own children behind. This situation attracted wide criticism from welfare organisations, including the SANNCW, and will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

²² Interestingly, a large portion of domestic servants in the early 1900s came from the movement of impoverished Afrikaner women into the cities. However, as the poor white ‘problem’ was resolved, they were replaced by African women. D. Gaitskell, J. Kimble, M. Maconachie and E. Unterhalter, ‘Class, Race and Gender: Domestic Workers in South Africa’, *Review of African Political Economy*, 27/28 (1983), 95.

²³ D. Gaitskell, J. Kimble, M. Maconachie and E. Unterhalter, ‘Class, Race and Gender: Domestic Workers in South Africa’, 102; A.J. Christopher, ‘The Atlas of Apartheid’, (London, Routledge, 1994), 2.

²⁴ Zaal, ‘Court Services for the Child’, 67.

²⁵ S. Tema, ‘Domestics earn spurs as trained help for children’, *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 February 1984, 5.

“Somewhere a Child is Crying”:²⁶ The ‘Discovery’ of Child Abuse

Following closely on the heels of an increased awareness of the psychological welfare needs of children, came the ‘discovery’ of child abuse. Although reports of the ill-treatment of children dated back to the establishment of child welfare agencies, the term “child abuse” only came into common usage in South Africa and abroad in the 1970s.²⁷ Of course, children had been cruelly treated since the beginning of human society. However, what had increased were the reports of abuse and the resultant reaction by civil society and the state. Indeed, newspaper and child welfare reports were awash with cases of child abuse from the 1970s onwards, with headlines such as “Battered babies: sad products of society’s cruelty” being commonplace.²⁸ In the context of the psychological welfare of the child, child abuse was seen by social workers and doctors as a “symptom of a stressed society”.²⁹

As Archard has argued, child abuse is in its very nature a social problem. It is each specific society that defines the concept of cruelty and within it the parameters of child abuse and these definitions change over time and in accordance with the changes in society.³⁰ In light of the unique socio-economic and political conditions that existed in South Africa during apartheid, the idea that child abuse was socially defined is particularly interesting.

When examining the increased awareness of child abuse in South Africa, it is important to keep in mind the idiographic socio-economic and political conditions that defined the country. Racially discriminatory laws like the Group Areas Act of 1950 made it difficult for child welfare actors to gain an understanding of the plight of child abuse across racial lines. As such, many of the reports relating to the abuse of children and the resultant psychological impact were initially concerned mainly with white children.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the progression of child welfare often follows a set pattern with independent welfare workers being the first to identify a social need, bringing it to the public attention and then placing pressure on the government to introduce

²⁶ F.P. Poggenpoel, ‘Child Abuse – the Role of the Clergy’, *First National Workshop on Child Abuse 7-9 July 1977*, (Johannesburg, Central Printing Unit, 1979), 299.

²⁷ L. Pierce and V. Bozalek, ‘Child abuse in South Africa: an examination of how child abuse and neglect are defined’, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28, (2004), 818.

²⁸ “Battered Babies: sad products of society’s cruelty”, *The Star*, 28 October 1981, 41.

²⁹ J. Strachan, ‘Battered babies: What makes parents ill-treat or even kill their children?’, *The Daily News*, 26 October 1981, 21.

³⁰ D. Archard, *Children: Rights and Childhood, Second Edition*, (London, Routledge, 1993), 192-193.

reforms.³¹ This pattern can be found in the way that the plight of child abuse was brought to the attention of the South African public and the state. In 1967 the SANCCW established a working committee aimed at investigating the problem of child abuse in South Africa with the goal of bringing public attention, particularly within the medical and social welfare spheres, to the issue.³² The committee was able to illustrate a very real need for institutional care for children and as a result, in 1971, the first Child Abuse Unit was established at the Transvaal Memorial Hospital for Children. The product of a joint venture between the Paediatrics and Psychiatry Departments, the Unit offered shelter for abused children whilst simultaneously providing rehabilitative and educative facilities for families with the goal of reintegrating the child back into the home thereby restoring the prized nuclear family.³³

In a bid to place the concerns of child abuse activists on a national platform, the First National Workshop on Child Abuse was hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand from the seventh to the ninth of July, 1977. The workshop covered a wide area of issues including the identification of possible causes of child abuse and the need to provide counselling not only for the abused child, but also for the abusive parent.

Significantly, the workshop also included presentations on child abuse relating to coloured and black children. This is particularly important because, prior to the workshop, the racially divisive policies of apartheid meant there were very few options available to voice concerns over children other than whites on a national level. Furthermore, it illustrated that coloured and black children, just like white children, were victim to abuse.

The report on “Child Abuse in the Coloured Population of the Western Cape” used the question of coloured child abuse to voice broader concerns relating to the welfare of the coloured population as a whole. In contrast to arguments that child abuse was not limited to social class, this report argued that the reason why there were more reports of coloured children than white children being abused was because the majority of coloureds lived in impoverished circumstances.³⁴ It further asserted that child abuse was due to the

³¹ This pattern was identified by the South African government in a 1947 report to the United Nations. KAB, File SWP II 57 Child Welfare 1942-1949 Part 1. Annual Report for the year 1947 on child and youth welfare services, submitted to the United Nations by the Government of the Union of South Africa (UN Reference: SOA 16/01/GN, 25 March 1948).

³² C. Irwin, ‘The Establishment of a Child Abuse Unit in a Children’s Hospital’, *SA Medical Journal*, 49 (1975), 1142.

³³ Irwin, ‘The Establishment of a Child Abuse Unit’, 1142.

³⁴ B. Robertson and Hendricks, ‘Child Abuse in the Coloured Population of the Western Cape’, *First National Workshop on Child Abuse 7-9 July 1977*, (Johannesburg, Central Printing Unit, 1979), 228.

“unbearable” socio-economic conditions found at coloured homes which drove parents and other care-givers to lash out against children.³⁵ The report goes on to say that numerous lives could have been saved if more coloured children had been admitted into the coloured section of the Red Cross Children’s Hospital. Instead, the coloured section was almost always overflowing, whilst many of the beds in the white child section remained unoccupied.³⁶

Black child abuse received similar coverage at the workshop with a report titled “Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families”. Presented by Mrs C.N. Ngcambu, a social worker from Cape Town, the report stressed that corporal punishment and the strict discipline of children was part of the African culture. As such beating a child with a broomstick or the handle of an axe was not regarded as taboo in African society, but as a necessary part of the child’s upbringing. She further argued that it was common place for children to be punished through “neglect and various kinds of mental torture”.³⁷

Interestingly, it was only in the discussion which followed Ngcambu’s report that many of the criticisms directed towards the position of African children in South Africa were addressed. Perhaps aware that she was an outsider presenting at a white-dominated event, her report was kept neutral when it came to government policies. It was the prying questions of the audience which brought out more overt criticism.

For example, her argument that corporal punishment was part of the African culture was challenged by one participant as it contradicted a “persisting myth regarding the considerable nurturant qualities of African mothers”. Ngcambu back-tracked on her statement stating that African mothers were good carers indeed, however, the process of urbanisation had placed new strains on the African family that decreased levels of tolerance for misbehaving children.³⁸

Ngcambu went on to argue that the squalor of “squatter camps” were fertile conditions for child abuse and neglect. Not only were many children malnourished due to poverty, but they were left alone for the whole day whilst their parents worked in white urban areas.³⁹ Ngcambu’s argument received backing from another member at the workshop, Dr Winship of the Durban Child Welfare Society. He asserted that there were “stress situations” in the

³⁵ Robertson and Hendricks, ‘Child Abuse in the Coloured Population of the Western Cape’, 233.

³⁶ Robertson and Hendricks, ‘Child Abuse in the Coloured Population of the Western Cape’, 234.

³⁷ C.N. Ngcambu, ‘Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families’, *First National Workshop on Child Abuse 7-9 July 1977*, (Johannesburg, Central Printing Unit, 1979), 265-266.

³⁸ Ngcambu, ‘Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families’, 292-293.

³⁹ Ngcambu, ‘Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families’, 293-294.

townships unlike anywhere else in South Africa “where people are living outside of marriage, away from their cultural background and where children become a burden”.⁴⁰

Winship asserted that the plight of abused and neglected African children should be “broadcast loud and wide”. Interestingly, Ngcambu disputed the suggestion that white and coloured social workers be brought in to help with African children (seeing that there was a severe shortage of black social workers – in 1977 there were only eight black social workers in the entire Western Cape). She argued that such a development would only bring frustration to both the social worker and the patient because the cultural and language differences would form a barrier in the required communication needed to create a relationship of trust and confidentiality.⁴¹ This emphasises the prevalence of arguments around ethnocentricity and social construction in understanding child abuse: re-enforced racial differences emphasised by the separation of races were a further hindrance in the cross racial ambitions of child welfare.

The attention given to black and coloured children at the workshop is historically significant. Although criticism of the government’s racial policies had been expressed in a subtle form in child welfare reports from the early days of apartheid, it is not surprising that more overt concern was given to coloured and black children in 1977, one year after the Soweto Uprising.

Increased Awareness of the needs of the African Child

“Heaven help anyone who hurts a child”: The Soweto Uprising of 1976⁴²

In 1959, Mrs H Stent had warned of the dangers that the neglect of African children posed to the stability of the South African state in terms of the sentiments of Black Nationalism that could be fostered.⁴³ Almost two decades later, her warning was realised in the form of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.⁴⁴ In the previous chapter it was established that education in South

⁴⁰ Ngcambu, ‘Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families’, 295.

⁴¹ Ngcambu, ‘Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families’, 274-275.

⁴² This is a statement which South African Prime Minister, BJ Vorster claimed to have made in the 1960s to South African Police in reaction to criticism of the Sharpeville massacres. By 1976, with the shooting of school children, this statement would be proven futile. D. O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The apartheid state and the politics of the National Party 1948-1994*, (Athens, Ohio University Press, 1996), 180.

⁴³ KAB File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S40/1 Annual Child Welfare Conference, 18 August 1959. Annexure 1: Introductory remarks by chairman of council, Mrs H. Stent.

⁴⁴ It should be kept in mind that African youth rebellion had existed before 1976. See C. Glaser, “‘We must infiltrate the Totsis’”: School Politics and Youth Gangs in Soweto, 1968-1976’, *Journal of Southern African*

Africa was used as a means of reinforcing the social construction of the differences between the races. The inadequate education facilities for black children, together with the overt discrimination in the curriculum led to growing discontent amongst African children, youth and in the broader African community.

Tensions climaxed in 1976 with the government's introduction of Afrikaans as the main medium of instruction in schools. Replacing English, it was regarded by blacks as a further step by the government to oppress them, denying them the potential to expand their horizons to an international level and forcing them to co-operate with the Afrikaans-dominated apartheid government.⁴⁵

On 16 June 1976 approximately six thousand students gathered at the Orlando West Junior Secondary School carrying banners, posters and placards that emphasised their frustrations with the new policy.⁴⁶ With statements such as "to Hell with Afrikaans", "Away with Bantu Ed" and "Black Power", the purpose of their protest was clear: they had had enough of their subjugation and were striking back.⁴⁷ By marching to the Orlando Stadium in Soweto they were not only illustrating their agency, but their subsequent confrontation with the police was a direct challenge to the visible power of the government: the body that implemented and carried out the oppressive policies of the apartheid government was being confronted by mere schoolchildren.

Although versions of what happened vary according to who is giving the account, one thing is agreed upon: chaos prevailed. A small police force was sent to calm the uprising. Apparently overwhelmed by the number of students, the police opened fire with live ammunition. Students attacked police dogs, symbols of the apartheid state and domination, whilst the police used ever greater force in an attempt to quell the situation. The official death toll for 16 June 1976 was twenty three, although Patterson, and others, argue that this is a severe underestimation.⁴⁸

Studies, 24, 2, (1998), 301-323. However the 1976 Youth Uprising saw the mass rebellion of African youth on a national scale.

⁴⁵ J. Jansen, 'Knowledge and Power in Southern African Education: The Curriculum Challenge to Apartheid', *The Radical Teacher*, 38 (1990), 22-23.

⁴⁶ This number, like the actual events of the Soweto Uprising, is contested. Whilst Patterson asserts the number to be 20 000, Welsh and Spence place the number of students as less than 6 000. See Patterson, 'Constructs of Childhood in Apartheid', 22 and D. Welsh and J.E. Spence, *Ending Apartheid*, (Harlow, Pearson, 2011), 41.

⁴⁷ Patterson, 'Constructs of Childhood in Apartheid', 22-23.

⁴⁸ Patterson, 'Constructs of Childhood in Apartheid', 25.

The traumatic events of 16 June did not deter the resistance by African students, with riots spreading across the country and lasting for three months.⁴⁹ Although initially aimed at protesting against the introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction the Soweto Uprising ignited a fuse that would spark other protests across the country that encompassed criticism of the apartheid system in its entirety. The end of the three month period of rioting did not mean an end to the struggle of students, if anything it was just the beginning. The events in Soweto and its aftermath illustrated the vulnerability of white rule in South Africa, causing a loss of faith amongst the white electorate in the government and increased confidence amongst blacks for self-rule and African pride as forwarded by organisations such as the Black Consciousness Movement.⁵⁰ Furthermore, it attracted much international and local attention from the media, particularly fuelled by the introduction of television in South Africa in 1976 which brought the events of the Soweto uprising into the homes of South Africans.

The events of 1976 provide powerful material for analysing the changing position of children in South African society. Firstly, it illustrates the agency of children (in this case African children specifically) in bringing about reform. Partly because of their status as children they were able to engender such strong criticism of apartheid. Social constructs of children as innocent and vulnerable did not sit well with photographs and television reports of black children dodging bullets and tear-gas, running amidst armoured vehicles in a war like scenario. Secondly, it challenged notions of children as passive passengers in society, following the flow of the life adults define for them. This had broader implications for South African society as, in many ways, the paternalistic nature of apartheid had placed all Africans in a passive position, seemingly powerless to challenge the authority of the apartheid state.⁵¹

The reaction of the South African government, in the face of negative international exposure, was to introduce conditions that would improve black education. Government funding for African education increased and Afrikaans was repealed as the compulsory language of instruction.⁵² Although these material improvements were perceived by some at the time to have been superficial in nature, one key aspect of this event was the notion of agency; not only were African children exercising agency in challenging the state, they were

⁴⁹ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 180.

⁵⁰ O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 181.

⁵¹ Although the agency of children invariably raises the question of child versus youth and where does one draw the age-line, the fact remains that the majority of participants in the Soweto insurgencies were students, of school-going age and therefore in their teens and younger.

⁵² Jansen, 'Knowledge and Power in South African Education', 23.

contemporaneously *seen* by the public to exercise such agency. Thus the events surrounding 16 June 1976 had broader implications for the nature of African child welfare as a whole. Although black children had been an issue of concern for child welfare workers for decades before the uprising, the resultant media attention led to numerous other organisations and civil society actors bringing attention to the “blatant discrepancies in the health and welfare of white and black children”.⁵³

Although they increased drastically after the events of 1976, concerns over the welfare of African children had in fact been present for decades in reports by child welfare agencies. Important to keep in mind here is the reality that the child welfare movement in South Africa was made up of individuals and groups with differing values and opinions. Although by the 1970s and 1980s the SANCCW had been strongly influenced by international arguments regarding the psychological welfare of children, this did not mean that it altogether forgot about other areas of concern. Different people and organisations within the moment forwarded different concerns. Whilst some welfare workers were highlighting concerns of the perceived moral degeneration of the youth and the psychological welfare of children in white society, others were placing increased emphasis on the needs of African children.

The consequences of separate development were highlighted by criticisms of the impact acts such as the 1945 Urban Areas Act had on African infant death rates through the separation of mother and child when African mothers returned to work in white areas whilst infants remained in homelands and townships.⁵⁴ The question of forced removals also received some attention, particularly in the Cape where the removal of the coloured population from Cape Town Central to Bonteheuwel, Kalksteenveld and Heideveld led to a direct increase in child welfare cases. This situation was compounded by the fact that there were few trained coloured social workers, as much of the coloured population was “overburdened” with their everyday demands to take up the cause of child welfare.⁵⁵ The lack of trained social workers was a problem across the races, but particularly urgent in the case of Africans and coloureds. The discrepancy between white and black child welfare was further brought to attention by

⁵³ B. Bowman, ‘Children, pathology and politics: a genealogy of the paedophile in South Africa between 1944 and 2004’, *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40, 4, (2010), 452.

⁵⁴ KAB, File 3/Kim 4/1/265 S40/1 Resolutions of the Annual Child Welfare Conference of 18 August 1959

⁵⁵ KAB, File 1/WBG 210 33/2/1 Society for the Protection of Child Life: Fifty Seventh Annual Report, 1965.

on-going calls by the SANCCW for increased maintenance grants and compulsory education for African and coloured children.⁵⁶

With the events of 1976, these issues gained a national and international platform. In newspapers across the country reports relating to the position of African children identified the potential consequences of apartheid policies on African child welfare. The division of families as a result of separate development received much attention with particular focus being placed on the Homeland system. One article titled “Homelands hindering family life” supported the argument made by the South African Council for Child and Family Welfare (previously the SANCCW) that the Homeland policy made contact between parents and children extremely difficult, emphasising the need to phase out the hostel system and reunite African families.⁵⁷

Other articles emphasised the high levels of infant abandonment amongst the African population, an issue that had also been raised previously at the 1977 Workshop on Child Abuse.⁵⁸ The lack of social security for African women meant that some mothers, who did not have the support of an extended family that could look after their children whilst they worked in ‘white areas’, turned to the abandonment of their babies as a desperate measure. Child welfare societies were inundated by the arrival of abandoned black infants and openly criticised the government for not providing adequate crèche facilities in the townships. This debate was further fuelled by frustrations that, despite the fact that many white families wished to adopt black babies, the Group Areas Act made this illegal.⁵⁹

The 1979 International Year of the Child was used in newspapers such as the *Post*, *Argus* and *Rand Daily Mail* to ridicule the government’s attitude towards “non-white” child welfare. Introduced by the United Nations to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, it was not officially adopted by the South African government, whose membership to the UN had been suspended in 1974. According to Patterson the prime objective of the Year of the Child was to assess the conditions of children across the world.⁶⁰ One journalist from the *Post* likened South Africa’s contribution to the

⁵⁶ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/10/14 E4/1 Vol 3: Maternity and Child Welfare. South African National Council for Child Welfare, 1946-1954. South African National Council for Child Welfare, Kimberly 1953: Memorandum on Council Meeting.

⁵⁷ ‘Homelands hindering family life’, *Post*, 28 September 1978, 8.

⁵⁸ This point was raised in the discussion section of Ngcambu’s report, ‘Aspects of Child Abuse Applicable to Black Families’, 295.

⁵⁹ Edwina Collier, ‘Suffer little children’, *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 July 1983, 10.

⁶⁰ Patterson, ‘Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid’, 57.

1979 endeavour as “The Year of the Child – the dead child”. The article commented on the ever increasing number of babies being “dumped” by African mothers, who, forced to earn a living in the apartheid state, were left with little alternative.⁶¹

A similar article, written five years later, continued with this theme. Titled “The daily grind of the poor housewife”, it commented on the “dual shift” African mothers had as workers and as home-keepers. The article highlights a number of grievances including the lack of rights for African women who, oppressed by race and gender had little job protection with pregnancy being grounds for dismissal, hence the desperation of African women abandoning their babies.⁶²

Concerns over the impact apartheid had on child welfare led to direct criticisms of the government in the press. The refusal of the government to give a permit to hold a multi-racial children’s carnival in Worcester in 1979 was described by *The Argus* newspaper as “a foolish, cruel and retrogressive decision”.⁶³ The *Star* newspaper drew attention to the potential closure of the Child Guidance Clinic in Johannesburg that could not “reproduce the existing service for three other groups with the scarce resources available” and that the government needed to recognise its non-racial nature, otherwise the children would suffer.⁶⁴

Such internal criticisms were echoed by international condemnation of apartheid. It would appear that the concern over African child welfare, although present for decades, was thrown into sharp relief by the Soweto Uprising of 1976. Despite the pressures placed on the government, nationally and internationally, following the events of 1976, the 1983 Children’s Act did not bring much reprieve to broader African child welfare besides from the education reforms mentioned above. Black children became an issue of concern for the apartheid state, but for a whole other set of reasons to those listed above. By illustrating their agency and ability to mobilise mass black action (and in some cases white sympathy) they were a direct challenge to the government. As such, despite increased criticism, the government did not kneel to pressure for reform, but continued in its oppressive nature.

As Zaal has shown, the 1983 Children’s Act included many of the racially discriminative laws as found in the 1960 Children’s Act. Quite the opposite of what one might expect given the harsh criticism the government received for its neglect of “non-white” children, the 1983

⁶¹ *Post*, 26 August 1979, ‘Year of the Child – the dead child’, 5.

⁶² *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 April 1984, P. van Niekerk, ‘The daily grind of the poor housewife’, 11.

⁶³ *The Argus*, 1 October 1979, ‘A cruel decision’, 10.

⁶⁴ *The Star*, 31 August 1979, ‘Child clinic is worried by Act’, 8.

Act included a graded level of child foster care grants with white children receiving the most, then Indian and coloured children, with black children at the bottom of the list.⁶⁵

Despite criticism from the SANCCW and the liberal press, the government continued to press the importance of identifying different ethnic needs in the 1983 Children's Bill. Dr JP Grobler, a representative of the National Party in Brits, encouraged the continuance of the separate development line, contending that different communities in South African had different needs and therefore required different welfare services that could only be identified from within the community. Thus he promoted the continuation of a Minister of Health and Welfare for whites, the Minister of Internal Affairs for coloureds and Indians and the Minister of Co-operation and Development for black welfare.⁶⁶ As with the gradation of foster care grants, the implication was there that the identification of different needs along a racial basis assumed an inherent inequality in levels of state-provided child welfare.

The commentary on the 1983 Act brought criticism beyond racial concerns. One significant change in the Act was that it shifted focus from the condition of the child, to the activities of parents. In a growing context of children's rights "Incompetent parents [were] warned of action against them" and social workers were empowered with increased rights to remove the child from conditions they perceived as unfavourable.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the nuclear family received further legal protection: mothers who lived with men out of wedlock were to have their child grants rescinded in a bid to prevent such immoral conditions that were "not conducive to the welfare of children".⁶⁸

The Act also gave social workers increased authority to remove children from homes. An unforeseen consequence of this, as *The Natal Witness* proclaimed, was that "Baby Farms could soon be legal" as the draft bill for the 1983 Act neglected to state where children removed from their parents could be placed, thereby reducing control over who cared for the children.⁶⁹ This headline epitomised the retrogressive nature of South African child welfare during apartheid. The original children's act introduced in South Africa, firstly in the Cape in 1907, followed by the Transvaal in 1908 and consolidated on a national level in the 1913 Infant Life Protection Act, was in direct reaction to the level of infant deaths resulting from a

⁶⁵ Zaal, 'Court Services for the Child', 66.

⁶⁶ *The Citizen*, 10 May 1983, 'Plea to identify ethnic welfare needs', 4.

⁶⁷ *The Citizen*, 10 May 1983, 'Incompetent parents warned of action against them', 4; *The Argus*, 10 May 1983, 'Child Care Bill', 18.

⁶⁸ *The Star*, 20 August 1983, 'Children's Act amended', 3.

⁶⁹ T. Shapiro, *The Natal Witness*, 24 March 1982, 'Baby Farms could soon be legal', 3.

process of baby-farming.⁷⁰ The full circle of child welfare had been completed. African children had been identified through welfare agencies and the media as in drastic need of state subsidised care, just as the needs of poor white children were identified in the early years of the 1900s. The difference, however, lay in the nature of the government which child welfare agencies faced.

Conclusion

Between 1965 and 1983, child welfare in South Africa was characterised by the development of two separate and often contradictory paths running in accordance with racialised state policies that, having been fostered during the early years of apartheid, were consolidated during the period of grand apartheid from the 1960s onwards. On the one hand, South African child welfare, as it related to white children, followed the progressive discourses of international concerns relating to the psychological welfare of the child amidst increasing concerns over child abuse. Newspapers expressed concern over rising child abuse statistics with headlines such as “Society’s Shame” – which highlighted the reality that thousands of white children did not get to enjoy the pleasures of childhood, with an estimated twelve thousand being in foster care in the late 1970s.⁷¹ There was an additional “Call to tighten up the law on child abuse”, criticising the government’s lack of a legal and medical definition of child abuse.⁷² The increased focus on child abuse dominated the child welfare movement, in many ways over-shadowing previous areas of concern such as the impact of poverty. Yet, the reality remained that the majority of South African children were black and they continued to live in conditions of material poverty; their needs were not being adequately addressed. The position of black children in South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century echoed that of the poor white child in the first half of the century thereby counteracting the perceived progressive nature of the South African child welfare movement.

By mid-century the idea of children as rights bearers, as subjects rather than objects of welfare, was gaining ground on an international level. This was epitomised by the

⁷⁰ See Chapter Two. Jasper Anderson, founder of the Society for the Protection of Child Life and Medical Inspector of Health in the Cape published a report in 1906 that illuminated high levels of infant mortality. The deaths were blamed on the process of “baby-farming” whereby mothers desperate for work would leave their children in the care of strangers or unqualified carers. He therefore called for the introduction of state legislation that would place stricter controls on the movement of infants, which was realised in the 1907 Infant Life Protection Act. Chapter Two, “‘Cries of the Children’: The Politics of Child Welfare in Early Twentieth Century South Africa (1907 to 1924)”, 27.

⁷¹ ‘Society’s Shame’, *The Daily News*, 25 January 1979, 14.

⁷² ‘Call to tighten up the law on child abuse’, *The Natal Witness*, 4 October 1984, 5.

international rise of children's rights, exemplified by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. The timing of the 1979 International Year of Child (IYC), which sought to re-enforce notions of children's rights, corresponded with increased public attention given to African children in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The pro-activeness of these children challenged the international constructs of children as passive, vulnerable and even innocent. At the same time, they complimented the ideals of the IYC in as much as it advocated the need to recognise the position of children as citizens with needs *and* rights.

The events of 1976 triggered international outrage at the South African government's treatment of African children – the denial of basic rights to equal education and resources coupled with violence from the police challenged international and national constructions of childhood innocence and vulnerability. The 1983 Children's Act illustrated the government's reluctance to relinquish its hold on white domination. It would take almost two decades before the ambitions voiced at the 1976 Soweto Uprising were realised in the legislative reforms brought by the introduction of a democratic government in 1994.

Chapter Six

Welfare and Womanhood

The politics of gender and caring for children, c. 1899 to 1940.

*Just as much as it is the woman's hand that rocks the cradle, so it must be the woman's brain that directs the nation. Never underrate your strength.*¹

As the previous chapters have illustrated, from the macro-policies of the state to the intimate level of the care of children and the meaning of a “good home”, South Africa is marked by a history of extreme social division – between races and classes. This chapter illustrates that issues of social division between race and class were further fissured by gender. Politically, economically and socially, women have been subject to the rule of their husbands and fathers, not dissimilar to the paternal relationship between parent and child, with focus historically placed on their responsibility as the bearers and carers of children.² Therefore, when the international and South African social climate illuminated the need for the organised protection of children in the early 1900s, as explored in chapter two, it is little wonder that this task fell primarily into the domain of women.

At the Third Annual National Child Welfare Conference in 1919 Mr J.P. Logan, town clerk of Bloemfontein, stated: “With the coming into public life of women the social welfare committee of the local council is the one place where her qualities will be most valuable, and where women will be able to develop on the side of race preservation”.³ Indeed, Logan's

¹ Part of the opening address given by Werner Eiselen at the 1951 Conference of the National Council of African Women. Cape Town Archives Repository (KAB), 1/ MFK 49 File N 1/14/3 (9) Native Organisations: National Council of African Women. Ironically, Eiselen, as the Secretary of Native Affairs under Minister Hendrick Verwoerd, was the same man responsible for researching and encouraging the introduction of the 1953 Bantu Education Act which would hamper the welfare of blacks in South Africa. See Chapter Four of this thesis and S. Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid*, (Oxford, MacMillan, 1989), 11.

² Susan Klausen argues that the early 1900s were characterised by growth in women's rights movements which sought to dispel the image that women were mere “child bearing machines”, but rather active citizens in their country. See S. Klausen, *Race, Maternity and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa, 1910-1939*, (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 69-70.

³ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/3/107 E 109/3 Third Annual Child Welfare conference September 8th to 13th, 1919, at Durban. Pamphlet titled “Child Welfare and the Community: A Plea for a Wider Outlook - The Provision of Municipal Social Welfare Departments” By Mr J.P. Logan, FSAA Town Clerk and Treasurer, Bloemfontein.

comment touched on many threads that defined the socio-political context in early twentieth century: gender, race and class.

Women were regarded as the social and biological reproducers of society, not only birthing the next generation of South Africans, but also responsible for shaping them into acceptable citizens of the state.⁴ Thus in 1912 the *Cape Times* reflected on a broader social attitude when it reported: “The work of rescuing these young children, maybe from death, or from a life of unhappiness and sin, was essentially the women’s work”.⁵ Furthermore, the task of protecting children was seen as “particularly suitable for women who have time to spare”, which in an era when white South African women were not yet granted full access to the work force (but still had the colonial luxury of servants) included the majority of the middle to upper class white female population.⁶

It was this same portion of middle class white women who made up the majority of the members of organisations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) formed in 1889, the National Council of Women (NCW) in 1909 and the Women’s Enfranchisement Association of the Union (WEAU) in 1911.⁷ More specifically, there was a strong overlap, in members and ideology, between the NCW and the National Council for Child Welfare formed in 1924, as this chapter explores. This chapter will argue that women’s rights and welfare were closely related. Furthermore, it will illustrate that children’s welfare, especially education and health, were used as a primary argument in the on-going petition of the early twentieth century to win white women the vote and representation in parliament.⁸

Whilst it would appear that white English speaking women were championing both the South African suffrage movement and the child welfare campaign, through their dominance of organisations such as the WCTU, NCW, WEAU and SANCCW, it is important to keep in

⁴ See C. Walker, ‘Women and Gender in southern Africa to 1945: An Overview’ in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, Walker, C. ed., (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 28 as well as Louise Vincent’s ‘Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 1 (2000) 61-78; Klausen, *Race Maternity and the Politics of Birth Control*, 25, 37-38; M. du Toit ‘The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1, (2003) 155-176 and E. Brink, ‘Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*.’ in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, C. Walker, ed., (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 273-292 for arguments about women as reproducers of society.

⁵ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 ZC/6/7 Child Welfare Society Conference, 1920- 1924.

⁶ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 Z6 6/7 Report of the Mayor as Council’s Delegate attending the Child Welfare Conference held in Johannesburg from 28th to 30th May 1918.

⁷ C. Walker, ‘The women’s suffrage movement: The politics of gender, race and class’, in C. Walker, ed., *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), 315.

⁸ Walker, ‘The women’s suffrage movement’, 333. In 1919 the issue women’s suffrage won a majority in the House of Assembly using the argument that women should influence government policies in relation to areas such as child welfare, education and health care.

mind that this status quo was influenced by the socio-political context existing in the early twentieth century. Afrikaans speaking and African women were not absent in this process; they were however, originally at least, less vociferous than their white English speaking compatriots partly due to their socially marginalised position, as explained in this chapter. Belinda Bozzoli shows that South Africa was characterised by a “‘Patch Work Quilt’ of Patriarchies”, in that female identities in South Africa were not influenced by a single patriarchal ideology, but by a variety of patriarchies each rooted in different social groups in the country.⁹

The Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging (ACVV) established in 1904 became one of the largest Afrikaner welfare champions of its time and was simultaneously used to voice the concerns of Afrikaner women. Yet, as Brink illustrates, the ideal Afrikaner woman was constructed as the *Volksmoeder*, or mother of the nation. Defined as loyal housewives, willing to sacrifice for their families, having a “purifying and ennobling influence on their menfolk”, remaining “earnest in prayer, sage in advice, with a great love for freedom and steadfastly anti-British”.¹⁰ Whilst welfare activities were seen as acceptable activities for Afrikaner women, the realm of politics remained the exclusive and largely unchallenged domain of men in the early part of the twentieth century.¹¹

Walker points out that African women had the triple constraints of gender, race and class being female, black and poor.¹² Arguably, poverty and subordination prevented African women from publicly voicing their concerns, with a few exceptions such as the organised protest by African women against the pass laws in the Orange Free State in 1913, and the formation of the Bantu Women’s League as an adjunct of the African National Congress

⁹ B. Bozzoli, ‘Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 9, 2, (1983), 149.

¹⁰ E. Brink, ‘Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*.’ in *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, C. Walker, ed., (Cape Town, David Philip, 1990) 281. The argument that men were responsible for constructing the Afrikaner female identity as *Volksmoeders* is challenged by Louise Vincent in her article “Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 1 (2000), 61-78. Vincent argues that working class Afrikaner women challenged the perception that female duties were restricted to the familial realm, rather fashioning a position for Afrikaner women in the South African economy.

¹¹ Brink, ‘Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*’, 285.

¹² Walker, ‘Women and Gender in southern Africa to 1945: An Overview’, 2.

(ANC) in 1918.¹³ It was only many years later, in 1937 that the National Council for African women, based on the NCW, was formed.¹⁴

This chapter seeks to explore different ways in which women from different race, class and social groups used child welfare as a platform to voice broader political concerns in early twentieth century South Africa. To best achieve this, individual case studies have been adopted to offer a lens into the development of heterogeneous female political consciousness in relation to child welfare across different social groups. For the purposes of this chapter five women have been identified: Emily Hobhouse, Mabel. C. Elliott, Lady Buxton, M.E. Rothmann and F.S. Thaele. Their individual case studies serve as a lens into the varying social conditions existing in the broader context of early twentieth century South Africa. Whilst Hobhouse, Buxton and Rothmann have received attention in South African histories, the account of FS Thaele, an African woman, is previously undocumented. For this reason, more space has been dedicated to her than any of the other women in this chapter.

Although by no means a reversion to the “Great Man (or Woman) School of History”, which privileges the powerful over the ordinary, the individual roles of these women are explored in order to provide insights into the conditions prevailing at the time and context in which child welfare was evolving. Emily Hobhouse embodied many of the ideals of the British philanthropy movement as it related to South Africa in the early 1900s, whilst Mabel C Elliott provides a window into the growth of a nation-wide child welfare movement driven primarily by white South African English liberals in the 1910s and 1920s. Lady Buxton represents the importation of international creeds and policies relating to child welfare to South Africa, whilst M.E Rothmann brings to the mix insights into the increased involvement of Afrikaans women in national affairs and issues relating to children by the late 1920s. FS Thaele characterises the difficulties facing the development of African child welfare in a racially hegemonic state and illustrates the tensions and dangers inherent in the relationship between racialised state politics and child welfare.

¹³ C. Murray and C. O’Regan: ‘Putting Women into the Constitution’ in *Putting Women on the Agenda*, S. Bazelli ed., (Johannesburg, Raven Press, 1991), 38. See also C. Walker, “The women’s suffrage movement: The politics of gender, race and class.” *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, Walker, C. (ed.), p. 329

¹⁴ KAB, File 1/MFK 49 N 1/14/3 (9) Native Organisations: National Council of African Women.

The development of women's groups in early twentieth century South Africa.

This section contextualises the role of individuals by providing a brief description of the women-centred organisations that were developing in early twentieth century South Africa, and discusses their impact and involvement with child welfare. The early 1900s marked a period which witnessed an increasingly active role of women in the socio-economic and political spheres, both internationally and nationally. Cherryl Walker has written on the women's suffrage movement in South Africa, which began with the formation of the Women's Temperance Union in 1889, and escalated after the formation of the Women's Enfranchisement Association of the Union in 1911.¹⁵

The question of women in politics was intersected by the continuous issue of race and class in South Africa. The WEAU consisted entirely of middle class white, predominantly English speaking women living in urban areas of South Africa. Whilst the movement in South Africa echoed international developments in Britain and America, with the awakening of women's rights in the late 1800s, the racial tensions and the extreme heterogeneity of the population made the South African context unique. Elevated by state-structured inequalities above the social level of blacks, white South African women were by and large a social construct of their time – enjoying the privileges of their position. White female vote-seekers should not be romanticised as egalitarian reformists; in reality most white South African suffragettes identified themselves with the segregation policies of the government; a factor which was well illustrated when in 1930 white women over the age of eighteen were given the vote. “It was a victory predicated on racial domination” as the vote was not extended to coloured and black women; the WEAU offered little resistance to the lack of franchise of another, increasingly marginalised group of South Africans.¹⁶

Whilst the WEAU was campaigning for the white women's vote, the National Council of Women was also furthering the interests of white South African women. The NCW consisted of a similar societal stratum of middle-class English-speaking, urban white women – also championing the cause of female enfranchisement. However, the concerns of the NCW were broader than that of the WEAU, encompassing a range of other social questions, including questions surrounding birth control and child welfare.

¹⁵ Walker, 'The women's suffrage movement', 324.

¹⁶ See Walker, 'The women's suffrage movement', 327, 313-314.

It is important that there were significant overlaps between the National Council of Women and the National Council of Child Welfare. The first secretary of the Society for the Protection of Child Life (the pioneering child welfare organisation in South Africa) in 1908 was a Mrs Beaumont Rawbone, who also acted as Convener at the foundation meeting of the National Council of Women in 1909.¹⁷ Miriam Walsh, an active member of the National Council of Women, was offered the position of executive of the South Africa National Council of Child Welfare when it was formed in 1924. She declined due to other commitments but continued to work as the city council's representative to the National Council of Child Welfare.¹⁸ Similarly, Princess Alice (the wife of a governor general and part of the Royal Family) simultaneously occupied the position of Honorary President of both National Councils in the 1920s.¹⁹ Edith Rheinalt Jones, a British philanthropist and teacher in South Africa, was a respected member of the South African National Council of Child Welfare, representing the organisation at international conferences. She played a crucial role in establishing the National Council of African Women, aimed at promoting African women's political, social and economic rights.²⁰ That politically minded women were actively concerned with child welfare challenges the potential perception that a binary existed between women as carers for children, and women as political agents. Rather than rejecting the role of women as carers for children, child welfare became a tool through which women could express political concerns.

Thus, many of the same women who were furthering the cause of children were simultaneously attempting to further their own cause. The NCW was by no means a docile group of women: they were actively trying to gain an equitable position for white women in South Africa. In 1920, the secretary of the National Council of Women wrote to the town clerk of Cape Town requesting information on the exact qualifications necessary to become a

¹⁷ See UCT Archives and Manuscripts, BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive, A1: History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports and J. Laubscher, *Interfering Women*, (Parkview, Masterprint, 1999), 1.

¹⁸ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/5/502 E973/5 SA National Council for Child Welfare Congressed, 1926-1929. Mrs Walsh became a member of the Cape Town City Council and worked as their representative to the National Council of Child Welfare. Incidentally, she was also the woman who led the debate on removing the sex bar from all spheres of life at the 1929 Women's Civic Conference.

¹⁹ See KAB File 3/CT 4/4/1/22 HM 138/4 Reception Conference National Council of Women of South Africa, Friday 30 April 1926 and File 3/CT 4/1/5/502 E973/5 SA National Council for Child Welfare Congresses 1926-1929. Princess Alice would remain an active participant in South African child welfare, founding "Our Children's Day" which would become an important part of fundraising for the National Council of Child Welfare. As with Lady Buxton, Princess Alice was the wife of a governor general who would become immortalised in South African history through the establishment of the Princess Alice Adoption Home in Johannesburg. See <http://www.princessaliceadoptionhome.org/> (accessed 4 April 2011).

²⁰ KAB, File 1/ MFK 49 N 1/14/3 (9) Native Organisations: National Council of African Women. Brochure: National Council of African Women: Coming of Age Conference, 1937-1958.

member of the city council. The reply was vague, stating that the process was very technical and complicated, but not discriminatory along the lines of gender.²¹ Despite this evasive response from government, by 1929 women were not only on the city council, but were advocating the “Value of Women Town Councillors to the Community”.²² In the same year, the NCW held a debate entitled “the time has arrived in South Africa when the sex bar should not operate in any sphere of life”, thereby illustrating the scale of reform which the NCW hoped to bring about.²³

It was not, however, these radical (for their time) arguments of gender equality that helped white women succeed at gaining representation in government. Rather, a primary motive for allowing women into the town councils was the principle that in issues relating to women, children and care-giving, women simply knew best. As the realm of state involvement in child and social welfare increased in the early twentieth century, the argument for allowing women into politics and policy-making gained more ground.²⁴ Thus, many of the issues raised by the NCW had domestic overtones, such as an address given at the 1929 Women’s Civic Conference entitled “Co-operation between Municipality and the House Wife”.²⁵

The platform given to woman in politics because of their gender, allowed them to voice concerns relating to other marginalised groups in South Africa. In its 1926 General Resolutions the NCW stated: “the National Council of Women of South Africa voice to the Government the opposition of South African women to any proposed legislation affecting Natives and Indians which is not based on honour and justice”.²⁶ Although the membership of the NCW remained white, a statement of this kind made in the period of increasing segregation brought by the Hertzog government, illustrates that the Council did have concerns relating to other population groups in South Africa.²⁷

²¹ See KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/3/137 I72/3 National Council for Women 1920.

²² Title of paper delivered at Congress. KAB File 3/CT 4/1/5/553, E 1443/5: (First) Women’s Civic Congress held in Cape Town January 8th to January 11th 1929.

²³ KAB, 3/CT 4/1/5/553, E 1443/5: Women’s Civic Conference held in Cape Town January 8th to January 11th 1929.

²⁴ Walker, ‘The women’s suffrage movement’, 333

²⁵ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/5/553 E 1443/5: (First) Women’s Civic Congress held in Johannesburg, January 8th to January 11th 1929.

²⁶ KAB, File 3/CT 4/4/1/22 HM 138/4 Reception Conference National Council of Women of South Africa, Friday 30 April 1926.

²⁷ See Dubow, *Segregation and Apartheid in South Africa*, 14. Concern over the position of other racial groups continued even during the apartheid period. In 1958, Dr Thelma Gutsche, president of the National Council of Women of South Africa stated, “There can only be one National Council [of Women] in any single country”, one which by implication, would be multi-racial. KAB, 1/ MFK 49 File N 1/14/3 (9) Native Organisations:

The NCW promoted a policy of inclusion, perhaps due to its early affiliation with the International Council of Women (ICW), whose motto declared:

“We, women of all nations, sincerely believing that the good of humanity will best be advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, and that an organised movement will serve to promote the highest good of the family and the State, do hereby band ourselves in a federation of women of all races, nations, creeds and classes to further the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law: DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD THAT THEY SHOULD DO UNTO YOU”.²⁸

Yet, promoting such a policy and actually implementing it are two different things. The NCW remained a whites’ only organisation in the early years of the twentieth century. However, it was concerned with another urgent division, that which existed between the two so-called “white races” in South Africa: English-speakers and Afrikaners.

The close link which existed between the NCW and the South African National Council of Child Welfare (SANCCW) meant that concerns of division within the white South African population impacted on the child welfare movement. For years, the English-language dominated National Council of Child Welfare had been trying to recruit the support of Dutch speakers. Even before the Council was formed in 1924, a resolution was passed at the 1919 Annual Child Welfare Conference “That with a view to interesting the Dutch-speaking people to a greater extent in the child welfare movement all notices and papers, as far as possible, in future shall be published in Dutch as well as English”.²⁹

In 1929 the National Council of Child Welfare issued special invitations to the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal branches of the ACVV to attend an annual meeting of the Council.³⁰ The attendance and participation of Dutch-speaking citizens was regarded as a huge success. Simultaneously there was also increased interaction between the National Council of Women and the ACVV with three members of the ACVV attending the 1929 Women’s Civic Conference hosted by the National Council of Women.³¹

National Council of African Women. Brochure: National Council of African Women: Coming of Age Conference, 1937-1958.

²⁸ Laubscher, *Interfering Women*, iii.

²⁹ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/3/107 E 109/3 Third Annual Child Welfare Conference September 8th to 13th, 1919 at Durban.

³⁰ KAB, File 3/CT 4/1/5/502 E973/5 SA National Council for Child Welfare Congresses 1926-1929

³¹ KAB, File E 1443/5: (First) Women’s Civic Congress held in Cape Town January 8th to January 11th 1929.

Afrikaanse Volkswerk, die werk van die vrou³²

Although the ACVV only began to associate with the NCW and SANCCW towards the late 1920s, it had by no means been absent from the child welfare movement. Established in 1904, it predated both other organisations. However, the ideological differences between the ACVV and the NCW (and by association the SANCCW) prevented it from making the same radical arguments, particularly those around women's suffrage, gender equality and the protection of "non-white" races.

The ACVV was closely linked to the ideology of the *Volksmoeder*, whose duty was first and foremost to her own *volk*, the emerging class of Afrikaners.³³ In the wake of the South African War of 1889 to 1902, along with the process of increased industrialisation, there was a massive growth in the poor white population of South Africa, primarily amongst the Boer (later Afrikaner) population.³⁴ Sandra Swart argues that there had been "rhetoric of equality" between white males, but this dissipated by the end of the nineteenth century with poverty leading to aggressive class differentiation within white South Africa.³⁵ As such, not only was white South Africa divided between male and female, English and Afrikaner, but it was increasingly divided along the lines of rich and poor. A single homogenous *volk* would serve the purpose of paving over the cracks in the class differentiation between Afrikaans-speakers.³⁶ It was in reaction to this situation that the ACVV was formed; to help alleviate the suffering of the *volk* in the wake of the war.

Actively involved in the field of welfare, the ACVV made little secret of its ambition to promote the racial exclusivity of Afrikaners. It felt that Africans "had no claim to urgent help" and were indeed considered as one of the threats from which poor white Afrikaner children and adults needed to be rescued.³⁷ The exclusive nature of the ACVV, and perhaps

³² This phrase, written by M.E Rothmann in her autobiography, M.E.R *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling*, can be translated as "The building of an Afrikaner nation, the work of women". M.E. Rothmann, *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling*, (Cape Town, Tafelberg Uitgewers, 1972), 232.

³³ Klausen, *Race, Class and the Politics of Birth Control*, 25.

³⁴ See R. Morrell, 'The poor whites of Middelburg, Transvaal, 1900-1939: resistance, accommodation and class struggle', and A. Grundlingh "'God het ons arm mense die houtjies gegee": poor white woodcutters in the southern Cape forest area, c. 1900-1939', in *White but Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa 1880-1940*, (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 1992), and E.G. Malherbe, *Education and the Poor White*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia Drukkery, 1932), 43 as well as S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), 175.

³⁵ S. Swart, "Republican Masculinity and the 1914 Rebellion", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4, (1998), 741.

³⁶ By 1932 it was estimated that they represented almost eighteen percent of the white South African population Carnegie Report, *Joint Findings and Recommendations*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia Drukkery, 1932), par. 9.

³⁷ Du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volkmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929', 161.

the lingering “anti-British” attitude in the post War period, arguably prevented the ACVV from collaborating with the NCW and SANCCW in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The idea that the ACVV was a product and producer of the *Volksmoeder* ideology made it an exclusive organisation for Afrikaner women, embracing ideals of women as operating purely in a supportive capacity to men.³⁸ However, by the 1920s and 1930s, there was a shift in the discourse of the ACVV. Marijke du Toit argues that the arrival of M.E. Rothmann, saw a modification in the organisation’s stance. MER, as she was publicly known, went against the constructed ideals of the *Volksmoeder* as supportive housewives, herself being outspoken, divorced and politically minded.³⁹

Welfare – including child welfare – was seen as a platform through which women could voice broader political concerns. MER asserted that Afrikaner ‘feminism’ expressed itself through involvement in various welfare organisations; an educational experience through which women could learn what was in the best interests of their *volk*.⁴⁰

African Women’s Groups

However, what was in the best interests of the *volk*, was not necessarily in the best interests of the rest of the South African population. African women had gained little representation in either the English dominated nor in the Afrikaner women’s lobby and welfare groups. The only recorded time that an African woman was given representation in the WEAU was in a 1921 address given by Charlotte Maxeke (1874 to 1939); a black social worker and founder of the Bantu Women’s League in 1918.⁴¹ Maxeke was the first African woman university graduate. Whilst travelling in America with her church choir, she received a scholarship to the University of Wilberforce. Graduating with a bachelor’s degree in science, she returned to South Africa in 1902. Many years later, in 1937, she became the first president of the National Council of African Women.⁴² It is important to note that again, a representative from a marginalised group was given representation because of her involvement in welfare. Indeed, as the issue of poor whiteism had illustrated, poverty went beyond barriers of race

³⁸ Du Toit, ‘The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV, 1904-1929’, 166.

³⁹ Du Toit, ‘The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV, 1904-1929’, 170 and Klausen, *Race, Maternity and the Politics of Birth Control*, 136.

⁴⁰ Brink, ‘Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*’, 285.

⁴¹ Walker, ‘The women’s suffrage movement’, 329. The League protested against the introduction of pass laws relating to women and in 1919 it became affiliated with the ANC.

⁴² KAB, File 1/ MFK 49 N 1/14/3 (9) Native Organisations: National Council of African Women. Brochure: National Council of African Women: Coming of Age Conference, 1937-1958.

and gender.⁴³ Welfare provided a platform which transcended race and class, however narrowly and however obliquely, through which political aspirations could be voiced. In this case Maxeke, herself politically active, was given an audience with a group of white female liberals to voice concerns over the welfare of Africans: a question which, in the period of increased African urbanisation, was simultaneously receiving great attention in government.⁴⁴

To provide an adequate overview of the role of African women in promoting child welfare as a means of furthering broader political concerns is a difficult task. As mentioned earlier the marginalised position of African women has left little archival data. However individual cases do shed more light on the question. Maxeke, mentioned above, used her authoritative position as a welfare worker to establish the Bantu Women's League, whilst FS Thaele, discussed in detail later in the paper, founded the African Child Welfare and Benevolent Society. Thaele hoped that this organisation could help educate Africans in the broader context on their rights to welfare, which given her connection to the ANC had significant political undertones.⁴⁵

Whilst individual women may indeed have used welfare as a stepping stone from which they could express broader political concerns it is important to keep in mind that none of the women discussed below operated alone. They formed part of a broader discourse relating to the position of women in child welfare. They do, however, represent lenses through which one can gain understanding of the different perspectives, from different social groups, about the development of child welfare in South Africa.

The role of individual women in promoting South African Child Welfare

Emily Hobhouse

Quoting George Eliot in her memoirs, the British philanthropist Emily Hobhouse argued that "It is the individual with whom we sympathise, and the general of which we recognise the

⁴³ As Posel has shown, the 1930s was characterised by reformist lobbies seeking to introduce a "racialised welfare state" that would be "fully compatible with the maintenance of a system of white supremacy" whilst uplifting the living standards of black and white. The end result of this would be to secure a stable and reliable African work force. See D. Posel, 'The Case for a Welfare State: Poverty and the Politics of the Urban African Family in the 1930s and 1940s', in S. Dubow and A. Jeeves, *South Africa's 1940s: Worlds of Possibilities*, (Cape Town, Double Storey Books, 2005), 66.

⁴⁴ Dubow, *Segregation and Apartheid South Africa*, 10.

⁴⁵ The connection between welfare and politics amongst African women stretches even further into the future with the case of Winnie Mandela, former wife of Nelson Mandela and infamous political activist. In 1965, she lost her job as a social worker due to a banning order by the apartheid state. C. Merrett, *A Culture of Censorship: Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa*, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1994), 52.

irresistible power”.⁴⁶ Emily Hobhouse, the British philanthropist, represents the first key female whose actions in welfare, including child welfare, directly challenged state politics. Coming to South Africa in 1901, Hobhouse was the secretary of the women’s Branch of the South African Conciliation Committee, an organisation set up to protest against the British occupation of South Africa in the South African War of 1899 to 1902.⁴⁷

Upon discovering the extent of the desolation of the Boer people, particularly the women and children in concentration camps, Hobhouse began a campaign to raise awareness and support to alleviate these conditions. Such an act was inherently political: Hobhouse, through promoting awareness of the suffering of the Boers at the hands of the British, was tacitly critiquing British policy in South Africa.

Brink raises the somewhat ironic point that it was Hobhouse, a Briton, who through her interaction with the women and children in the camps, played an active role in constructing the *Volksmoeder* ideology; an ideology predicated on sentiments of being anti-British. Hobhouse asserted that the suffering of women in the camps contributed to their “heroism, patriotism and defiance of the British enemy” which became bywords of the *Volksmoeder* identity.⁴⁸ She was struck by what she perceived as the quiet resolve of the Boer women, who despite their trying conditions, were not willing to forsake the cause of the war.⁴⁹ This was an image, through her writing, that she portrayed to the British and South African public. In her 1902 book, *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell*, Hobhouse makes a dedication to the women of South Africa “whose endurance of hardship, resignation in loss, independence under coercion, dignity in humiliation, patience through pain and tranquillity amidst death kindled the reverent appreciation of the writer and has excited the sympathy of the world”.⁵⁰

The quiet resolve of the Boer women, as portrayed by Hobhouse in her quest to gain sympathy for their cause, was projected in conjunction with harsh imagery, visual and textual, of the camps illustrating the extent of the suffering of women and children. Hobhouse wrote, “I can’t describe what it is to see these children lying about in a state of collapse – it’s

⁴⁶ R. Van Reenen, ed., *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters*, (Cape Town, Human and Rousseau, 1984), 112.

⁴⁷ J.V. Crangle and J.O’ Baylen: ‘Emily Hobhouse’s Peace Mission, 1916’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 14, 4, (1979), 732.

⁴⁸ Brink, ‘Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volksmoeder*’, 277.

⁴⁹ Van Reenen, *E. Hobhouse: Boer War Letters*, 81.

⁵⁰ E. Hobhouse, *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell*, (London, Methuen and Co, 1902), vii.

just exactly like faded flowers thrown away”.⁵¹ The image of young Lizzie van Zyl, lying on her deathbed became a visual manifestation of Hobhouse’s cause:



Fig. 3 Picture taken from *Suffering of War: a photographic portrayal of the suffering in the Anglo Boer War*. The caption reads “Bloemfontein Concentration Camp: Lizzie van Zyl holding the porcelain doll given to her by Emily Hobhouse, English Humanitarian”.⁵²

The idealised image of Boer women and the terrible suffering of the children would serve the purpose of creating an even greater political critique of the consequences of the British conquest in South Africa, for on the women “fell the brunt of the war. More adult Boers perished in the camps than fell in the field of battle, and over four times as many children”.⁵³

Although Hobhouse’s actions were not favourably received in her homeland, where she was in her own words “branded as a rebel, a liar, and an enemy of my own people” in many quarters, she was part of a fundamental shift in the nature of child welfare in South Africa.⁵⁴ Emily Hobhouse was at the beginning of what would become a protracted battle between politics and the protection of children; one that would span the coming century. Although the South African War ended in 1902 its aftermath extended far into the future with a new

⁵¹ Van Reenen, *E. Hobhouse: Boer War Letters*, 54-55.

⁵² I.W. Direko, and L. Changuion, and F. Jacobs, *Suffering of War: a photographic portrayal of the suffering in the Anglo-Boer War*, (Bloemfontein, Kraal Publishers, 2003), 31. The epilogue of the collection is the memorial speech given by Hobhouse in commemoration of the unveiling of the National Women’s Monument on 16 December 1913. See 269 to 270.

⁵³ Hobhouse, *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell*, 1.

⁵⁴ J. Fisher, *That Miss Hobhouse*, (London, Secker and Warburg, 1971), 160

generation of Boers (or later, Afrikaners) who would fill the burgeoning class of poor whites.⁵⁵ The class of poor whites would form part of the motivating force for the development of an institutionalised child welfare movement in South Africa, beginning early in the 1900s, shifting and changing shape as it grew amidst a turbulent social climate.

Whilst Hobhouse set about bringing public awareness to the plight of Boer children during the South African War, a new generation of philanthropists appeared to clear up the consequences in the post war period. As MER simply stated “we women are newly aware that the State, like the home, could become very disorderly. And we suffer because of this...And we very much want to tidy it up”.⁵⁶ The symbolic “mess” of the state in early 1900s was the plague of poor whites, the vast majority descendants of the Boer population. It was this portion of the South African population which took up most of the resources and attention of state policy makers and welfare workers alike in the early 1900s.⁵⁷

The morality of condensed milk: the roles of Elliott and Buxton

Although women in South Africa have become associated as the main drivers behind the child welfare movement in South Africa, it should be noted that the founder of the first child welfare organisation, the Society for the Protection of Child Life (SPCL), was a man: Dr Jasper Anderson.⁵⁸ Whilst Anderson played a pivotal role in the establishment and initial running of the Society, he surrounded himself with capable, efficient women.

One of the earliest secretaries of the SPCL was a Miss Mabel Charlotte Elliott. Becoming the honorary secretary of the Society in 1913, it was a position she held until 1926. From 1924 to 1926 she served as Chairman of the South African National Council for Child Welfare (established in 1924), occupying the position of honorary vice president from 1926 to 1931. In these years her name became synonymous with the child welfare movement. In a tribute to

⁵⁵ Malherbe, *Education and the Poor White*, 43

⁵⁶ M. du Toit, “The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1, (2003), 175.

⁵⁷ By 1932 it was estimated that poor whites made up nearly eighteen percent of the white South African population, the vast majority of whom were Afrikaners. See Carnegie Report, *Joint Findings and Recommendations*, par. 9. S. Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, 175.

⁵⁸ See Chapter One. Anderson was the first Medical Officer of Health in the Cape. In 1906 he published his findings on the high infant mortality rates amongst the white and coloured population. Although his findings resulted in the 1907 Infant Life Preservation Act passed in the Cape (and in the Transvaal in 1908), Anderson saw it as necessary to establish an independent, philanthropic body charged with ensuring that the state laws were being implemented. KAB, File 3/SMT 4/1/82 P16/2/1 Child Welfare 1937-1944. “Our Children’s Day Pamphlet 1936”.

her upon her death in 1931, the then president of the SANCCW wrote, “To her more than anyone else was due the initiation of the child welfare movement in the Union”.⁵⁹

Elliott was responsible for recruiting the skills and reputation of the British philanthropist Lady Buxton to the South African child welfare movement.⁶⁰ Buxton, the wife of a governor general, Charles Rhoden Buxton, was the sister of Eglantyne Jebb, founder of the Save the Child Foundation in Britain and one of the key players in the drafting of the 1924 *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*.⁶¹ Elliott managed to convince Buxton to lend her name to the Lady Buxton Home in 1917.⁶² It remains one of the most prominent children’s homes in South Africa. Elliott and Buxton, with the support of Anderson, were responsible for the development of the Mothercraft Training Centre as part of the Lady Buxton Home, where they hoped prevention would be better than cure in a bid to protect the children of South Africa by educating mothers on the proper care of their infants.⁶³

Indeed, the focus of both Elliott and Buxton was on practical reform. As major role players in the early establishment of the South African child welfare movement, they would shape the guiding ideology for the coming decades. Buxton was no stranger to the welfare movement. In May, 1919, she stood up at a meeting held at Albert Hall in London, holding a tin of condensed milk in her hand, and proclaimed “There is more morality in this tin than in all the creeds”. Her challenge was met with massive applause.⁶⁴ Buxton’s message translated into the argument that the laws and philosophies of welfare meant little unless they could bring actual relief to suffering.

The next step in bringing about practical reform came with the expansion of child welfare from a localised endeavour, to a national movement. Lady Buxton was president of both Cape Town’s Society for the Protection of Child Life and Johannesburg’s Children’s Aid Society. It was in response to her suggestion and under her supervision that the First National

⁵⁹ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive, A1: History of the Centre, various accounts, reports.

⁶⁰ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports. Speech made in 1967 on the development of the Lady Buxton Home over the past forty years.

⁶¹ E. Fuller, *The Rights of the Child: a Chapter in Social History*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1951), 23-27.

⁶² UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports. The SA Mother Craft Training Centre History.

⁶³ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports.

⁶⁴ E. Fuller, *The Rights of the Child: a Chapter in Social History*, 27.

Conference on Child Welfare was held in 1917.⁶⁵ The National Conferences, in turn, gave birth to the South African National Council of Child Welfare (SANCCW) in 1924: a standing committee created to act as a channel of communication between the various child welfare actors and the state.⁶⁶ It is somewhat fitting that Elliott was the first chairperson of the National Council.⁶⁷ Again, it was under the urgings of Elliott that another prominent matron was added to the child welfare movement: Princess Alice, who occupied the position of president of the SANCCW in 1924.⁶⁸ The Princess became the founder of “Our Children’s Day” in 1926, a fundraising endeavour held on the first Saturday of every November.⁶⁹

The likes of Buxton and Princess Alice were recruited to the child welfare movement for the credibility and prestige they would bring – thereby attracting wealthy patronage and press attention. However, Buxton’s principle of practical morality was a good guiding principle to be adopted by the SANCCW. Whilst the *de jure* declarations of helping children in need was reaching the ears of the public, and would no doubt be supported, there remained the question of translating intention into action. One of the greatest challenges facing the child welfare movement at this stage was arguably the rift between the givers and the receivers of welfare.⁷⁰

As mentioned earlier, one of the greatest concerns of welfare workers in the early twentieth century was the issue of poor whites, the vast majority of whom were of Boer or Afrikaner origin. The above mentioned women, Hobhouse, Elliott, Buxton and Princess Alice were all English speaking women, with Elliott being the only one native to South Africa. This division would arguably create a barrier in co-operation between givers (English-speakers) and receivers (Afrikaners) of welfare.

M. E. Rothmann

The largest and most influential welfare group organised by women in the Afrikaner group was the ACVV. Unlike the SANCCW it did not only focus its attention on the well - being of

⁶⁵ KAB, File 3/KWT 4/1/234 , ZC/6/7 Child Welfare Society Conference 1920-1924.

⁶⁶ KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare 1937 to 1941.

⁶⁷ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive, A6: Invitations, Programmes, Tributes.

⁶⁸ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports. The South African Mothercraft Training Centre History.

⁶⁹ UCT Archives and Manuscripts, File BC 1149: Lady Buxton Centre Archive Lady Buxton Centre Archive. A1 History of the Centre, Various Accounts, Reports. The South African Mothercraft Training Centre History.

⁷⁰ See Chapter Two, “‘Cries of the Children’: The Politics of Child Welfare in Early Twentieth Century South Africa (1907 to 1924), 32-33.

children, but on the *volk* as a whole. As mentioned earlier, the ACVV was characterised by exclusivity, limiting its membership to Afrikaner women, seeing its duty as being exclusively to the Afrikaner people. However, by the 1930s, there was a greater collaboration between the ACVV and other women's groups working on welfare.

Marijke du Toit argues that this transition in the 1920s and 1930s came partly with the arrival of a new group of "dynamic women less closely tied to the church – some with careers of their own".⁷¹ M.E. Rothmann was a prominent role player in bringing political overtones to the ACVV. She was a university-educated woman whose political outlook had been shaped by the events of the South African War of 1899 to 1902.⁷² MER was particularly concerned with the consequent plethora of poor white Afrikaners in the war's aftermath: she was the only woman involved in the Carnegie Commission's investigation in the poor white problem from 1929 to 1932, focussing her attention on the plight of mothers and daughters.⁷³ Indeed, having not come from a wealthy family herself, she commented that she was unwilling to accept class differentiation in South Africa and asserted that change was needed.⁷⁴

M.E. Rothmann argued that welfare and charity work were an expression of feminism amongst Afrikaner women, allowing them to contribute to the political make-up of society whilst upholding an acceptable ideological base of women as carers.⁷⁵ Rothmann, known for her philanthropic work, used her position as a journalist of *Vrouwsake*, a column in the Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, along with her position on the ACVV executive, to comment on the entry of Afrikaans women into the political field.⁷⁶ Rothmann's actions in politics were well illustrated through the role she played in founding the Nasionale Vroue Party (NVP) in 1922. Although Rothmann and her associates in the ACVV still emphasised the centrality of motherhood, they also encouraged Afrikaner women to take an active interest in formulating and executing social policies that would influence mothers, children and the broader Afrikaner *volk*, seen for example in MER's advocacy of birth control.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV', 168.

⁷² Du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV', 168.

⁷³ Rothmann's contribution to the five reports of the Carnegie Commission was titled *The Mother and Daughter of the Poor White Family* and was published in conjunction with J.R. Albertyn's sociological report on *The Poor White and Society*, (Stellenbosch, Pro-Ecclesia Drukkery, 1932).

⁷⁴ Rothmann, *My Beskeie Deel: 'n Outobiografiese Vertelling*, 236.

⁷⁵ E. Brink, "Man-made women: Gender, class and the ideology of the *volkmoeder*." *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, Walker, C. (ed.), 285.

⁷⁶ Du Toit, 'The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: *Volksmoeders* and the ACVV', 169-170.

⁷⁷ Klausen, *Race, Morality and the Politics of Birth Control*, 136.

The actions of Rothmann helped to bring to ACVV more in line with the ideological stance of their English compatriots in terms of an increased advocacy of the role of women in politics. Whilst this may have lessened the divide between English and Afrikaner to some extent, a broad rift continued to exist between white women and black women.

Francis Sarah Mary Thaele

The movement of African women into politics was also launched from the platform of welfare. As mentioned earlier, Charlotte Maxeke, a prominent social worker, founded the Bantu Women's League in 1918, an organisation that would work in adjacency to the ANC, and later became president of the National Council of African Women in 1937.⁷⁸ Two decades after the Bantu Women's League was formed, another African woman would follow in similar footsteps.

Mrs F.S. Thaele formed the *African Child Welfare and Benevolent Society* in Port Elizabeth on 31 October 1939. The main task of the Society was to set up crèches for black infants. Although the crèches were the most visible manifestation of the Society, it also had goals aimed at the broader African community, including the education of black South Africans on issues of social welfare with the goal of uplifting the black community.⁷⁹ Thaele was largely able to establish the Society with the aid of local businessmen, such as Neil Boss, the proprietor of a successful shoe company in Port Elizabeth.⁸⁰

Thaele and her Society were almost immediately faced with difficulties mainly due to a chronic lack of resources. Virtually from the outset, the Society and Thaele were met with grave suspicion and hostility from the state, and to a lesser degree, from the South African National Council of Child Welfare. Shortly after the Society's establishment she became the victim of what she considered to be a slander campaign, stating that "there are a number of rumours spread amongst the European community that is detrimental to the welfare of the society" and, more personally, that there was "a case of defamation against me [Thaele] in

⁷⁸ Walker, 'The women's suffrage movement', 329.

⁷⁹ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/106 Child Welfare 18937-1941. "First Annual Report, 13 November 1940".

⁸⁰ Cape Town National Archives (KAB), File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/106 Child Welfare 18937-1941. "First Annual Report, 13 November 1940". Boss had previously made his voice heard on the issue of non-white welfare at the 1934 National Conference on Poor Whites in Kimberly. Invited by HF Verwoerd to discuss the feasibility of separate development, Boss unreservedly condemned the proposal, adapting a well-known George Orwell quote to state, "there can be no lasting peace and prosperity in South Africa now, unless all participate". See J.N. Boss, "Measures for the Provision of a more rational placement in employment" in *The 1934 Conference on the Poor White Problem*, (Cape Town, Nasionale Pers, 1934), 114.

the embryo”.⁸¹ Whilst such claims may have seemed somewhat overstated, research has revealed that Thaele had reason for concern. Numerous documents, stamped “confidential”, called for the assessment of Thaele’s character by the local Port Elizabeth government.⁸²

The initial accusations made against Thaele were in relation to perceived financial irregularities. These were mainly due to the unsuccessful attempts of the government to get Thaele to submit her financial records for inspection. Whilst the state argued that this inaction was a sign that Thaele was hiding some illegalities, she maintained that it was precisely the lack of resources and the lack of an office that prevented the society from being in a position to keep detailed records.⁸³

The state then went further in its endeavours to label Thaele a criminal by delving into her past. Although many seemed unwilling to acknowledge that they knew her well enough to pass judgement, one report did cast a questionable shadow on the morals of Thaele. In a letter from the Mayor of Jansenville to the town clerk of Port Elizabeth in November 1940, the mayor reported that Thaele had begun a movement among the children in the location aimed at encouraging thrift. The name of the organisation was the *Busy Brown Bees* and membership fees included an entrance fee of 6d and a weekly subscription of 1d. Mrs Thaele was accused of disappearing with the funds, never to be seen again in Jansenville.⁸⁴ This hearsay evidence is not supported by any action on the part of the mayor as one would expect in a straightforward case of fraud. Although unproven, it did however cast a shadow on the character and integrity of Thaele.

Despite the fact that all the communication surrounding the assessment of Thaele’s character was marked ‘confidential’, she was aware of the claims being lodged against her. She was particularly upset by a critical report written by Mrs Mackenzie, secretary of the South African National Council of Child Welfare, to the Department of Native Affairs which cast a bad light on the charity and negatively affected its funding drives. In response to the “rumours spread amongst the European community”. Thaele called upon the Council to

⁸¹ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/106 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Letter from Mrs FS Thaele to the town clerk of Port Elizabeth dated 10 July 1940.

⁸² KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/106 Child Welfare 1937-1941. For example, Undated document titled “Interview with Mr GC Bain [probation officer] re Mrs Thaele”.

⁸³ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/106 Child Welfare 18937-1941. “First Annual Report, 13 November 1940”.

⁸⁴ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Letter from the Mayor of Jansenville to the Town Clerk of Port Elizabeth, dated 23 November 1940.

initiate a Board of Enquiry to investigate the affairs of the Society with the goal of uncovering the true facts.⁸⁵ No such formal enquiry was initiated.

In an attempt to further defend why she had not submitted financial records, Thaele wrote to the town clerk of Port Elizabeth asserting that, in light of the war and the strain this placed on the funds of the Social Welfare Department, she had it in mind to establish the Society in a fashion that it would put minimal pressure on state resources. This is seen in her argument that “our own communities [African] are not over-taxed with war appeals like the European community; they should be encouraged to shoulder part of their responsibility which in the past was carried out by the European community”.⁸⁶

Seen particularly in light of the later introduction of separate development in the 1950s where government legislation necessitated that African welfare be an African responsibility, it is ironic that the Government did not support Thaele’s actions. One could, however, argue that on the eve of apartheid the South African government was not welcoming of having any organisation or institution that fell beyond the scope of its authority.

Thaele’s desire to bring the welfare of African children under the control of the African community was equally met with suspicion from the local Native Advisory Board (NAB), a body consisting of white and African representatives meant to act in the interests of Africans after the introduction of the 1923 Urban Areas Act.⁸⁷ She was invited to attend a special meeting on the 22 May 1940 where she was asked to discuss the development of the crèches. Their primary concern was whether or not the crèches could pay their own way, or as councillor AF Pendla put it, “whether it could stand on its legs or whether it had a leg at all”.⁸⁸ Again, Thaele was grilled on her lack of financial records, to which she struggled to find an answer. In the end, the Board sided with her, with Councillor G. Dubula stating

⁸⁵ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Letter from Mrs FS Thaele to the town clerk of Port Elizabeth, dated 10 July 1940.

⁸⁶ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/106 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Letter from Mrs FS Thaele to the town clerk of Port Elizabeth, dated 10 July 1940. Ironically, this argument for ‘separate development’ in the sphere of welfare would become government policy, but in 1940 (when this letter was written by Mrs Thaele) African control of African welfare was not seen as sufficient reason to drop the accusations against her.

⁸⁷ D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), 34. Posel argues that the African Advisory Boards had little real power and were mostly ineffectual.

⁸⁸ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. “Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Native Advisory Board held in the administration office, New Brighton Village, on Wednesday the 22nd May, 1940 at 8pm”.

“Tonight you stand like Apostle Paul before Agrippa [laughter and cheers] and I thank you for the satisfactory statement you have given to Board”.⁸⁹

Although she appeared to win the support of the NAB, the state continued to hound Thaele. Thaele represented a threat, perceived or real, to the South African government. She was the wife of Kenan Thaele and sister-in-law of James Thaele, the infamously politically active African brothers in the 1920s and 1930s.⁹⁰ Prof James Thaele became the president of the Cape Branch of the African National Council (ANC), whilst his brother Kennan was renowned for his radical rhetoric. For example, at a mass gathering at the Grand Parade in Cape Town on 28 June 1929, Kenan Thaele stated: “100 000 Italians were sent to Abyssinia to suppress the blacks. They were cut into pieces by the blacks with the result that today they have their independence. Therefore, gentlemen, you also have a way whereby you can gain your freedom”.⁹¹

The association with James and Kennan Thaele alone would have been enough to mobilise state watch dogs. However, even without the familial ties, FS Thaele represented a challenge in her own right. She was an outspoken, politically-minded African woman with close ties to influential members of society (black and white) and had an acute awareness of the changing position of black social welfare in South Africa, navigating the state bureaucracy to achieve her own ends. By proving the agency of blacks in welfare and asserting independence, she was perceived to be undermining the basis on which the state had introduced discriminatory measures, such as the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act.⁹²

⁸⁹ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. “Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Native Advisory Board held in the administration office, New Brighton Village, on Wednesday the 22nd May, 1940 at 8pm”. Apostle Paul before Agrippa refers to the biblical tale of Apostle Paul who was a Christian disciple tasked with converting King Agrippa to Christianity in a short period of time, largely in an attempt to defend himself against claims made by Jewish leaders.

⁹⁰ Proving the connection between FS Thaele and James and Kenan Thaele was a long process. Thank you to Peter Limb and Iris Berger for their advice, as well as Robert Vinson for directing me to James Thaele’s will and a testament as a source to find his familial connections. See KAB, File MOOC 6/9/15275. 4139/48 Thaele, James Estate Papers. 1948. FS Thaele was involved in a bitter dispute with Daniel P. Adams, an ANC colleague of Thaele’s, who she accused of faking James Thaele’s last will and testament to make himself the sole heir.

⁹¹ KAB, File CSC 1/1/1/157 23 Record proceedings of criminal case Kenan Thaele. Thaele was initially arrested for promoting disharmony between Africans and Europeans. The charges were later dropped by order of the Crown. His reference to Abyssinia (modern day Ethiopia) draws upon an ideology that increasingly defined African nationalism in the period leading up to African independence. As Ethiopia was the only African state (asides from Liberia) effectively able to keep its independence from colonial control, it became a source of inspiration for African countries seeking to gain their independence.

⁹² The 1937 Act was an amendment of the 1923 Urban Areas Act and gave the State increased control over the movement of Africans, allowing officials to remove them from Urban areas if they were deemed “surplus”. See, D. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid 1948 – 1961*, 43.

Her awareness of the political conditions in South Africa was well illustrated at a meeting in October 1939 with the Health Committee where Thaele cited the need for a society like the African Child Welfare and Benevolent Society rising directly in reaction to the state's withdrawal of funds for black children. She argued that:

the Society by reason of the government's withdrawal of the grant which had been previously given through recognised child welfare societies for indigent native children was now in the course of formation for the purpose of co-operating with the Native Affairs Department in an endeavour to alleviate the conditions obtaining amongst non-European children.⁹³

The local government remained determined to remove control of the crèches from Mrs Thaele and place them under the supervision of a body more under the control of the state. However, Mrs Holland, a local Councillor had commented that Thaele "had a large measure of support amongst certain sections of the public and it would not be too easy to withdraw management of the crèches from her".⁹⁴

In the minutes of a town council meeting dated 17 June 1940, it was acknowledged that

Mrs Thaele was at present trying to obtain a subsidy from government to assist in the running of the crèches. It would be difficult to do anything unless the medical officer of health could say definitely that from a health point of view the management of the crèches was unsuitable.⁹⁵

An opportunity came on 29 July 1940 when it was noted at the Town Council meeting that measles had broken out in the New Brighton Village Crèche, making it (according to Councillor Perridge), "easy to do away with her [Mrs Thaele's] services".⁹⁶ However, Councillor Holland, who had had far more interaction with Thaele, had warned that Thaele would "cause a lot of trouble if this were done".⁹⁷ To a degree, she was right. Thaele did indeed protest the proposed closure of the crèches, insisting that the measles outbreak had occurred in the township a whole, and if the council desired to close the crèche, it should only be on a temporary basis. However, her calls were ignored and by the end of 1940, the town council had decided to force the closure of the crèches by withdrawing the subsidisation of

⁹³ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Minutes from the proceedings of the Health Committee dated 9 October 1939.

⁹⁴ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Minutes from Town Council Meeting dated 17 June 1940.

⁹⁵ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Minutes from town council meeting dated 17 June 1940.

⁹⁶ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Minutes from town council meeting dated 29 July 1940.

⁹⁷ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Minutes from town council meeting dated 29 July 1940.

the cottages housing the crèches run by the African Child Welfare and Benevolent Society.⁹⁸ The voice of Mrs Thaele, along with that of the African Child Welfare and Benevolent Society, then disappeared from archival records.

The case of Mrs Thaele and the African Child Welfare and Benevolent Society was indicative of a broader process that was occurring in the rest of South Africa. Whilst child welfare for white children was progressing at a rate similar to that of western countries such as Britain and America, racial policies aimed at protecting white hegemony and control stunted the growth of black child welfare. This would create a legacy of inequality that continued to haunt the development of multi-racial child welfare in South Africa.

Conclusion

Hobhouse, Elliott, Buxton, Rothmann and Thaele: these names varied in the levels of praise and opprobrium that they attracted. Yet, they are united in the common thread of their challenge of government policy relating to children, women, language and race. Each woman provides a portal into a specific social context in South Africa, illustrating how child welfare in particular offered a platform through which women could have their voices heard in the policy-making process that governed the South African state.

The period between the early to mid-1900s marked a drastic shift in the position of women in South African society; one in which paternal domination was supplanted through the enfranchisement of white South African women in 1930. One of the major arguments for allowing women into politics was premised on their traditional roles as mothers and carers. The growth of state subsidised child welfare in early twentieth century South Africa created a need for expertise in the realm of care-giving. It was this need that politically minded women used as a platform to have their voices heard in the broader political context.

Through publicising the harsh conditions faced by Boer women and children during the South African War, Hobhouse was able to criticise the British occupation policy in South Africa. Elliott and Buxton brought home the need for practical reform through the petition for increased state assistance in child welfare, seen particularly in the formation of the National Council of Child Welfare in 1924. M.E. Rothmann challenged the existing position of

⁹⁸ KAB, File 3/PEZ 4/1/1/1507 25/06 Child Welfare 1937-1941. Minutes from town council meeting dated 6 August 1940.

Afrikaner women as removed from politics, promoting the ideology that welfare could be used by women as a socially acceptable platform to express their concerns.

In a period characterised by increasing government control over the lives of the black population, seen particularly in the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act, Thaele's role in advocating black agency in welfare in the urban surrounds of Port Elizabeth posed a challenge to the state's authority, not least by bringing the decision to cease funding for "indigent native children" through the established welfare societies into question. By 1940 Mrs Thaele and her short lived independent society had become a casualty of emerging policies that were to pave the way to the introduction of apartheid in 1948.

These individual cases are representative of a broader societal background where divisions between English speakers and Afrikaners, white and black, men and women defined each group's position in South Africa's social hierarchy. The growth in discourses of social welfare provided a channel whereby these traditional stations in life could be challenged. The above mentioned women and women's organisations no doubt had the interests of South Africa's children at heart, but with their philanthropic activities came an opportunity to address their own concerns and positions within society. In the words of Olive Schreiner, the famous South African novelist and feminist: "Strength shall not help you, nor knowledge, nor labour. You shall gain what men gain, but through other means".⁹⁹ In the case of South African women, welfare work was one of the 'other means' which women could use to gain a more prominent position in politics.

⁹⁹ O. Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), 223.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

South Africa's Child Welfare Movement

On 27 April 1994 television screens around the world showed images of South African adults of all races queuing for hours to make their voices heard in the country's first fully democratic election. This day, now known as "Freedom Day" marked the transition from the racially divisive apartheid state to a democracy priding itself on promises of equality and social justice. Nelson Mandela became not only the first president but the symbol of a 'new South Africa' where black and white would live side by side, sharing equitably in the state's resources. The South African National Council of Child Welfare's slogan of child welfare "irrespective of race or class, of politics or creed" used – as this thesis has shown – without foundation in lived experience throughout the twentieth century, appeared to finally have found an appropriate social context.¹

With the introduction of a multi-racial democracy in 1994 it seemed that the child welfare movement in South Africa would be able to turn its oft stated policies into practice for the benefit of all the children of South Africa – ostensibly with the full support of a government that prided itself on non-discriminatory principles and the welfare of its citizens. However, in 2009, Child Welfare South Africa (CWSA, previously the South African National Council of Child Welfare) reported that it was in debt to the extent of six million rands. Formed in 1924, under the title of the South African National Council for Child Welfare, the role of CWSA has remained consistent. It acts as an umbrella organisation co-ordinating different child welfare agencies and acting as a channel of communication between the government and private child charities. As such, government subsidies for the various organisations are allocated through the CWSA to member organisations. With government subsidies only contributing eighteen percent of its costs, the CWSA reported that it and its member organisations were financially burdened by having to support an increasing number of

¹ KAB, Cape Town Archives Repository, File 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council for Child Welfare 1938-1945. "National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Report for the year ended March 31st, 1938".

children infected by HIV Aids.² Indeed, child welfare bodies vociferously blamed the government for shirking what had, over the course of the twentieth century, come to be accepted increasingly as the state's responsibilities to child welfare, responsibilities that are now enshrined in the constitution of South Africa.³

The current debate regarding government subsidies for independent child welfare agencies echoes earlier disputes dating back over a century. As described in Chapter Two, by 1910 the Society for the Protection of Child Life (SPCL), the first children's welfare organisation in South Africa, had been promised a grant by the Cape provincial government without which it would cease to function. Newly dependent on the provincial government, the SPCL was dealt a blow when the grant was discontinued in 1911 on the pretext that, following the formation of Union of South Africa in 1910 grants to charities should be a national responsibility. The next few years were filled with financial woes for the organisation.⁴ Although the South African government did not then have a legal responsibility for the welfare of children, then as now, child welfare was hampered by government bureaucracy, something that created the perception that the state was avoiding its responsibilities towards children. Criticisms of the present government's perceived lack of action and support for child welfare are further underlined by the prevalence of children on the streets with an estimated 13 300 children living on the streets in 2011.⁵ As with the poor white children of the early 1900s, roaming the streets of cities, peddling flowers and newspapers, street children offer a visual manifestation of poverty and neglect, their presence not only creating a sense of social failure, but bringing the uncomfortable issue of poverty into the everyday experiences of the middle classes. This public evidence of child neglect was brought under the spot light during the 2010 Soccer World Cup that was hosted in South Africa. Children's rights organisations were outraged by the forced removal of children from cities to places of safety, which were likened to

² Nomahlubi Sonjica, 'Child welfare bodies battling to survive', *The Herald*, 11 March 2009, 4.

³ See A. Crotty, 'Meeting with government further frustrates NPOs', *Star*, 30 August 2011, 4 and A. Dawes, R. Bray and A. van der Merwe, *Monitoring Child Well-Being: A South African Rights-Based Approach*, (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2007), ix. High levels of HIV Aids infections were blamed partly on lack of government support. In 2001 provincial education departments were criticised for under spending their Aids education budgets by sixty percent. See R.W. Johnson, *South Africa's Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid*, (London, Penguin, 2009), 203.

⁴ KAB, File: PAH 24 H10/3Infant Life Protection Acts. Proposed Administration by Provincial Authorities. Letter from Jasper Anderson to Joel Janisch, dated 30 January 1911.

⁵ Michael Tlhakudi, 'Progress in helping street children', *Citizen*, 7 June 2011, 3.

“concentration camps”, in order to remove an embarrassing spectacle from the eyes of foreign visitors.⁶

Perhaps an even stronger criticism of the current South African government’s lack of adequate attention to child welfare – and certainly a manifestation of the enduring racial hierarchy evidenced by the history of South African welfare – is that seventeen years after the end of apartheid children are still polarised according to race. As illustrated in Chapter three, racial discrimination in child welfare went from being a *de facto* practice to legally entrenched with the introduction of apartheid in 1948. This institutionalised racialism of the twentieth century created an enduring racialised binary that still poses a major obstacle almost two decades after the ending of apartheid. The South African branch of the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimates that around two thirds of all South African children live below the poverty line, the majority of whom are black.⁷ These children live in conditions of poverty with limited access to resources and are severely hampered in education and access to basic amenities.⁸ Although there has been some redistribution of wealth, this has not adequately filtered down to child welfare in the present day.

Aside from problems related to unemployment and HIV Aids, the current predicament of South Africa’s child welfare endeavours can perhaps be best understood by considering the historical factors described in the preceding chapters. This history shaped the child welfare movement throughout the twentieth century, consolidating a divergence between black and white children that remains a problem for child welfare in the modern South African context. As very little has been written on the developmental stages of child welfare in South Africa, a large portion of this thesis necessarily consists of primary research. As illustrated in Chapter One, Archival documents housed at the Cape Town Archives Repository have helped to shed light on the way in which the motives, patterns and challenges of child welfare have evolved throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter Two examined the creation of child welfare agencies in the early 1900s, demonstrating that they were a direct response to concerns over the plight of the children of

⁶ Sibongile Khumalo, ‘Cops round up the usual suspects to “clean up cities” – Prostitutes, street kids and beggars put in “concentration camps”’, *Star*, 19 May 2010, 12.

⁷ http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/social_policy_6508.html (accessed 27 October 2011).

⁸ Ebrahim Shabbir Deen, ‘Race still plays a big, and ugly, role’, *Star*, 6 January 2011, 13.

poor whites specifically. Virtually from their inception, private child welfare agencies, faced financial difficulties and soon realised that they would need the financial support of the government to achieve their objectives. They also soon realised that only the state had the power to enact and enforce legislation that would be necessary to bring about meaningful and positive change in the lives of needy and abused children. In order to facilitate interaction between the growing number of child welfare agencies and the state, the National Council of Child Welfare was formed in 1924, an umbrella organisation representing the needs of its members and giving a unified voice to the movement, whilst also performing a watchdog role by ensuring that members adhered to state laws relating to children. With the government's financial, structural and legislative support, child welfare organisations were able to achieve results, such as the enactment of child maintenance grants in 1921 as discussed in Chapter Two, that otherwise would have been beyond their ability and authority, at least with regards to white children. However, financial dependence brought with it decreased levels of autonomy for private child welfare organisations and in effect made many of them virtually dependent upon the state for their continued existence.

In 1937 this process was further consolidated by the formation of the Department of Social Welfare, as discussed in Chapter Three. Although it had long been an ambition of child welfare activists to persuade government to accept responsibility for child welfare, the idea that they were now accountable to a specific government department brought with it a number of difficulties. With budgets having to be routed through and sanctioned by the Department, child welfare agencies were given less flexibility on how their funds were to be spent. This was particularly significant in light of the fact that the decline in poor whiteism in the late 1930s meant that child welfare agencies had increasingly turned their attention to the plight of African children.

Private child welfare agencies' interest in the welfare of needy African children did not receive the same level of governmental support as their earlier endeavours regarding poor white children had finally done. In the same year that the Social Welfare department was introduced an amendment to the Native Urban Areas Act was enacted, placing strict controls on the movement of Africans and well illustrating the lack of government concern for African welfare generally, particularly in the urban context. Racial tensions between state policies and the ambitions of private child welfare agencies heightened markedly after the introduction of apartheid in 1948.

As illustrated in Chapter Four, the unequal allocation of resources to black and white children developed from a *de facto* reality to a practice backed by state legislation. A series of acts, including the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the 1960 Children's Act, not only hampered black child welfare – consequently reinforcing the position of white hegemony – but made collaboration between white and black welfare workers difficult, and in some cases illegal. This period was characterised by a growing divergence between black and white child welfare, despite the oft stated aims of the SANCCW to promote the interests of children irrespective of race. Regardless of pleas by the SANCCW for better African child welfare and education, the state allocation of resources drastically favoured white children thus reinforcing the status quo of white hegemony. Indeed, child welfare for white children under apartheid closely resembled that of 'first-world' Western countries, whilst black child welfare remained at a 'third world' level. At the same time apartheid discourses asserted the dangers of African dependency. An example of this attitude was seen in the statements made by the Bantu Affairs Commissioner (BAC) discussed in Chapter Four's case study of the Kimberly Child Welfare Society. These attitudes fed into arguments of separate development promoting ideals of African responsibility for African welfare, ignoring the fact that the great majority of the country's wealth and control of resources rested in the hands of the white minority.⁹

This state of divergence continued into the 1970s and 1980s, as illustrated in Chapter Five. Whilst white child welfare was reflecting international discourses relating to the mental and psychological well-being of children, the oppressed position of African children eventually and inevitably led to feelings of dissatisfaction amongst large portions of the African population, culminating in the Soweto Uprising of 1976. The revolt of black youth against the apartheid system brought local and international condemnation of apartheid. Despite the attention the uprising brought to bear on the plight of African children, fears of a rebellious African youth led to even stricter government controls, with the 1983 Children's Act reinforcing the practice of racial segregation.¹⁰

⁹ In 1946, white South Africans, who represented a fifth of the country's population, controlled two-thirds of personal income. A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, (London, Routledge, 1994), 1.

¹⁰ F.N. Zaal, 'Court Services for the Child in Need of Alternative Care: A Critical Evaluation of Selective Aspects of the South African System', (PhD thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2008), 66.

Whilst the previous chapters have adopted an institutionally based approach to child welfare, the danger of generalisation must be kept in mind. Indeed, some members of the child welfare movement may well have endeavoured to adhere to the practice of child welfare “irrespective of race, politics or creed”, more so than their colleagues. For this reason it is essential to note that the child welfare movement in South Africa was driven not only by historical shifts, ideological trends particularly from the metropole, but by the agency of particular individuals. Without returning to the “Great Man (or Woman)” narratives of history, the sixth chapter illuminates the role of individual women, white and black, in bringing child welfare onto the national agenda. In so doing, it raises the point that these women used child welfare as a socially acceptable platform to voice broader concerns relating to the role of gender and race in politics in South Africa.

Thus the trajectory of South Africa’s child welfare movement was strongly influenced by state policies and in particular by the pressures of a racially defined and regimented society. The idea that child welfare agencies in South Africa would act as pioneers in the child welfare movement, identifying new areas of need to which state resources could be directed had worked well while the focus of their joint attention was needy white children. When private child welfare organisations attempted to extend this method to South African society as a whole, they found the way effectively blocked by the racist policies of an authoritarian state. Fissured by issues of race, politics, class and creed, the National Council continued to issue statements such as “The Council’s propaganda is carried on for the extension of child welfare work in the interests of all children, without distinction of race or creed”.¹¹ The apparent Janus-faced nature of this statement in the context of a racially polarised society begs explanation. The financial dependence of the Council on the government and its role as a corporate citizen meant that it needed to adhere to state policy and laws and yet, the influence of international western discourses on child welfare had long been present in South Africa, appealing on a fundamental level to the conscience of individual child welfare practitioners. Notwithstanding the inherent irony, having closely mimicked Britain in its fledgling years the South African child welfare movement continued to aspire to international ideals, adopting the idea of a politically independent, non-racial child welfare system which had become popular in much of the Western world, particularly with the rise of human rights discourses.

¹¹ KAB, File SWP 6 22/5 National Council for Child Welfare, 1937-1941. “Pamphlet: Our Children’s Day”.

As discussed in Chapters Two and Six, Lady Buxton, a child welfare enthusiast and British philanthropist responsible for forming the South African National Council of Child Welfare, promoted the ideology of practical morality as far back as 1919. The essence of her argument was that promises of welfare meant nothing without material relief. Indeed she dramatically asserted that a tin of condensed milk held more practical value than any political creed, as a tin of condensed milk could feed a child.¹² At the time she forwarded this argument, the South African government had begun focusing resources on poor white children, a process which saw poor whiteism being almost entirely eradicated by the 1950s.¹³ However, although the National Council always forwarded an ideology of child welfare independent of race and politics, this dictum did not translate into practical morality for black children, primarily because independent child welfare agencies were financially beholden to a racially dogmatic government and bound by its laws.

Now that South Africa has moved from an authoritarian regime to a democracy, which promises children the right to education, health and a safe home environment, the question of practical morality—the “condensed milk” of children’s rights – still remains.¹⁴ Despite promises, which have been backed by legislation that seeks to undo welfare's history, child welfare in South Africa still faces the problems of poverty along racial lines.¹⁵

The idealistic notion that independent child welfare agencies serve to identify new areas of need that are then enthusiastically backed by the financial and legislative authority of the state is a thread that has run throughout the twentieth century and continues to have currency into the twenty-first. It is an ideal that has been thwarted and misdirected since the inception of the first South African child welfare organisation in 1907, with child welfare agencies kept on a short financial leash and continually facing obstacles of bureaucracy and politics. Despite the dramatic events of 1994 which saw the transfer of power from a minority to a majority, child welfare appears to remain entangled in a web of bureaucracy and is still obliged to plead for adequate resources from the state, resources which are inadequately and

¹² E. Fuller, *The Right of the Child: A Chapter in Social History*, (London, Victor Gollancz, 1951), 23.

¹³ E.G. Malherbe, *Never a Dull Moment*, (Lansdowne, Timmins Publishers, 1981), 169.

¹⁴ See <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/96cons2.htm#28> (accessed 23 October, 2011).

¹⁵ This racialised poverty is coupled with new challenges like the Aids pandemic. By 2007 there were an estimated one and a half million Aids orphans in South Africa, a number which is still increasing at a steady rate, placing massive strain on the resources of both independent child welfare agencies and the state. L. Odendal, ‘Urgent need to expand drug roll-out’, *Mail and Guardian*, 20 April 2011, 1.

reluctantly provided. Although the post-1994 South African government codified child welfare in its constitution, tension still exists between child welfare agencies and the state, with the government being accused of neglecting its legal responsibilities, acting instead as a benign but occasional benefactor.¹⁶

Concerns over whose responsibility child welfare was, and still is, is an on-going debate. Prior to the twentieth century, the idea that the state should interfere in the family unit was unheard of and the welfare of children was regarded as the responsibility of parents and churches.¹⁷ The campaigns of child welfare lobbyists have seen the transfer of child welfare from the virtually exclusive realm of the private sector to the public sector in the timespan of the twentieth century. However, as this thesis shows, the state has lacked the capacity and motivation to give child welfare direction or provide adequate resources. Consequently, it has been private initiatives, the historical equivalents of Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), which have in the past, and continue today to plough the path of child welfare. In order to achieve their objectives, such organisations have nevertheless needed to cede a great deal of autonomy in order to secure the co-operation and assistance of the South African government, relying as they do not only on state resources, but also on the backing of increasingly progressive child protection laws.

The historical question of child welfare responsibility has recently reared its head again. In October 2011, CWSA issued a statement in which it refuted accusations by the head of the National Lottery Board, Professor Vevek Ram, that it expressed an attitude of dependency:

We would like to challenge Professor Ram's notion of dependency when applied to social services. The old "teach a person how to fish" saying does not apply when dealing with maltreated children. It is therefore irresponsible of Prof Ram to depict Child Welfare in the manner that he did. Child Welfare organisations across the country provide *essential* services: child protection is a statutory responsibility, and recognising that government does not have the capacity to deliver, the non-profit sector provides the service.¹⁸

¹⁶ A. Crotty, 'Meeting with government further frustrates NPOs', *Star*, 30 August 2011, 4

¹⁷ C. Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001), 106.

¹⁸ <http://www.childwelfare.org.za/index.php/news/latest-news2/150-response-to-a-media-statement> (accessed 23 October 2011).

Professor Ram's comment stands in stark contrast to a statement made by the Cape Administrator in 1915 in a similar context. The Administrator, who had been dogged by the SPCL for years to provide a consistent annual grant to the Society, asserted

“We are getting done as a labour of love, that for which the state could only pay officials. When a person is doing services which are unpaid, the work must necessarily be better done than as a matter of bread-winning”.¹⁹

This “labour of love” has indeed increasingly become the responsibility of paid officials, seen in the adoption of children's rights in the country's constitution. The Administrator's speculation back in 1915 – that the quality and passion of child welfare work will be diminished if performed by paid officials – remains to be proven. However his statement rings true by highlighting the importance of non-governmental organisations in implementing child care where the state (and parents) fall short and acting as watch dogs as regards government legislation relating to children. Ostensibly now able to operate in a climate independent of “race or class, of politics or creed”, child welfare in South Africa is still burdened by its history: bureaucratic obstacles and administrative intransigence.²⁰ The close relationship between government and child welfare, born of necessity in the early twentieth century, long hampered by racial dogma, is now, as in the past, still burdened by bureaucratic inertia and a lack of political will.

¹⁹ KAB, File PAH 24 H10/3A, *Cape Times*, 7 August 1915.

²⁰ KAB, File 3/PRL 4/1/67 14 National Council for Child Welfare 1938-1945. “National Council for Child Welfare: Annual Report for the year ended March 31st, 1938”.

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