

## Space, Welfare, and Agency in England and Wales, 1780s–1840s

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On 11 November 1835, the overseer of the poor of Oundle<sup>1</sup> (Northamptonshire) wrote to his counterpart from Bedford (Bedfordshire), Mr William White. Responding to a letter asking Oundle to provide support for one widow Yorke, the overseer had ‘laid [her case] before the commissioner & also the select Vestry the result of which I have written to Mr Chapman of yr House of Industry. Our vestry decline allowing anything from Home but will send a conveyance for her any day that will suit her best’.<sup>2</sup> By chance, widow Yorke’s case had come to the attention of Oundle just as the New Poor Law (in the persona of a Commissioner) was being imposed upon the parish.<sup>3</sup> A vestry had interpreted the law of the New Poor Law as discouraging the non-resident relief (‘anything from Home’) to which it

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<sup>1</sup> Overseers changed in Oundle every six months, so it is impossible to be sure of the name of the overseer at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office (hereafter NRO) 249p/216/109, Letter.

<sup>3</sup> For the implementation of the New Poor Law see Steven A. King, ‘Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition between the Old and New Poor Laws 1820–1860s’, in Peter Jones and Steven A. King (eds.), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute under the English Poor Laws, 1600–1900* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015), 263–91, and Peter Jones and Steven A. King, *Pauper Voices, Public Opinion and Workhouse Reform in Mid-Victorian England: Bearing Witness* (Basingstoke, 2020).

had previously been strongly committed, something seemingly confirmed by the Commissioner himself.<sup>4</sup>

The 1834 law appeared to provide a frame of reference on all aspects of welfare. In a letter of 21 September 1835, the same overseer wrote to his counterpart in Gedney (Lincolnshire) to say that:

you have behaved very shabby towards us from what the constable stated to me I carefully *read over* the Clauses in the New Poor Law Act relating to the Removals and finding it not clear to my mind as regarding the Expense of conveying the pauper *I laid the case before the Poor Law commissioners in London and they inform me* that you are only liable for all expenses up to the day of removal but not for the actual conveyance &c therefore I am to deduct the hire for the cart & horses also the charge of time &c for the Constable but the other expences then there is no doubt about<sup>5</sup>

Not only had the Oundle official read the Act and tried to digest the intent of the New Poor Law as a national system, he had referred the matter to the Commissioners in London, whom he assumed to be the keeper of definitive knowledge on what practice should be followed, in turn quoting it to his counterpart both in justification and as a mechanism by which the Commissioners hoped practice would be standardized. Such standardization extended to the

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<sup>4</sup> On non-resident relief see Steven A. King, ‘“It is Impossible for our Vestry to Judge his Case into Perfection from Here”’: Managing the Distance Dimensions of Poor Relief, 1800–40’, *Rural History*, 16 (2005), 161–89.

<sup>5</sup> NRO 249p/216/100, Letter. My italics.

nature of record-keeping and reactions to cases of extreme and sudden need. Thus Thomas Stevens, the Clerk of the Bradfield (Berkshire) Union, wrote to relieving officers in May 1835 noting that they were:

requested to pay particular attention to the following points—In the report, on cases of application for relief to the Board the ages of the applicant & his children should always be stated, his last employment & the cause of his present necessity as nearly as can be ascertained, & the date of the application and all other particulars relative to the case. Rule 27 of the Union 2<sup>nd</sup> Directs in cases of sudden & urgent necessity to give such temporary relief as each case may require either by taking the Pauper into the Workhouse or else affording relief out of the House in articles of absolute necessity but not in money.<sup>6</sup>

The New Poor Law, then, was supposed to be a rule and principle-based system underpinned by a duality of extra-local (via elected poor law guardians and a paid official staff) and national supervision. Whether or not its intent was to generate a uniformity of

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<sup>6</sup> Berkshire Record Office D/P 132/19/3/1, Letter. Underlining in the original. On the development of form-filling and information requirements see Natalie Carter and Steven A. King, “‘I Think we Ought not to Acknowledge them [Paupers] as that Encourages them to Write’: The Administrative State, Power and the Victorian Pauper,” *Social History*, 46 (2021), 117–44.

practice,<sup>7</sup> the impact of the Law *should* have been to reduce the pauper agency and the malleability of local decision-making that I have suggested was the signature of the Old Poor Law.<sup>8</sup> In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Gilbert Unions and other incorporations responsible for welfare in England and Wales prior to 1834 survived the New Poor Law and remained an important source of variant practice. Standardized rules, structures, and funding arrangements were only slowly imposed outside the rural south of England, and injunctions to deliver relief via workhouses were, as Douglas Brown points out in this volume, honoured in the breach in urban and industrial areas.<sup>9</sup> An understaffed and underpowered central authority, at least before 1871, found itself relatively toothless in the

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<sup>7</sup> Karel Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty* (London, 1981) warns persistently that the central purpose of the New Poor Law was only limited to addressing the problem of the able-bodied unemployed and underemployed.

<sup>8</sup> Steven A. King, *Writing the Lives of the English Poor, 1750s to 1830s* (London, 2019). The Old Poor Law was a national system of poor relief applying to England and Wales which afforded a right for those with a valid settlement to apply for (but not to receive) welfare in their place of ‘belonging’. It had no central oversight and not until 1813 were regular statistics on the nature and scale of relief spending (akin to those used by Andreas Gestrich in his chapter for this volume) required by Government of the ecclesiastical parishes that largely administered relief. The central lessons of these statistics—essentially that relief spending was out of control and the poor had obtained rights to welfare where there should have been none—would later, in 1834, be used as an excuse to replace the Old Poor Law.

<sup>9</sup> Joanna Innes, *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Policies in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2009), 78–106. For a summary of alternative organizational forms to the parish under the Old Poor Law see John Shaw, *The Loes and Wilford Poor Law Incorporation 1765–1826: ‘A Prison with a Milder Name’* (Woodbridge, 2019).

face of local intransigence and there is clear evidence that Commissioners and Inspectors rapidly abandoned regulation and attempts at standardization in Wales.<sup>10</sup> In areas such as medical welfare, burials, unemployment relief, and regular outdoor pensions for the aged, poor law unions exhibited highly variant practice, which came to a head in the subtly gradated implementation of the so-called ‘crusade against outdoor relief’ in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that whatever the intent of central government, the New Poor Law remained a coalition of variable practice rather than a coherent national framework for addressing poverty.<sup>12</sup>

This situation is perhaps unsurprising. The New Poor Law was superimposed upon a remarkably complex patchwork of spatial variation in practice and sentiment under the Old Poor Law, one that arguably persists to the present day. Steve Hindle argues forcefully that differences between parishes in wealth, the nature of poverty, the sentiments of overseers, and local custom generated an Old Poor Law which was a chaotic amalgam of parochially oriented welfare republics.<sup>13</sup> His perspectives have recently been codified in a countywide study of Oxfordshire by Jack Langton, who traces remarkable interparochial variation in poor

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<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey F. Hooker, ‘Llandilofawr Poor Law Union 1836–1886: “The Most Difficult Union in Wales” ’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 2014), and Megan Evans and Peter Jones, ‘ “A Stubborn, Intractable Body”: Resistance to the Workhouse in Wales, 1834–1877’, *Family and Community History*, 17 (2014), 101–21.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth T. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late-Victorian England, 1870–1900* (Woodbridge, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> King, ‘Rights, Duties and Practice’, 291, and Jones and King, *Pauper Voices*.

<sup>13</sup> Steve Hindle, *On the Parish? The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England c.1550–1750* (Oxford, 2004).

law practice between different subregions marked out by landscape and soil structures.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Thomas Sokoll has identified intense variation in the experience of poverty and the nature of parochial responses between similar and proximate agrarian communities. Systems of wage and family support once thought to have been ubiquitous are now seen as periodically applied and limited in scope, but on a spectrum from non-existent to intensive and long-term.<sup>15</sup> Focusing outwards from these parochial contexts, however, also suggests wider regional variations. I have variously argued, for instance, that we can see a marked difference in the scope, scale, and intent of Old Poor Law welfare between a broadly defined north and west and the south and east.<sup>16</sup> Such assertions have not been uncontentious.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, a growing body of welfare and demographic historians have likewise come to see macro-regional patterns in illegitimacy, negligence in workhouses, the crusade against outdoor relief, and the likelihood of able-bodied men receiving assistance.<sup>18</sup> Their boundaries

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<sup>14</sup> John Langton, 'The Geography of Poor Relief in Rural Oxfordshire 1775–1832', in Jones and King (eds.), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute*, 193–234.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Sokoll, 'Families, Wheat Prices and the Allowance Cycle: Poverty and Poor Relief in the Agricultural Community of Ardleigh 1794–1801', in Jones and King (eds.), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute*, 78–106. For a contrary view focusing on the Essex parish of Terling see Henry French, 'How Dependent were the "Dependent Poor"? Poor Relief and the Life-Course in Terling, Essex, 1762–1834', *Continuity and Change*, 30 (2015), 193–222, at 215–16.

<sup>16</sup> Steven A. King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> For a critique see Hindle, *On the Parish?*, 282–99.

<sup>18</sup> For different regional models see Margaret A. Lyle, 'Regionality in the Late Old Poor Law: The Treatment of Chargeable Bastards from Rural Queries', *Agricultural History Review*, 53

do not always map onto those I have suggested but, and particularly if we allow for short-term ‘noise’ in local welfare practice, it is possible and necessary to break out of an explanatory framework rooted in micro perspectives. We will return to this issue of ‘purpose’ below, but in the meantime welfare historians across Europe, including for instance Andreas Gestrich in this volume, have reached similar conclusions. In particular, sophisticated work on the region of Flanders has begun to unpick both the intense spatial patterning of welfare provision and attitudes in this broad area, and the potential for comparability with lowland southern England.<sup>19</sup>

### *Thinking about Space and Welfare*

Whether we are minded to construct the spatial dimensions of welfare in micro or macro terms, it is still necessary to develop a framework by and in which experience and policy can

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(2005), 141–57; Kim Price, *Medical Negligence in Victorian Britain: The Crisis of Care under the English Poor Law, c.1834–1900* (London, 2015); and Marjorie Levine-Clark, *Unemployment, Welfare, and Masculine Citizenship: ‘So Much Honest Poverty’ in Britain, 1870–1930* (Basingstoke, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Thijs Lambrecht and Anne Winter, ‘An Old Poor Law on the Continent? Agrarian Capitalism, Poor Taxes and Village Conflict in Eighteenth-Century Coastal Flanders’, *Economic History Review*, 71 (2018), 1173–98; eid., ‘Migration, Poor Relief and Local Autonomy: Settlement Policies in England and the Southern Low Countries in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past and Present*, 218 (2013), 91–126; and Marjolein Schepers, ‘Regulating Poor Migrants in Border Regions: A Microhistory of Out-Parish Relief in Bulskamp (1768–96)’, *Rural History*, 29 (2018), 145–65.

be codified, classified, compared, and explained. I have argued (as we began to see above) that there was a distinct regionality to practice, sentiment, and outcome under the Old Poor Law. The boundaries I draw for such welfare regions are imprecise and perhaps unduly focussed on the outlines of artificial administrative units such as counties. Yet we can see in the detailed micro record a gradual spatial transition in the scope, scale, and intent of welfare—one not simply patterned onto the economic and social structure or assumed wealth of communities. This crude spatiality becomes clear when national statistics of spending are captured episodically in the 1770s, early 1800s, and from 1813. Andreas Gestrich traces a similar patterning for the newly created Germany in his chapter for this volume, while the fierce independence of French regions has long been acknowledged as creating distinctive spatial patterns to welfare.<sup>20</sup>

Whether precise boundaries can be traced for welfare regions is far less important for our understanding of the nature and intent of social support systems than their broadly measurable existence in the first place. In the British context, for instance, it matters that by the early nineteenth century, the north-west of England, northern England, and North Wales had significant welfare features in common (per capita poor relief, the scope of welfare, the nature of the negotiation process), and that these looked very different to similar variables in southern England.<sup>21</sup> Obviously this speaks to the Old Poor Law as a fragmented framework rather than a national system, but more than this it provides evidence of the limited reach of the central state, the identity or otherwise of Wales, the meaning and function of fast-growing northern cities, and the nature and meaning of taxation systems, amongst other things.

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<sup>20</sup> Philip Nord, 'The Welfare State in France, 1870–1914', *French Historical Studies*, 18 (1994), 821–38, and Timothy Smith, *Creating the Welfare State in France, 1880–1940* (Montreal, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 79–105.



Yet as others in this volume also note, where supposed welfare regions and regimes are elaborated on the basis of snapshot statistics, the amalgamation of ad hoc micro studies of individual communities, or (rather less often) collections of places, they become static objects rather than useful tools. As welfare historians across Europe have become more and more interested in and driven by the dynamism of welfare practice and culture within and between countries and over time, so we have become less agile in understanding the pan-national frameworks of sentiment, law, policy palettes, agencies, and experiments within which dynamic local practice operated. This has consequences. For Britain, there is no comparative history of welfare in Scotland and northern England (and no means of writing one), even though there are compelling philosophical reasons why there should be. The New Poor Law is regarded as an experiential, organizational, and philosophical fracture point with its pre-1834 counterpart, when for large parts of England and Wales it may well have not operated in these terms. And under both the Old and New Poor Laws, when we talk about England and Wales, we continue to mean England.

Similar predicaments might be seen for other European states, and of course welfare historians persist in comparing welfare systems at the national level when there is very little utility in doing so. Crudely, there is more merit in comparing the welfare practices and outcomes of German noble estates and communities, closed communities in England and Wales, and the cantons of southern France than in thinking about the respective national arrangements of which they were notionally part. Moreover, the issue grows wider than this since the study of welfare structures, practice, outcomes, and philosophies provides a window onto bigger questions—about the nature and limits of citizenship, the meaning of taxpaying, the reach and power of the central state, regional identities, and the limits and possibilities of class—which also require a more systematic comparative approach. Yet if we want to explore this sort of comparative canvas over periods which span normative legislative or

organizational yardsticks, we need to be able to model welfare regimes and to look for them as part of an opening research agenda rather than simply imposing them on research already done.<sup>22</sup>

Existing frameworks for locating, measuring, and explaining diversity in welfare practice take us only so far along this road. We have traditionally turned to broad dichotomous categories to try to understand (and predict) diversity. One of the most important of these is a supposed difference in the funding, organization, and purpose of welfare between broadly defined Catholic and Protestant areas, the first with a bias towards charitable imperative and the second with a more diverse but also local state-oriented welfare system.<sup>23</sup> Within this broad framework we have gained an increasing awareness of the distinctiveness of welfare provided by other religious groups, not least Jews.<sup>24</sup> As the gulf in policy and practice between Protestant England and Scotland shows, however, the presence or absence of religion as an organizing principle of welfare provides only a partial explanation of the variation we see in micro studies.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, as Andreas Gestrich shows

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<sup>22</sup> Joanna Innes, Steven A. King, and Anne Winter, 'Introduction. Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500–1930s: Structures, Negotiations and Experiences', in Steven A. King and Anne Winter (eds.), *Migration, Settlement and Belonging in Europe, 1500s–1930s: Comparative Perspectives* (New York, 2013), 1–28.

<sup>23</sup> For a review see Marco H. D. Van Leeuwen, *The Logic of Charity: Amsterdam, 1800–1850* (Basingstoke, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> Rainer Liedtke, *Jewish Welfare in Hamburg and Manchester c.1850–1914* (Oxford, 1998), and Alys Levene, *Jews in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Charity, Community and Religion, 1830–1880* (London, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Rosalind Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: The Experience of Poverty, 1574–1845* (Edinburgh, 2000).

in his chapter for this volume on the regional dimensions of the German welfare system, stark distinctions between Catholic and Protestant do not always serve as a defining variable.

The same would be true of a further stock dichotomy: that between urban and rural or industrial/proto-industrial and rural communities. Such areas confronted very different problems of poverty—episodic but intense in urban industrial areas and often chronic and sustained in rural communities—and confronted those problems with very different complexions of charitable and taxation resources. Yet in England at least, if urban policy responses look at all different to those in rural areas, it is merely by degree. Indeed, there is a case for suggesting that London, under both Old and New Poor Laws, was a microcosm of practice and sentiment in the provinces as a whole.<sup>26</sup> Other means of codifying and explaining diversity on the wide spatial canvas—for instance, a contrast between institutionally provided welfare and that delivered within communities—are beset with problems of definition and comparability. The workhouses of the New Poor Law, and even more their counterparts under the Old Poor Law, look nothing like the carceral institutions of nineteenth-century Prussia and then Germany. The hospitals of urban northern France bear only the most passing resemblance to those in England or the Netherlands. And although Swedish VD hospitals carried the same title as their British counterparts, they were completely different in scale, intent, and legal framing.<sup>27</sup>

James Scott and Jack Langton begin to suggest a subtler set of approaches. Scott's sense that physical and psychological distance from the centre of power mattered in terms of

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<sup>26</sup> David R. Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790–1870* (Farnham, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Anna Lundberg, 'Stories of Care and Coercion: Narratives of Poverty and Suffering among Patients with Venereal Disease in Sweden, 1860–1920', in Andreas Gestrich, Elizabeth T. Hurren, and Steven A. King (eds.), *Poverty and Sickness in Modern Europe: Narratives of the Sick Poor, 1780–1938* (London, 2012), 161–80.

the ability of local elites to make theoretically uniform policy malleable certainly has purchase for the Old and New Poor Laws in Wales, though it is less useful in fully devolved welfare regimes.<sup>28</sup> A broader experience of distance and terrain decay also helped to shape the execution and intent of poor relief in nineteenth-century Scotland.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, across a range of variables from murder and illegitimacy to poverty and welfare, it is possible to argue that a broad north–south and east–west dichotomy patterned socio-cultural structures.<sup>30</sup> Langton, as we have seen, also relates the practice of welfare to topographical and environmental variables, building on a wider set of traditions which have constructed woodland or upland communities across Europe as somehow different from their lowland or arable counterparts.<sup>31</sup> As a variant of these ideas, I have argued that the practice of welfare at local and regional level has less to do with the scale of available resources (charitable, self-help, and tax funded) and the situational nature of poverty, but rather reflects long-established custom and sentiment, which defined the broad scope and meaning of welfare and changed

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<sup>28</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

<sup>29</sup> Peter Jones and Steven A. King, ‘Voices from the Far North: Pauper Letters and the Provision of Welfare in Sutherland, 1845–1900’, *Journal of British Studies*, 55 (2016), 76–98.

<sup>30</sup> For the clearest exposition of this idea see Peter King, ‘The Impact of Urbanization on Murder Rates and on the Geography of Homicide in England and Wales, 1780–1850’, *Historical Journal*, 53 (2010), 671–98.

<sup>31</sup> Langton, ‘Geography of Poor Relief’. On the wider traditions, see e.g. David Austin, et al., *Cipières: Community and Landscape in the Alpes-Maritimes, France* (Oxford, 2013).

only slowly.<sup>32</sup> In 2011 I melded custom and sentiment with variables such as the financial basis of welfare, the complexion of welfare practice, control/power, the experiences of paupers, and the mentalities of officials and ratepayers to identify a series of interlinked ‘yardsticks’ which might then be used to define the essential character of a local/communal or regional welfare regime.<sup>33</sup> These yardsticks are reproduced in Figure 1, along with the key empirical questions one might ask in order to characterize different welfare philosophies and practices over time, regulatory or legal regime, and space.

FIG. 1: Yardsticks of Welfare

Yardstick	Key empirical imperatives
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were poor relief resources, whether communally or charitably generated, controlled by independent office holders, the politico-taxpaying elite, religious leaders, or groups with a wider democratic mandate? In other words, were governance structures open or closed?</li> <li>• What were the exogenous checks (magistrates etc.) on independent governance?</li> <li>• What was the historically ingrained structure of local and regional welfare governance, as this would influence reception of new laws and discourses?</li> <li>• How were regional or national welfare laws framed? Were they general and enabling, allowing local interpretation, or specific and</li> </ul>

<sup>32</sup> To pick up a theme developed elsewhere in this volume by Andreas Gestrich, I also regarded long-term ‘investment’ in charitable trusts and other forms of philanthropic giving, which generated the resources to augment or replace tax-funded welfare provision, as part of this customary and sentimental architecture.

<sup>33</sup> Steven A. King, ‘Welfare Regimes and Welfare Regions in Britain and Europe, c.1750s to 1860s’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 9 (2011), 42–65.

	<p>obligatory, cutting local freedoms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>To what extent were officials susceptible to the interventions of advocates for the poor?</i></li> </ul>
Institutional focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what degree were welfare resources (however generated) delivered institutionally both at point in time and over the pauper life cycle?</li> <li>• To what degree were these generalized, catch-all institutions rather than tailored to specific subgroups of the poor?</li> <li>• To what degree were paupers free to access and leave these institutions?</li> </ul>
Inspection and surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent were the poor subject, or thought themselves subject, to intrusive inspection by local officials and their agents?</li> <li>• To what extent were different elements of the economy of makeshifts mutually exclusive?</li> <li>• Were there definite and known mechanisms for applications and the distribution of relief?</li> <li>• Did these issues vary according to the life-cycle stage of the pauper?</li> </ul>
Navigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the rules of the welfare regime transparent, anchored in law, and stable, or were they opaque, anchored in custom and past practice, and unstable?</li> <li>• Could paupers predict the response of a welfare regime to a given set of circumstances?</li> <li>• Could paupers know or learn the rules?</li> <li>• Were decisions contestable?</li> <li>• <i>Were they contested?</i></li> <li>• <i>Reflecting on a single lifetime, would paupers have seen fundamental transformation in the suite of welfare responses and their means of accessing them?</i></li> <li>• <i>Was the rhetoric of deservingness on the one hand and community obligation on the other developed freely or was it clipped and tailored to situational context?</i></li> </ul>

Symbolism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did poor relief regimes (charitably, communally, or individually financed) seek to mitigate, highlight, or increase the symbolism of being poor in terms of material indicators such as clothing, housing, diet etc.?</li> <li>• To what degree was relief (however funded, organized, or distributed) tied to structures of deference and gratitude?</li> <li>• Where was relief given and with what strings?</li> <li>• <i>Did particular subgroups of the poor have strong claims on the moral and humanitarian frameworks of communities?</i></li> </ul>
Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did poor relief (in terms of the collective charitable, communal, or individual resources available to people) provide enough for paupers to live?</li> <li>• If not, how ‘generous’ was the welfare regime?</li> <li>• If not, did officials seek partnership with paupers and families in their treatment of the poverty problem?</li> <li>• Was relief regular and predictable and did it come in a useable form?</li> </ul>
Intent and sentiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the local/regional welfare regime based upon sentiments that were broadly disciplinary/dissuasive, customary, minimalist, or humanitarian?</li> <li>• Was the link between those who financed welfare and those who received it direct (e.g. in the payment of local taxes or charitable levies) or indirect (e.g. bequests to centralized charities)?</li> <li>• Were the poor seen as belonging?</li> <li>• How did beggars figure in the overall relief structures?</li> </ul>
<i>Focus and complexion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Were welfare resources concentrated largely on a subset of the poor?</i></li> <li>• <i>Was the focus of welfare spending on a narrow or more substantial range of spending heads?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did past practice shape current welfare levels and forms, or was relief distributed according to formula?</i></li> <li>• <i>Was relief usually given when asked for and in the form it was requested?</i></li> </ul>

<i>Exogeny</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How far did local policies reflect continuity with past practice?</i></li> <li>• <i>How frequently did parishes have to deal with epistolary advocates?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did officials elaborate structures of custom and moral obligation?</i></li> <li>• <i>How often did paupers and officials invoke ‘the law’ in their correspondence?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did paupers elaborate rhetorics of Christian duty, moral obligation, and proxy measures for dignity?</i></li> </ul>
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Notes: The material in roman reproduces my original 2011 yardsticks. That in italics represents an extension and refinement of the list for this chapter and is justified and elaborated further below.

The difference between the original 2011 yardsticks (and associated empirical imperatives) and the list as augmented in Figure 1 for this chapter is considerable. The answers to the questions posed here will clearly vary across a spatial canvas within and between countries, but they might also change over time in relation to the same place. Some questions may not be answerable at all given absent, fractured, or inconclusive sources. It is entirely possible that the indicators of sentiment towards welfare that we detect in empirical research are contradictory, particularly where the local politics of welfare creates competing interest groups and thus inconsistent practice over time or even between individual recipients. For these reasons, balancing the multiple variables in order either to retrospectively characterize local welfare practices found in existing micro-studies or or when starting the research process for a new study, is clearly a matter of judgement rather than science. Yet by applying these yardsticks and addressing a core of their associated empirical imperatives, it is possible to fairly quickly characterize practice and sentiment for any individual community at a point in time or over time, and thus to discern broad welfare regimes that might exist on a



spectrum from great chronological longevity to fleeting. In 2011 I anticipated five such regimes:

- *Entitlement regimes.* That is, welfare systems where governance of access to poor relief was relatively open and exogenous checks on governance relatively strong; where institutional relief (communal or charitable) was uncommon/unstable, supportive, and disproportionately tied to particular life cycle stages; where inspection and surveillance were, and were seen to be, periodic and the outcomes usually benign; where paupers could navigate clear rules; where officials and communities were sensitive to the material symbolism of poverty; where relief may not have been adequate but was nonetheless substantial and regular, and partnership with families was desirable but not a mainstay of the relief process; where the ingrained sentiment of those financing relief was favourable to the *right* of the poor to make claims on charity and community based upon a sense of belonging; and where decisions were, and were seen to be, contestable.
- *Exclusion regimes.* That is, welfare systems where governance of access to poor relief was closed (particularly, for instance, through vestries or paid officials) and exogenous controls patchy; where institutional relief (communal or charitable) was used to deter present or future relief applications or to provide minimum possible levels of care; where inspection and surveillance were regular features of establishing and maintaining entitlement and the outcomes of such inspection were, for paupers, uncertain; where rules for establishing entitlement were not anchored and were difficult to learn; where the symbolism of poverty was a weapon for both pauper and provider in their attempts to establish entitlement; where relief was residual and potentially irregular and partnership with families was a first, not a last, option of officials; where the ingrained sentiment of those financing relief in its different

forms was to question the right of the poor to make claims; and where contestability was not a reality.

- *Obligatory regimes.* That is, welfare systems where governance of access to poor relief might be *either* open or closed, but was in any case usually subject to exogenous checks; where institutional relief was persistently uncommon; where inspection was irregular but nonetheless periodic and the potential outcomes of such inspection were well known; where the rules for establishing entitlement were anchored in law and the moral economy, could be known in advance, and would yield a broad range of known outcomes so long as communal obligations were balanced against pauper obligations; where the symbolism of poverty was a highly charged practical and socio-political issue; where relief was tailored to the exact and changing needs of the individual; and where the ingrained sentiment of welfare providers was favourable to the claims of the *deserving* poor, however defined.
- *Disciplinary regimes.* That is, welfare systems where governance of access to poor relief was institutionalized and extra-local, with either few or many exogenous controls; where institutional relief was a main plank of welfare; where inspection was a key technique to discipline and deter, and where the outcomes of such inspection could not be predicted; where the rules for establishing entitlement were anchored in law and precedent; where the symbolism of poverty was a problem for the poor rather than the community; where relief was residual; and where the ingrained sentiment of welfare providers was the minimization of present and future calls on resources.
- *Improvement regimes.* That is, welfare systems where governance of access to poor relief in all of its forms was relatively narrowly controlled but with strong exogenous checks; where institutional relief (communal or charitable) was common; where inspection and surveillance were regular and the expectations of such inspection clear; where paupers could navigate clear rules; where welfare agents were extremely sensitive to the material

symbolism of poverty; where relief may not have been adequate but was nonetheless regular; and where the ingrained sentiment of those controlling access to relief was the need to save/re-educate/improve the poor. In such a regime, relief would not be a *right* for the poor, but it might be an obligation for the community of which they were part.

Characterizing communities in these ways, and tracing continuity and change in what we might broadly understand as the sentimental architecture of the welfare system in a given locality, begins to move the conceptual agenda for welfare history beyond the discrete micro study. The regime types can encompass the experiences of all paupers or simply subgroups, such that a particular area or community might be classified as a disciplinary regime for one group and an entitlement regime for another. Moreover, the models are sensitive to change. It is perfectly possible for an area to demonstrate one ideal type in the 1750s and another in the 1790s, though collectively the underlying yardsticks are sufficient in number and depth to ensure that short-lived changes in practice, pauper experience, or official sentiment would leave the characterization of the welfare regime intact. The ideal types are also flexible enough to reflect community responses to fundamental changes in welfare law, while at the same time ensuring that real practice is elevated above the theory of the law.

Above all, the classification of communities and localities in this way provides the basis for understanding the presence or absence of wider spatial patterning of welfare types. The number of individual studies that might be needed to characterize a particular spatial unit as *belonging* to one particular regime, the extent of tolerance for ‘rogue’ communities in this pattern, and the degree to which the density of regime types needs to be diluted in order to discern a credible spatial boundary between one welfare region and another, are, as I suggest, a matter of art rather than science. Nonetheless, it is both possible and necessary to undertake this exercise. Thus for England, the forty or so historic micro studies and wider surveys of communities in Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland, North Yorkshire, Staffordshire, and

Shropshire encompass places across the topographical, socio-economic and rural–urban spectrum. Allied with a new comprehensive data set of pauper letters and the county level statistical surveys collected in the 1770s, early 1800s, and from 1813, these studies clearly suggest the existence of a long-established exclusion regime.<sup>34</sup>

While county boundaries are artificial administrative lines on a map, they are at their margins a useful shorthand for tracing and mapping the shift in the sentimental architecture of welfare that happens to the south of this broad region as we shift our attention to the clearly obligatory regimes of the Cotswolds and parts of south-west England, and to the entitlement regimes of central and eastern England.<sup>35</sup> In the post-1834 New Poor Law, a similar fusion of micro studies (richest of all for the county of Lancashire), regional surveys, centrally collected statistical data, and a massive database of pauper letters collected as part of an ongoing AHRC project would suggest that this broad northern and north-western collection of communities remained, as it had always been, an exclusion regime.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, notwithstanding the broad aim of the New Poor Law to create a nationwide disciplinary regime, it is clear from the same sorts of data that relatively few communities and even fewer ‘regions’ change their long term classification once we allow for the administrative chaos in the first decade after 1834, a matter to which I will return below.

All of these observations have important implications for the meaning of welfare payments, the identity of the poor, their experiences and expectations over the long term, and our sense of the reach of the state at different points. More than this, long-term continuities in

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<sup>34</sup> King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 79–184

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 141–80.

<sup>36</sup> For a summary of this work on Lancashire see Lewis Darwen, ‘Implementing and Administering the New Poor Law in the Industrial North: A Case Study of Preston Union in Regional Context, 1837–1861’ (Ph.D. thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015).

the classification of welfare regimes speak to the persistence of different models of citizenship, a matrix of very different relationships between centre and locality, a complex set of attitudes towards the raising of taxes, and an enduring set of spatial differences in beliefs about the causation of poverty and the potential for its remediation. Our ability to draw and change lines on maps at the national level, in other words, matters. The ability to draw those lines so that they cross national boundaries and we (for the first time) systematically compare the sentimental architecture of exclusion, entitlement, or obligatory regimes across Europe, whatever the socio-economic, religious, or topographical make-up of the underlying communities, is the necessary task for welfare historians of the future. After all, once we accept that England and Wales were not unique in their historic approaches to welfare, we can accept that European, not national, approaches are the only way to understand the meaning of welfare and its interconnections with questions of identity, citizenship, taxation, and state formation.

This said, as with any model, the application of further detailed empirical research since 2011 suggests the need for fine-tuning. Four issues in particular loom large. The first is embodied in Figures 2 and 3. Payments related to sickness and its relief under the English and Welsh Old Poor Law had for much of the eighteenth century absorbed between 10 and 15 per cent of all poor law spending. By the mid 1810s, this proportion was increasing, entering the 1830s at more than 30 per cent and on a steeply rising curve. The so-called crisis of the Old Poor Law was thus a crisis of sickness and response, and the increasingly central place of the sick poor in parochial welfare does much to explain the limited room for manoeuvre that New Poor Law Unions confronted in their initial decades. While the sick had no formal legal rights to more generous or sustained treatment than any other subgroup of paupers, there were clear moral and humanitarian duties for parishes to relieve sickness, as well as considerations of long-term economy. Since the surge in medical spending was common to

all English counties, it would be easy to construct the Old Poor Law in its final decades as moving towards an entitlement regime.

**## INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE ##**

**## INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE ##**

Figure 2: The Distribution of Medical Welfare Spending in West Yorkshire

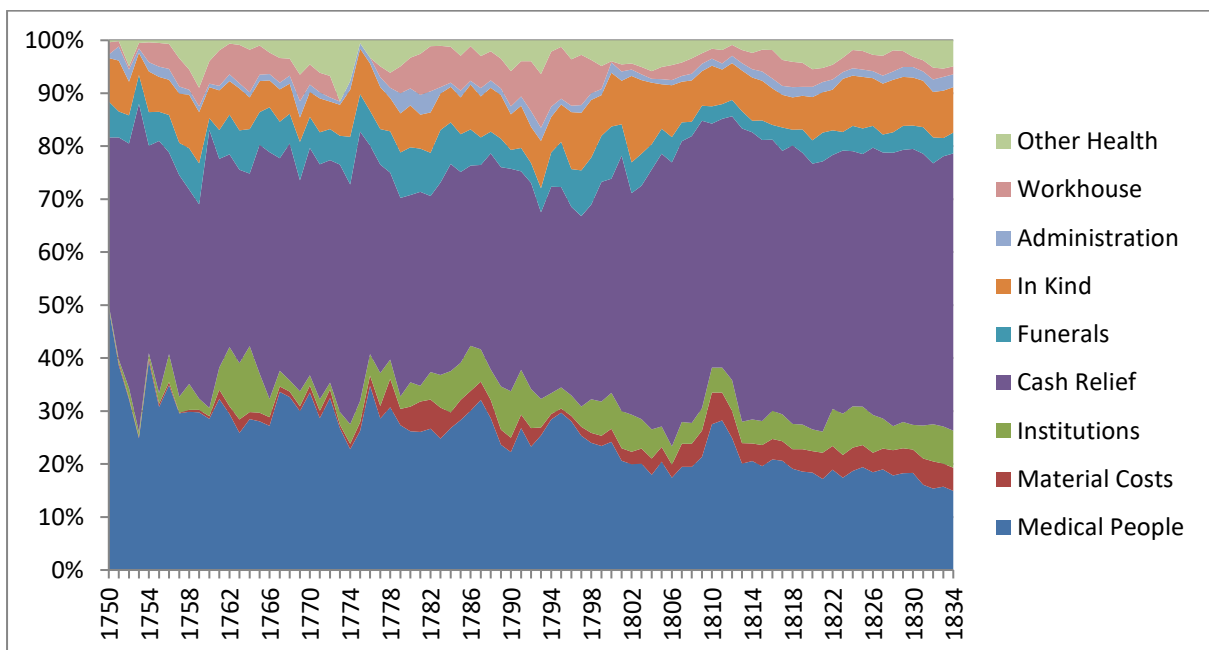
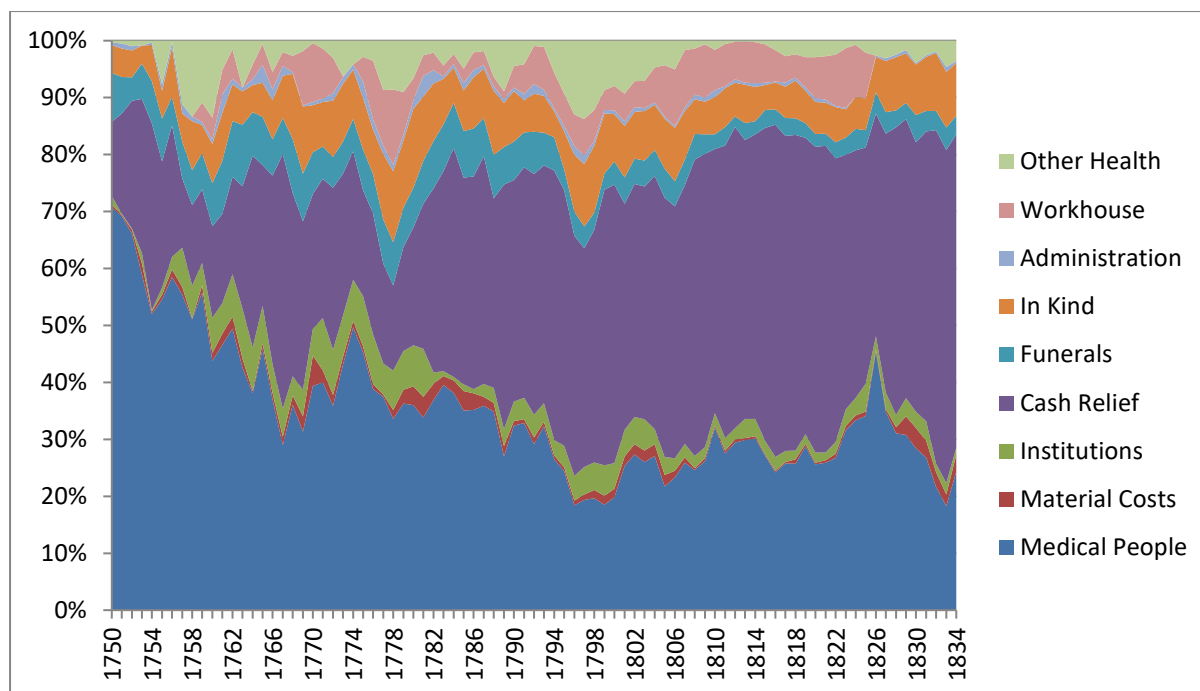


Figure 3: The Distribution of Medical Welfare Spending in Berkshire



Yet Figures 2 and 3, showing the distribution of medical welfare across a number of spending heads in West Yorkshire and Berkshire respectively, perhaps suggest a more nuanced conclusion. In Berkshire, surging medical welfare was coincident with, and driven by, larger cash payments to the sick and a progressive narrowing of the scope of medical welfare. For West Yorkshire the situation was broadly reversed, and there can be no doubt that both the experiences of sick paupers and the intent and sentiment of parochial officials were strikingly different in the two counties by the 1830s.<sup>37</sup> In particular, communities that focused on the provision of cash payments to paupers—effectively placing responsibility for welfare in their own hands—adopted a very different philosophical stance to places where the

<sup>37</sup> For more on the data underpinning these figures and on the sick poor more widely, see Steven A. King, *Sickness, Medical Welfare and the English Poor, 1750–1834* (Manchester, 2018).

parochial state itself commissioned and provided services. A model of welfare regimes might thus need to include measures of welfare concentration or extensity.

This engagement with sick paupers raises a second issue, which has come into sharper focus with the work of Samantha Williams and Henry French. Linking family reconstitution data and poor law accounts for communities in Bedfordshire and Essex respectively, they have been able to trace the life cycle focus in the distribution of poor law resources.<sup>38</sup> In a particularly striking analysis, French notes that by the early nineteenth century the concentration of relief in Terling (Essex) had begun to move decisively in favour of younger men with families and to less intensive, though no less expensive, allowances for this group.<sup>39</sup> Elsewhere—in Calverley (West Yorkshire), for instance—the major focus of poor law spending remained on women and the aged.<sup>40</sup> There were equally fundamental differences in the propensity of parishes to recognize and treat physical and mental impairment, and then to construct such impairment into degrees of ability and disability.<sup>41</sup> In turn, the gender, age, and health/ill-health focus of parochial policy are simultaneously a yardstick by which we might understand the sentiment of the welfare system, and a vehicle for providing coherence to the welfare regimes thus delineated. My 2011 model made insufficient allowance for the fact that welfare systems focused on women, the aged, or the

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<sup>38</sup> Samantha Williams, *Poverty, Gender and Life-Cycle Under the English Poor Law 1760–1834* (Woodbridge, 2011); French, ‘How Dependent’.

<sup>39</sup> Henry French, ‘An Irrevocable Shift: Detailing the Dynamics of Rural Poverty in Southern England, 1762–1834: A Case Study’, *Economic History Review*, 68 (2015), 769–805.

<sup>40</sup> Steven A. King, ‘Reconstructing Lives: The Poor, the Poor Law and Welfare in Calverley, 1650–1820’, *Social History*, 22 (1997), 318–38.

<sup>41</sup> Steven A. King, ‘Constructing the Disabled Child in England, 1800–1860’, *Family and Community History*, 18 (2015), 104–21.



sick and disabled signified different intent to those focused on men, younger people, and the able-bodied.

In part related to this observation, a third issue suggesting the need to tweak the model centres on the question of agency. Figure 1 encompasses yardsticks which partly capture the extent to which local welfare structures and outcomes were contestable, and thus how far the poor had agency. Recent empirical studies using pauper letters have done much to confirm the existence and purchase of such agency, and I have suggested that in many areas officials, paupers, and their advocates shared both a linguistic register through which to claim agency and an accepted ground of contestability on which such rhetoric might be deployed. This is not to argue that the ability to operationalize agency was experienced in a spatially uniform way. There can be little doubt that paupers in the high-density/high-turnover parishes of London and the rapidly growing cities of the Midlands and North had fewer avenues than those in other places, for instance.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, spatial differences in the nature of pauper rhetoric (to be found in their letters) might reflect an ingrained and widely held sense that agency must be tailored to the sentiment of the officials receiving such narratives. Agency both helped to create and reflected the welfare regimes under which paupers lived out their lives.<sup>43</sup> These empirical studies have also begun to highlight, however, the potential for third-party advocates (often of a similar or higher social status to parochial officials) to shape the

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<sup>42</sup> Though even in the London parish of St Martin's, Jeremy Boulton suggests that paupers had considerable agency in resisting the logic and execution of the settlement and removal system. See Jeremy Boulton, 'Double Deterrence: Settlement and Practice in London's West End, 1725–1824', in King and Winter (eds.), *Migration, Settlement and Belonging*, 54–80.

<sup>43</sup> Steven A. King, 'Regional Patterns in the Experiences and Treatment of the Sick Poor, 1800–40: Rights, Obligations and Duties in the Rhetoric of Paupers', *Family and Community History*, 10 (2007), 61–75; and King, *Writing the Lives*.

nature, longevity, regularity, and fluidity of local welfare. Epistolary advocates usually wrote with an explicit assumption that their testimony would carry weight, and that relief for ‘deserving’ paupers would be forthcoming. Almost all collections of letters relating to individuals and families contained such epistolary interventions, and Peter Jones and I have suggested three models of the timing of such interventions in the ‘story’ of the pauper.<sup>44</sup> My 2011 model was underpinned by a closed bilateral relationship between officials and ratepayers on the one hand, and paupers and their families on the other. In fact, the relationship was triangular, with advocates maintaining a two-way conversation with paupers and officials, and occasionally with each other.

A final driver for revisiting the welfare regimes model is rooted in the concept of path dependency. It is clear how an inter-melding of reactions to crisis and/or longer term changes in sentiment could result in a shift at community level from one regime type to another. The smallpox crises of later eighteenth-century central England fundamentally shifted, albeit temporarily, the focus of welfare towards a more institutional, less malleable, and more disciplinary structure.<sup>45</sup> In early nineteenth-century south-west England, the rapid multiplication of medical institutions such as dispensaries and voluntary hospitals was accompanied by a growing sense that poverty, where caused by ill health, was essentially remediable, and parochial officials delivered ever more of their welfare through institutional sojourns.<sup>46</sup> These experiences could all be accommodated in the 2011 argument. Yet—as shown by work on the longevity of attitudes to pauper burial, the differential treatment of

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<sup>44</sup> On agency and malleability see Steven A. King and Peter Jones, ‘Testifying for the Poor: Epistolary Advocates and the Negotiation of Parochial Relief in England, 1800–1834’, *Journal of Social History*, 49 (2016), 784–807.

<sup>45</sup> King, *Sickness*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

idiots and pauper lunatics at parish level, and marked spatial variation in the propensity for parishes to pursue families for recompense of or supplement to poor relief—few places changed their welfare practice completely or even rapidly. Just as the law of the Old and New Poor Laws was an amalgam of statute, case law, common law, and extra-legal structures and practices, so a welfare regime was likely in part to consist of a collection of ‘signatures’ of older ways of doing parish business, whatever its central tendency.

Nowhere is this clearer than in a variable such as attitudes towards children with physical and mental impairments. By the early nineteenth century it is clear that almost all parishes had come to see the value of investing in such children through training, apprenticeship, boarding, emigration, and ongoing cash allowances. Yet while Northamptonshire parishes seem to have migrated wholesale to this mode of thinking by the 1820s, the process was much less sustained in lowland Norfolk, where a combination of investment, incarceration in workhouses and homes, subsidy to family caring labour, and invasive treatments in medical institutions generated a much less positive set of experiences for this group.<sup>47</sup> My 2011 model did not make sufficient allowance for these sorts of persistent signatures. Nor was it flexible enough to deal with other aspects of path dependency of the sort highlighted by Andreas Gestrich in his chapter for this volume, notably the impact on the long-term sentimental architecture of welfare officials and recipients of the accumulation of charitable resources as a substitute for or supplement to welfare funded through other channels.

### *Rethinking Welfare Spaces*

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Against this backdrop, Figure 1 (see material in italics) suggests some supplemental yardsticks (focus and complexion and exogeny) and associated empirical questions which help to bring out a wider sense of the character, accumulated history, dynamics and susceptibility to outside influences of local welfare systems in England and Wales. These feed through seamlessly to my existing typologies of welfare regimes. Thus, in addition to the characteristics already outlined above for an *exclusion regime*, the new yardsticks would encourage us to add the following attributes: little susceptibility to epistolary advocates; bounded scope for pauper agency and, where it did occur, a situational rhetoric in letters; insignificant references to structures of custom and morality; the focus of resources on subgroups of the poor which were recognizably ‘deserving’; and the law as part of the disciplinary infrastructure. At the opposite extreme, an *obligatory regime* would be one where, in addition to the features already set out earlier in this chapter, agency was concerted and rhetoric both situational and generic; susceptibility to epistolary advocates was strong; the spectrum of relief was considerable; and the complexion of relief recipients varied across life cycle stage and causation of poverty.

Yet the addition of these yardsticks and the foregoing discussion about the recent development of micro studies, which necessitates the further development of the model, also perhaps requires the formulation of a *sixth* welfare typology—one which allows for the temporary or longer-term development of welfare structures and policies oriented strongly towards one particular subset of the poor, such as the sick, aged, low waged, or underemployed. The micro studies of the English and Welsh Old Poor Law are littered with such examples, though few show the concentration as clearly as French does for Terling. Such focus does not mean that either the poor or parochial officials equated the offering of relief with an obligation to grant it. Nor does it confirm the agency of the poor, or the power of exogenous actors such as magistrates and epistolary advocates. Recognizing these

*situational regimes*, however, affords a new tool for understanding the spatial dimensions of welfare, especially the response of communities to crisis periods. Thus, if we return to the example of medical welfare, a *situational regime* allows us to distinguish between the experiences of Wiltshire on the one hand and Lancashire on the other. At the aggregate level, both counties saw a sustained medicalization of poverty and a sharply rising proportion of welfare resources devoted to medical welfare. In Wiltshire this experience was generalized across the parochial spectrum. Key regularities included significant spending on institutional care, strong engagement with doctors under contract, and a very significant cash component to overall medical welfare. Above all, it is clear going into the early 1830s *both* that the majority of all relief was being spent on the alleviation of sickness broadly defined *and* that the majority of recipients were sick or part of families where sickness prevailed.

In every respect, then, the county was a situational regime in which agency was strong, the sick poor were deemed to have moral and customary rights, parochial officials invested significant sums in treating sickness, and surveillance of the sick poor was limited.<sup>48</sup> By contrast, Lancashire parishes exhibit a much less uniform focus on the sick poor, even though spending on them increased absolutely and relatively. At times of crisis, the able-bodied unemployed or unemployed dominated the relief lists. At normal times, the aged, widows, and children might still be the mainstay of relief recipients, even if the proportion of overall spending accounted for by medical welfare rose. And in many Lancashire parishes the sick poor never acquired *de facto* rights and never thought that they had them. The same broad conclusions can be drawn for other upland areas including Cumberland, Westmorland, and North Yorkshire, such that the exclusion regime label I have persistently applied to these spaces in my attempts to characterize the multiple Old Poor Laws that existed remains in place even as the composition of welfare changes, and even as those same changes might

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

prompt a rethinking of how we characterize and label the meaning and practice of welfare in south-west England.

This more refined hierarchy of yardsticks and welfare regimes also allows us to use the model to trace more precise chronological trends in the sentimental architecture of the poor laws. Returning to the point with which I started this chapter: there can be no doubt that the architects of the New Poor Law intended to create a disciplinary welfare regime. A historiographical (and contemporary) focus on workhouses, workhouse scandals, abuse, and the suffering and terror of the poor has often been taken as suggesting that the law achieved this aim.<sup>49</sup> In fact, this is a partial picture at best. While it is certainly true that some collections of communities embraced the essence of the New Poor Law with vigour and persistence—Atcham in Shropshire for instance, or Bethnal Green in London<sup>50</sup>—in most places the real effect of 1834 was to create a widespread but short lived spatial patchwork of situational and exclusion, rather than disciplinary, regimes. By the 1840s, the few truly disciplinary regimes that persisted—urban places like Barnsley (Yorkshire) and Mansfield (Nottinghamshire), or rural unions such as Mitford and Launditch (Norfolk) and Ampthill (Bedfordshire)—were surrounded by other areas that had reverted to their long-term regime type or become something else entirely. There were fewer obligatory regimes in rural southern England than had been the case under the Old Poor Law, but many more improvement and situational regimes.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Summarized in Jones and King, *Pauper Voices*, 1–19

<sup>50</sup> For Atcham see Lyn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700–1948* (Cambridge, 1998). On Bethnal Green, see Jones and King, *Pauper Voices*.

<sup>51</sup> King, 'Rights, Duties and Practice'.

Welfare regions became more numerous and fragmented after 1834, but judged over the appropriate period—say 20 years from 1834—the national statistics collected by the variously constituted central authorities of the New Poor Law point to enduring hierarchies in terms of welfare spending per capita, the composition of the pauper body, persistence of agency, and the susceptibility of localities to exogenous pressures.<sup>52</sup> This had little to do with the relative wealth or poverty of individual areas, and much more with the slow, often path-dependent, development of the sentimental architecture of welfare at local level. If, as I suggest, a legally and administratively enshrined New Poor Law with supposedly standard rules and practice was unable to eliminate the complex patchwork of welfare regimes that it inherited, then the obvious (perhaps single most important) question for the future is how these enduring welfare regimes pattern on to their counterparts on the Continent, which had even less central reach for the period I am considering here.

### *Conclusion*

No model, however firmly based in the codification of micro studies of parochial or community policy, is immune from the accumulation of exceptionalism. Indeed, in England and Wales there are parishes where practice was so situational that no amount of digging in the archives or reading between the lines of sources will tell us about the nexus of ego, personality, sentiment, and family connections implicit in one group or individual receiving relief while others with similar circumstances did not. Moreover, in most English parishes the

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<sup>52</sup> For comprehensive discussion of this statistical information see Williams, *From Pauperism to Poverty*.

operation of models is episodically interrupted by circumstance. By way of example, significant numbers of parishes in the 1810s and 1820s, seemingly without reference to each other but nonetheless in concerted fashion, sought to slash relief lists as bills rose and prices fell. Even vestries in areas and communities characterized by entitlement and obligatory regimes participated. An analogue for the New Poor Law might be union participation in aspects of the ‘crusade against outdoor relief’. Where sustained, these sorts of short-term measures could change the very character of welfare as it was delivered and experienced, so that circumstance melded seamlessly into structure.

Yet in most communities, these sorts of short-term changes did not gain traction. Indeed, paupers across most welfare regimes were remarkably successful in reasserting their claims, even if this took time and persistence. Officials lamented this state of affairs but were seemingly unable to prevent it developing. Such episodes may have left a signature on the nature of welfare practice and pauper agency, something for which we must account in modelling welfare regimes, but they did not change the core sentiment of welfare or the nature of the relationship between officials and ratepayers, paupers, and advocates. This does not, of course, mean that this chapter encompasses the full suite of models appropriate to different European contexts. Indeed, historians have much to learn from attempts by policy commentators to make sense of the still significant national, regional, and intraregional variations in modern European welfare practice. Gough et al., for instance, develop an eight-strand spectrum of ideal types, ranging from ‘Rudimentary assistance’ and ‘Selective welfare’ at one end to ‘Centralized, discretionary’ regimes at the other, in which the three main classificatory yardsticks are the extent and salience of welfare, structure, and generosity.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ian Gough et al., ‘Social Assistance in OECD Countries’, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 7 (1997), 17–43.



For the English and Welsh context, however, the density of published and unpublished micro studies is now such that welfare historians have an obligation to look upwards and outwards rather than downwards and inwards. We might adopt a suite of additional questions to explore and codify the yardsticks set out in the tables earlier in the essay. I have not, for instance, asked how officials in the different regimes tensioned agency and a broadly constructed ‘contribution’ to the community concerned.<sup>54</sup> Nor have I sought to explore the extent to which we might see the poor as exercising a collective as opposed to an individual agency, even though officials often felt themselves to be weighed down by the clamour of ‘the poor’. And I have not tailored any of these yardsticks to the ethnicity of the poor in terms of Scottishness or Welshness, even though there is some suggestion that those in the Scottish borders experienced and constructed welfare in different ways.<sup>55</sup> In this sense we might see the yardsticks and questions and the resulting welfare regimes as a work in progress. Nonetheless, it is a necessary one. National samples of pauper letters, overseers’ accounts, and vestry minutes increasingly reveal regularities of experience, motivations, policy, and sentiment which stand above the undoubted existence of welfare republics. In so far as these same sources reveal continuities between Britain and Europe, the need for a wider canvas is clear. As Andreas Gestrich and I suggest in our discussion of pauper narratives in Britain and Germany, the construction and execution of pauper agency between the two

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<sup>54</sup> I am grateful to Julia Moses who made this point and explored it with me in a seminar at the German Historical Institute London.

<sup>55</sup> Jones and King, ‘Voices from the Far North’.

countries has rather more in common than might be at once apparent, clearly suggesting the need for a more and more forceful comparative territory.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Andreas Gestrich and Steven A. King, 'Pauper Letters and Petitions for Poor Relief in Germany and Great Britain, 1770–1914', *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 35/2 (2013), 12–25.