

Acknowledgments

Both good fortune and great help from my Argentine friends and co-workers enabled me to expand this book from a discussion of street children to one that looks at feminist and female philanthropic child advocacy and the welfare state. My understanding of both themes would have been far different if I had not finally received permission to research heretofore closed archives. After eight years of persistence and, with the help of Dora Barrancos, then head of the Women's Studies Program at the Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires and a former legislator for the Government of Buenos Aires, I obtained permission to consult the archives of the government agency charged with monitoring state institutions for children and other legal issues associated with minors and the family. Currently known as the Consejo Nacional de Niñez, Adolescencia y la Familia [the National Council for Childhood, Adolescence and the Family, CNAFA], it holds many of the archival papers of child welfare institutions (including the Society of Beneficence) that are missing from the Archivo General de la Nación [National Archives of Argentina, AGN], as well as more than five hundred thousand files on children who entered state institutions. Significantly, the portion from 1880 to 1955 that I was allowed to consult had approximately fifty thousand files. Since that date the numbers have soared tenfold—a clear indication that the welfare state in Argentina continues to function, albeit in a more limited and poorly financed way. This observation is reaffirmed by the lines of families that queue outside of state agencies. Assisted by my researchers, Fernanda Gil Lozano, Luis Blacha, Laura Moon, and Analía Coccolio, we read these files for two years until a change of government and administration led to the rejection of our request to expand the time frame of our investigation. Throughout our research, we were not allowed to xerox, scan, or photograph files, but rather only transcribe them with computers.

As we sampled the materials, particularly from the 1930s onward, a rich collection of letters emerged concerning the role of philanthropic women and their social workers. In addition, letters from parents to children and from children to parents, social workers' reports on the housing of parents and foster parents, and correspondence related to the children offered a vantage point previously unavailable. In an effort to tell the stories of these people, as well as the institutions, I have quoted freely from the archives so that the children, parents, and agency employees of these institutions have the opportunity to represent themselves alongside the institutional evaluations of them. Clients' names have not been revealed in accordance with the wishes of the Consejo.

Access to provincial archives also permitted me to expand the story of child welfare beyond the city of Buenos Aires. However, the richness of these archives depended upon the wealth of the province or city as well as specific interests of local politicians. Furthermore, not all provinces and cities maintained careful statistics on child abandonment, juvenile delinquency, and women's feminist and philanthropic organizations. For these reasons I have expanded the story to include the provinces of Buenos Aires, Tucumán, and La Pampa, while others have been mentioned according to specific themes.

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