Book Reviews

This is an accessible and informative book, aimed at students, which should be read by anyone interested or involved in health policy development, delivery and analysis and those engaged in any type of comparative analysis. It places health policy in a comparative context with the purpose of demonstrating the similarities and differences in approach among various countries' efforts to resolve health care problems. They use quite a diverse range of 'first world' countries – the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Sweden – as a 'good sample upon which to analyse the dynamics of Western health care policy in the twenty first century' (p. 21).

This book goes further than most other generic comparative health policy texts. Its chapter headings demonstrate this, for only one chapter is allocated to 'Funding, Provision and Governance' of health systems, which is usually the sole focus of other comparative analyses. Following a thorough introduction of key concepts and issues in comparative health policy, Chapter 2 situates these countries health systems in their political, historical and cultural contexts. It provides a strong explanation and description on the complex interplay of factors which contribute to country-specific health care policies, despite the increased and common impact of global forces on health care – ageing populations, cost of medical technologies and increased public expectations. The importance of political systems is highlighted again in the outline of how each country differs in the funding, provision and governance of health care. The 'Setting Priorities and Allocating Resources' chapter goes beneath the structural and institutional dimensions of health care policies to examine their goals, objectives and priorities. This clearly demonstrates the emphasis on health care and not on health. It also simply and clearly deals with quite complex and competing factors, e.g. quality, equality, access, cost containment and efficiency. The concepts of effectiveness, equality and quality are still marginal to national and comparative health care policy planning and analysis, due to the difficulty in measuring such concepts and differing views on their actual meanings. Again, the welfare regime and prevailing political ideology of each country are identified as crucial forces in determining how health service priorities are determined and how resources are allocated in each place.

The second half of the book explores the role of the medical profession, health care beyond the hospital (by looking at informal care for the elderly) and public health. The attention and detail in these chapters is a refreshing take on comparative health policy. While rarely mentioned in other texts, these issues are almost never considered in detail. Their inclusion here is a very welcome development. The authors use these chapters to outline the power and control of the medical profession in maintaining the status quo in medical care, the under funding and marginlisation of essential elements of the health systems, e.g. informal care and public health. These sections clearly outline how health care is in fact interpreted and carried out in the form of medical care; how medical care, while important for those in need of it (in particular those who cannot afford or access it), does little to impact on our health. It also questions why

the institutional structures in which doctors work have changed significantly over the last few decades; how their power has not been reduced? One per cent of the health budget in the USA goes to public health – $3,000 per person is spent on health care per annum, while $34 per person spent on prevention.

Given current knowledge on the determinants of health – that we know that the main factors that influence our health lie primarily outside of the health sector, in education, income and wealth distribution, alleviating poverty, in the provision of good quality housing etc. – such figures are startling but alas true.

The book concludes with an analysis of understanding health policy comparatively. It explains why health policies do not easily fit into typologies, the importance of country-specific contexts and differences, the need for caution alongside the possibilities of cross-national learning. It summaries how different developments taking place across these countries show a convergence in health policies and the predominance of similarities. Within all this, the authors manage to highlight the complexity of health policy in a straightforward way.

Despite the clarity of the writing, the breadth of issues and countries covered, the welcome spotlight on public health and the importance of the political context, this book falls into the pitfall of most authors in comparative health policy analysis. They fail to sufficiently clarify the difference between health and health care policy and use the terms interchangeably. Again, while a real strength of this book is the authors' identification of the broader determinants of health, a book still needs to be written on comparative health policy which looks at how non health care policies' impact on population health across countries and regions. Also, it is no longer possible to look at health care policy in a comparative context without considering the developing world. Although this is acknowledged, it is not addressed. Key issues in global health and economic inequalities, such as the escalating gap in life expectancy between the developed and the developing world and the bleeding of qualified health service personnel from developing world countries, can no longer be ignored in any comparative analysis.

So, while this text moves such analyses significantly along in the right (or left!) direction, a further text by Blank and Burau including the global and public health explorations would be a useful addition to this valuable text.

A comprehensive list of further reading, a bibliography and a short list of links to essential websites for the countries under analysis are detailed at the end of the book.

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Martin Rein and Winfried Schmähl (eds), *Rethinking the Welfare State: The Political Economy of Pension Reform*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, 2004, 480 pp., £79.95 hbk, ISBN: 1 84376 102 5

Gerard Hughes and Jim Stewart (eds), *Reforming Pensions in Europe: Evolution of Pension Financing and Sources of Retirement Income*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, 2004, 320 pp., £65.00 hbk, ISBN: 1 84376 522 5
DOI: 10.1017/S0047279404228471

The last decade and a half have seen big changes made to welfare states. Welfare retrenchment, at one time seen as a particular feature of the Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare state, has become a general phenomenon with countries such as Sweden, France and Germany taking action to cut back the costs of their welfare states. Changes to pensions, often the largest single item of social expenditure, have been at the centre of these reforms. Governments, urged on by institutions

such as the World Bank and European Commission, have acted to deal with the twin pressures of ageing populations and globalisation, the latter having tended to restrict governments' ability to raise the necessary revenues to sustain their respective welfare state expenditures. The two books reviewed here both attempt to get to grips with this process and with its implications.

Martin Rein and Winfried Schmähl's ambitious but ultimately flawed edited work (*Rethinking the Welfare State: The Political Economy of Pension Reform*) highlights the changes that have occurred in a number of pensions systems and attacks the concept of path dependence in pensions. Its strength is the range of its analysis. Its 19 contributors outline reforms to the pensions systems of Japan, a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and in Latin America, as well as the usual suspects in Europe, America and Australasia. The editors rightly note that this enables them to represent something of the great variety of new directions taken by countries in transition, as well as by the mature industrial economies.

At the heart of the book is the question of whether the changes, taking place in the political economy of pension reform, are leading to a new form of public–private mix, and consideration of the possible effects of this. Whilst public pensions systems endure, the studies point to a general expansion of private sector provision. In many countries this is leading to a partial substitution of private for public provision. Nevertheless the case studies in this volume do not point to the emergence of a common approach. A process of 'privatisation' is clearly taking place, but its form is diverse: the voluntary provision of pensions (often defined contribution) by employers as in the USA; 'contracting-out' as in Britain and Japan; the introduction of mandatory second-tier private earnings-related pension schemes on the lines of the Dutch and Swiss systems or, more recently, Australia; and the carving out of part of the public system to be funded by direct investment in equity markets on the lines of developments in Germany and Sweden. As the editors point out, what we find is not the emergence of pure reform types but a series of hybrid approaches and a blurring of the public/private distinction. However, the editors seem uncertain as to the implications of this. One possibility might be the growth of inequalities amongst the aged. Another, they tentatively suggest, might be that the design of the public–private mix is more important than the relative proportions.

The book's key problem is that the chapters from which the editors' conclusions are drawn are variable both in the questions they address and the answers they provide. Thus, to take two chapters at random, Bonoli's analysis of the institutionalisation of the Swiss multi-pillar pension system is essentially backward looking, seeking to explain the mechanics of its emergence. In contrast, the succeeding chapter by Leny H. van der Heiden-Aantjes is essentially forward looking, describing the present system of pensions in the Netherlands and considering whether it will prove sustainable in the twenty-first century. Whilst each chapter is informative in itself, the imposition by the editors of a common set of questions would have strengthened the overall analysis, and the conclusions. Moreover, the quality of individual chapters is uneven. Some are excellent (most notably David Blake, Peter Whiteford, Giuliano Bonoli and Agnieszka Chłoń-Domińczak on Britain, Australia, Switzerland, and Poland respectively). Some, such as Yukiko M. Katsumata's chapter on Japan, badly need editing to make them easier to read and to strengthen their analysis. Rather surprisingly this is most noticeable in Winfried Schmähl's own chapter on Germany, which is marred by repetition, poor writing, and an over-eagerness to declare the concept of welfare state path dependence redundant.

In fact, despite the attack on the notion of path dependence in the editors' introduction, and as the editors themselves note, what is particularly striking about each of the case studies outlined here is the uniqueness of each country's development trajectory. Plainly, 'history matters'. Past decisions constrain present policy options. And, whilst reforms are certainly under way on a wide front, one should remember, as the editors concede, that the new pension schemes often cover the same people as the old public systems, and generally contributions

to these systems continue. The public–private mix is changing, therefore, but the problem of double payments in converting from unfunded pay-as-you-go state pensions to funded pensions, whether private or 'carved-out' of the public system, ensures that these old systems will be around for some time to come. This rather undermines the notion that a 'paradigm shift' has occurred.

Gerard Hughes and Jim Stewart's much more successful edited volume on *Reforming Pensions in Europe* has a narrower focus, but a far more sophisticated approach to the issue of path dependence. Its 13 chapters discuss recent European pensions reforms and analyse their consequences for present and future pensioners. The overall thrust of the book's argument is that pension reforms in a number of European countries have involved the superimposition of privately funded pensions on existing pay-as-you-go systems. As the analysis of many of the contributors brings out, this superimposition is a recipe for anomalies and inconsistencies.

What is particularly impressive about this volume is the way that the chapters add up to a coherent whole. Hughes and Stewart are to be congratulated on the quality and tightness of their editing. In this respect, the difference between this volume and that by Rein and Schmähl can be seen in chapters in each book by Martin Rein and John Turner. Each concerns the typology of pensions reform and each puts forward a persuasive argument for four pathways to reform: voluntary with tax incentives, contracting-out, widespread labour contracts, and mandatory. The chapter in Rein and Schmähl, however, takes nearly three times as long to make virtually the same argument as that made in the equivalent chapter in Hughes and Stewart.

Because the focus of Hughes and Stewart's volume is not just on the form but on the effects of the changes being made to European pensions systems, it very successfully brings out the profoundly negative long-term consequences for particular groups. For example, the future costs for women of the increasing role of privately funded pensions is highlighted by Mechthild Veil in her chapter on Germany's 2001 pension reform, and by Lena Granqvist and Ann-Charlotte Ståhberg's analysis of Swedish reforms in the 1990s. As other chapters show, privatisation means that all those moving in and out of (often low-paid) employment in Europe's increasingly 'flexible' labour market face the prospect of lower pensions as a result. An increasing role for private provision also exposes contributors to market risks from which they have hitherto been shielded. Moreover, as Gerard Hughes and Adrian Sinfield's excellent chapter points out, because the shift towards greater privately funded pension provision is being accomplished through the use of tax incentives, it involves substantial hidden costs for all taxpayers. Pension tax expenditures in some Anglo-Saxon welfare state regimes actually exceed the cost of means-tested and non-contributory pensions for the poorest pensioners and rival the cost of social insurance pensions. The regressive nature of these tax expenditures has potentially very profound implications for the distribution of income – something countries seeking to emulate the Anglo-Saxon approach would be well-advised to take more notice of.

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By any measure, Methuselah was a remarkable man. According to *Genesis*, he fathered Lamech at the age of 187, and lived until the age of 969. While scholars may debate whether these years are as long as our own, the potency of Methuselah as a symbol of longevity is preserved through

such contemporary distractions as the Methuselah Mouse Prize, currently offering a substantial dollar reward for the owner of a mouse which breaks the current longevity record.

But what about human beings: how long can we expect to live, what consequences will increasing longevity have for our society and way of life, and should we want to live longer? This book contains a series of chapters which explore seven different aspects of the subject – from the latest estimates of future longevity, through to the consequences on health care and welfare payments, and some ethical dimensions. The authors (and for most chapters, the discussants) are either members of staff of the Brookings Institution, or others associated with them, and therefore concentrate mainly on the USA.

The reason for the book, of course, is both the extension of life which has already been taking place for some time, and the future promise of molecular biology: 'the molecular biology century, as the twenty-first century may well be called, will almost certainly change how humans see the world and themselves' (p. 2). The projections are varied and by definition uncertain – estimates for life expectancy at birth range between 84 and 104 for babies born in 2030, and 86 to 115 for those born in 2075. The best advice for such estimates is perhaps to give a year or a number, but never both. In the meantime, the greatest impact will be the ageing and retirement of the baby-boomers.

So what will be the impact? The stakes appear to be high: 'A rapid increase in life expectancy could render the European economic paradigm unworkable' (p. 280), as the costs of reduced labour force participation and early retirement bankrupt the welfare state. The crucial issue, of course, is the relationship between work and retirement, with the corollary being the need to postpone, or otherwise redefine retirement. For example, a policy of postponing pension age by one month a year from 2018 would solve the problem for the USA.

With healthcare costs, the effects of ageing are less obvious. The authors accept the growing body of evidence that 'years to death' is probably a better indicator of healthcare costs than 'years since birth'. If so, then increased longevity is much less of a problem than improved technology linked to increased expectations. They also attempt to model the cost implications if medical science were to reduce the prevalence of particular diseases – such as heart disease, diabetes or cancer. The result is a significant, if modest decline in expenditure on these conditions, with the greatest reduction in expenditure on heart disease, and the smallest reduction on cancer. But more important, the golden prospect of extended – and healthy – life.

Unfortunately, for US citizens, this scenario is likely to increase health inequalities. The overall cost of health insurance will rise, mainly to meet the costs of more effective healthcare. More people will be unable to afford the increased costs and will become uninsured, thereby failing to benefit from the advances of medical science. European healthcare systems will presumably have to find alternative responses to such cost inflation.

This is just one of the ethical dilemmas to be faced. Others will result from the means used to extend life – such as genetic alteration – and the extent to which life is added to years, as well as years to life. In relation to the latter, the best scenario is that of Oliver Wendell Holmes's one-hoss shay, which lasted a hundred years and a day and then fell instantly apart. The book also considers – and rejects – the argument that we should not be looking to extend life, since finitude lends life savour, sweetness and value.

This book is strongest where it presents and reviews the detailed evidence – for example, on the competing projections of life-expectancy. Its limitations lie in its primary focus on the USA, and in the inherent uncertainty of so much of what is discussed. If one is looking for a simple answer to the question 'how much will advances in molecular biology cost society through extended life expectancy', one will look in vain, since at every turn different projections produce very different outcomes, and it is all very complicated. For instance, in a (rather brief) discussion on the impact on health inequalities, the conclusion generally is that increasingly

effective but costly health care will widen disparities. But there are sufficient counter-examples to make one wonder. For example, the development of stem cell transplants to treat diabetes will actually benefit the least well-educated, since they are generally least well able to manage the disease at present.

Any examination of this subject will face these difficulties. This book is a useful collection of evidence, for those not already familiar with the issues. Meanwhile, for old mouse enthusiasts, the prize money for any intervention which actually reverses the process of mouse ageing now stands at $40,000.

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Trudie Knijn and Aafke Komter (eds), *Solidarity Between the Sexes and the Generations: Transformations in Europe*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, 2004, 229 pp., £55 hbk, ISBN 1-84376-358-3.
DOI: 10.1017/S0047279404248474

A contemporary political agenda which calls for 'social inclusion' has re-awakened interest in issues of social solidarity previously explored by Durkheim and Weber in their examination of the impact of industrialisation on interpersonal ties. The latter decades of the twentieth century witnessed a return to neo-liberal policies and perceptions in the USA and Western Europe and largely subsumed notions of an 'inclusive society'. Nevertheless, changes in family, labour and neighbourhood solidarity as a result of the rise of European welfare state intervention since the mid twentieth century has transformed gender and intergenerational exchange both in capitalist and former communist European countries. However, this transformation has not been uniform and the extent of change is reflected in the welfare model adopted throughout the continent and is contingent on the degree of welfare intrusion within different societies.

This book, edited by Trudie Knijn and Aafke Komter (the Netherlands) draws on a wide range of academics from north, south, east and west Europe who present the experience of women, welfare state and citizenship in a geographical and political context. The authors pose, and tackle important questions for the twenty-first century, the major one being: 'Which structures of care, labour and income (social security), care for the elderly (*sic*), working hours are needed to keep up with the changing relations between sexes and generations?'

The book addresses both micro- and macro-solidarity and has an introduction and 12 main chapters organised into three parts. In the introduction, the editors provide a good background and overview of the volume.

Part I focuses on 'Transformations in the relationship between the public and the private' and comprises five chapters. In Chapter 1, Claude Martin (France) explores the history of family solidarity and draws out some of the difficulties in defining micro- and macro-solidarity within the framework of family and welfare provision/withdrawal over time. Trudie Knijn (the Netherlands) in Chapter 2 takes the argument further by examining the widely debated issue of whether the welfare state and its caring provisions act as a substitute for family solidarity. For Chapter 3, Ruth Lister (UK) looks at the shifts in boundaries of responsibility between the micro and macro, private and public obligations to families and individuals. The deeply gendered nature of the division of paid and unpaid caring work is discussed in Chapter 4 by Jane Lewis (UK), and a case put forward for policies to promote a more equal valuing and sharing of care work between men and women. This section is rounded off by Chiara Saraceno (Italy) in Chapter 5 with a comparison of European trends in income-tested family benefits and concludes that family benefits are not neutral: class and gender divisions are increased when welfare provision focuses on family solidarity as the model for help and care.

The second part examines 'Cross-national comparisons of demographic trends' and contains two chapters. Pearl Dykstra (the Netherlands) gives an historical overview of trends in patterns of family solidarity across Western European countries. Differences between 'familialistic' welfare regimes of southern Europe and the 'de-familialized' welfare regimes found in northern Europe are explored. Chapter 7 by Irena Kotowska (Poland) offers an interesting exposé of demographic and fiscal changes in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Research reveals that the reduction of state support has imposed a greater responsibility on the household to provide for itself but that families are facing increasing economic disparity in the transitional period following the collapse of communism.

Part III 'Shifting patterns of family solidarity' opens the wider debate on gender and intergenerational exchange of paid and unpaid labour, instrumental and emotional care and the influence of changing welfare policies across Europe. In Chapter 8, Aafke Komter (the Netherlands) argues that there can be a 'dark side' to family solidarity and that it is not necessarily a positive experience for everyone, whether either giving or receiving informal care (or both). Negative factors such as dependency, burden and obligation are discussed and how anger and disappointment can sour intergenerational relationships. The youngest and oldest populations receive attention in Chapter 9 from Constanza Tobio (Spain). The chapter highlights intergenerational exchange and reciprocity, looking at the role of women, middle-aged and old in caring for children and aged parents. Reciprocity and solidarity between parents and children are again central to Ilona Ostner's (Germany) Chapter 10. These two concepts are further refined and defined in terms of 'give and take' and 'one way street' and the diverse expectations of family and state-based provision of care. The Nordic model of welfare provision comes under scrutiny in Chapter 11 and Arnlaug Leira (Norway) argues that state-supported childcare and paid parental schemes, including special leave for fathers, have contributed to the transformation of parental obligations into social rights in these countries. In the final chapter Fiona Williams (UK) examines some of the processes involved with the increased use of migrant domestic labour in countries whose welfare systems have traditionally sustained familial obligations to care. This is one of the most interesting developments in gender and family solidarity. As working women take on the male model of working time and conditions, they employ other women to carry out the traditional 'female' caring role.

The strength of the book lies in the comprehensive coverage of the expanded Europe and its diverse welfare perspectives, taking gender and intergenerational solidarity as the core of the discourse. The volume includes theoretical, empirical and comparative material, which is written in an accessible and refreshingly jargon-free style. I consider it is eminently suitable for courses in social policy, gender studies and sociology.

However, a seemly minor criticism but an important issue for me as a social gerontologist, is the use of the term 'the elderly'. The Eurobarometer Survey conducted as long ago as 1992 revealed that when asked, people over the age of 60 preferred the terminology 'senior citizens' or 'older people' and they firmly rejected the label 'elderly' (Walker and Maltby, 1997: 17). In the UK and EU, policy makers and government departments involved with strategy for an ageing population now consistently use the term 'older people' in their documentation. Such an oversight by the editors is very disappointing and for this reason I am aware that many gerontologists would be reluctant to recommend the text to students who were studying ageing.

Reference

Walker, A. and Maltby, T. (1997), *Ageing Europe*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

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This is an interesting and infuriating book. It is interesting because it is the best written 'cultural
studies' based treatment of the contemporary situation and trajectory of the UK and US welfare
states. In contrast with most 'cultural studies' writing in social policy it is clear, coherent, and
contains interesting and innovative ideas. It is infuriating because it relies entirely upon the
contemporary, but certainly not original, version of the cultural studies/post-structuralist/neo-
foucauldian project. By so doing, given the clarity of Clarke's expression, it demonstrates the
vacuity and evasion which underpins that project as it is now constituted.

The project represented by the book has two interwoven strands. One is to generate
an account of the contemporary situation and trajectory of welfare states. Clarke explicitly
indicates that this is not a comparative social policy text but rather an account of the overall
situation and tendency illustrated by a 'juxtaposition of examples' (p. 7) drawn from a range
of contexts, although in reality the book draws primarily on UK and US material. The other
is to transcend a tradition in social policy studies which confines attention to: '"thin" social
landscapes – peopled only by economic forces, socio-economic groups (classes) and political
parties' (p. 1). Clarke seeks to achieve this by drawing on a range of intellectual approaches and
modes which come together as cultural studies. What these approaches have in common is a
concern with: 'the contested and conflictual production of meaning as a terrain in which social
groups struggled to create and maintain forms of domination and subordination' (p. 2).

Although the book is not explicitly organized into parts the first introduction and first
three substantive chapters are specifications of position – arguments for 'taking a cultural turn'.
Clarke begins with a consideration of the 'deconstruction of welfare states' which relates the
politics of welfare over the last twenty years to the contemporary position of nation states
themselves. 'The unsettling of these familiar combinations of nation, state and welfare provides
the political and analytical springboard for the book' (p. 9). The next chapter outlines of the
nature of the cultural turn as project – in essence Clarke sets out the conceptual framework
which informs the book as a whole. He then proceeds to: 'an examination of the "social"
exploring the changing content of what counts as "social" in social policy' (p. 9). This is a
chapter concerned with the sources of claims on welfare states in terms of differences and
divisions – a constant theme in the cultural turn, which reflects the degree to which that turn
derives from linguistic approaches.

Chapters 4–7 are more substantive and deal with globalization and destabilization, neo-
liberalism, governing welfare, and 'performing for the public' in which Clarke reviews the whole
audit/target style of contemporary governance and regulation of UK welfare. The treatment of
governance and performance measurement is rather good, if seriously incomplete in coverage –
no mention of recommodification and the role of agency in relation to profit imperatives. Clarke
knows about governance and the audit culture and has interesting things to say. The thematic
approach is maintained throughout these chapters. That is to say the accounts are accounts in
terms of the approach set out earlier for the text as a whole. As is the case for the whole book,
these discussions are clear and coherent.

What then is the 'cultural turn'? For Clarke the cultural turn involves a rejection not
only of any notion of structural determination of welfare systems by 'economic base' but also
an elimination of the idea that class relations expressed in action are fundamental for welfare
state forms and futures. In their place we get culture. I agree that of course welfare states are
'not just the institutionalized expression of the balance of class forces' (p. 25), but in capitalist
(a term not much employed in this text) societies that is the most salient thing about them. What

Clarke does, here respecting absolutely the recent version of the cultural turn, is to abstract culture as a domain from the messiness of real life and transport it, again in accordance with the intellectual tradition on which he is drawing, into the domain of semantics. This is as much a linguistic turn as a cultural one. If we are to deal with power as expressed in discourses, then meanings become central and structure and agency move out of sight.

Clarke draws on Raymond Williams in the general development of his approach and in particular on Williams' very important notion of residual and emergent cultural forms as the potential basis for cultural attachment and mobilization against the neo-liberal project. He does so without citing the original sources in which Williams developed these ideas. I am sure this was not conscious or deliberate censoring but this approach facilitates the separation of Williams' conceptual apparatus from the political milieu and intellectual foundations around which it was constructed. Williams always drew on the tradition of marxist historical materialism. Moreover, in developing his ideas from the 1960s onwards he was engaged in an argument with E.P. Thompson about what culture implies for social action – an argument which was enormously fruitful for the development of the original version of the cultural project.

Along the way somehow cultural studies has lost this frame of reference. All sorts of reasons can be advanced for this and Clarke's book demonstrates some of them very clearly. One of the most significant absences of the cultural turn in its contemporary form is the lack of any real empirical programme which uses the methods of social research to access the reality of everyday lives, including of course those components of everyday lives lived in and through processes of governance. We have a cultural turn without ethnography. The tradition is aempirical, in much the same way as the Althusserian structuralism which preceded it and which many contemporary post-structuralists adhered to when that was the style. Not only do we have little in the way of ethnography, we have minimal history. Again Clarke illustrates. His story of welfare is often a story of a white male English world. Crucial real historical struggles about key aspects of welfare, most notably around housing and the local provision of health, were conducted by working-class women who had both a project and an organizational base and did so in a context of mass Irish immigration. Of course Clarke is not writing a history book, but he draws on a simplistic historical version, which informs his argument, and that historical version is wrong. Finally, although this is by no means a completion of the catalogue of errors in the cultural turn, there is no real sense of the nature of social structure. Clarke appreciates the significance of structure, suggesting (p. 25) that the notion of unstable equilibria is a guiding metaphor for his whole project. However, the important arguments, which might have developed in relation to this proposition, do not emerge.

In his last chapter Clarke makes a wholly genuine attempt to relate the frame of reference and arguments he has developed to some form of social practice outwith the confines of academia. This is more than a gesture. The problem is that by writing class out as central Clarke is left with no real audience. There is the usual ritual obeisance to social movements, but apart from green groups social movements in contemporary capitalism are significant by their absence. There is a battle going on – as Clarke himself says 'The project of neo-liberal hegemony required an assault on welfare states, not just for what they did, but for *what they represented*. They embodied collective identities and forms of social solidarity in their complexly structured and contested forms of "universalism"' (p. 93 [original emphasis]); put that in the present tense and that is the issue. The contemporary form of the academic cultural turn will not play a role in that contest.

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Across the social sciences, growing attention is being paid to the role of social networks. To some extent, this reflects the coming of age of network analysis as a way of examining people's personal bonds, and exploring the intensity of a group's internal solidarity. More recently, the lively debate over the concept of social capital has further strengthened the appeal of studying social networks. Thanks partly to Robert Putnam's success in persuading policy makers in America and Europe that the idea of social capital may have practical virtues, this debate has been interdisciplinary and has helped draw attention to a wider body of literature on the subject.

While there is as yet no clear consensus on the components of social capital, the main contenders agree that it centrally focuses on the ways in which the capacity for social co-operation can serve as a resource. This background helps to explain the developing body of literature that examines the relationship between social networks and social exclusion/inclusion. If people's networks serve to promote or block access to resources, it follows that they also play a part in reinforcing inequality, or may help to compensate for the absence or weakness of other assets. The policy implications have obvious congruence with ideas of networked governance, and it is not surprising that these ideas have been embraced by some parts of New Labour in Britain, reflected in some recent thinking from the Home Office or the Social Exclusion Unit. Of course, these are hardly new developments, and it is not difficult to trace the theoretical roots of these ideas back to Durkheim and Simmel, while the research methods used to study social networks are drawn from well-established traditions of social analysis. What is new is the way that contemporary debate has broadened out to encompass a wide range of social and economic issues and concerns, and has sought to place them within a coherent perspective of network analysis.

This volume brings together twelve chapters that explore theoretical, empirical and policy aspects of social exclusion as viewed through the lens of social network analysis. The book's impact is particularly forceful in confirming that people's networks are indeed closely connected to their relative socio-economic position. At the most general level, isolation is bad for people, connections are good. An obvious illustration of this is loneliness, a condition that is touched upon here in Pearl Dykstra's chapter on the impact of partnership arrangements on the lives of older adults. Yet Dykstra's account emphasises the complexity and diversity of older people's partnership arrangements. While her research evidence points to a connection between partnership arrangements and access to social support, she warns against the assumption that particular partnership types are linked in any simplistic way with loneliness. The only pattern that appears consistently to produce loneliness, and diminish access to social support, is among the unpartnered (with single men tending to be lonelier than single women). Thomas Scharf and Alison Smith's chapter, based on a quantitative study of deprived neighbourhoods in three English cities, concludes that loneliness and isolation are often multiplied across different domains, so that older people with few social bonds are often excluded from local services, civic activities and neighbourhood involvement, as well as being disadvantaged in access to material resources.

Dykstra's chapter suggests that older people are as likely to suffer, or benefit, from changing lifestyles as the rest of us. New partnership arrangements like 'Living apart together' are also reviewed by Ray Pahl and Liz Spencer, drawing on their ESRC study of personal communities. This chapter, along with Virginia Morrow's equally informative study of friendship and family among children, suggests that new methods of research might help shed light on the way that people are approaching changes at the macro level, in the wider patterns of social networks.

Conducting research into networks by such well-established techniques as – for example – estimating density and frequency of particular ties may well be of value in pointing to the structural features of personal networks; but both chapters warn against any over-simplistic temptation to draw easy conclusions from such methods about the significance to people of the relationships concerned.

Other chapters explore in greater detail the types of resource that people access from their networks. Particularly interesting is Vicky Cattell's ethnographic account of network types in two working-class neighbourhoods in East London. One neighbourhood is characterised by mixed housing, a stable population, and a history of male dockside employment; housing in the second case is largely council-owned, its population is more fluid, and there is a history of regeneration initiatives. Cattell constructs a typology of five sets of network characteristics, including what she calls the 'socially excluded network', of very limited size; 'parochial networks', of extensive contacts among a small number of closely linked people; and a 'pluralistic network', typified by diversity, size, and (usually) loose links. Cattell argues that the most restricted network types are closely related to behaviour and values that tend to damage health and well being, and are often associated with fatalism and low self-esteem. The more pluralistic and open network types appear to provide access to a wide range of resources, including information, and foster active approaches to coping.

Cattell concludes that these patterns may well have key policy implications. The concluding chapters explore the complexities of attempting to develop strategies for promoting informal networks. Perri 6 compares the potential of a range of 'tools for trying to shape solidarities', and examines the ways in which service strategies play out in the case of each broad policy area, from housing and education to crime management and the design of the built environment. He concludes that his detailed analysis suggests that such direct interventions are rarely very effective, and may even provoke 'negative feedback in the form of the counter-development of other solidarities'. Marilyn Taylor shares this concern, but opts firmly for an arm's length approach to the promotion of informal networks in excluded neighbourhoods, and warns that low-trust behaviour by the state will produce low-trust responses from communities.

Social Networks and Social Exclusion is an important and thought-provoking collection that adds substantially to the current debates over networks and exclusion. Given some of the editors' well-known interests, it is not surprising if some of the chapters focus on the situation of older people, and pay less attention to other aspects of social exclusion. Nevertheless, the combination of theoretical, empirical and policy debate is admirable, and the quality of individual chapters is uniformly high. The book as a whole will appeal to a range of social policy specialists, while providing an accessible introduction in the particular areas covered by each chapter for postgraduate and other students.

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Given his previous work Peter Dwyer was a good choice to author this textbook on social citizenship, another wave in the avalanche of books published by Policy Press as part of its Understanding Welfare series. This is an introduction to *social* citizenship and so we receive only occasional nods in the direction of its civil, political and legal counterparts. The four chapters in Part I lay the groundwork, moving rapidly but skilfully through terms such as equality, rights, needs and desert. The traditions of liberalism and republicanism, i.e. communitarianism in its

updated version, are contrasted and the social democratic influence upon British social policy is outlined and then critiqued from a number of perspectives. A refrain throughout the text concerns the principle of conditionality and Dwyer is able to account for its fashionableness, while specifying what is objectionable and worrying about the rush to smother everything with the comfort blanket of duties.

Part II reviews various social divisions and differences: class and poverty, gender, disability, race and ethnicity. In Part III we are invited to look beyond the nation state to developments in the European Union and to other forms of transnational and cosmopolitan citizenship.

By and large the book delivers what it promises to deliver. It allows policy-oriented discussions to interact with more theoretical ones, without allowing either to overwhelm the other. It is pitched at the correct level for undergraduates, the summaries and suggestions for further reading are useful and most of the boxes elucidate the text without interrupting its flow. Equally, teachers from across the social sciences should find that it allows them to pause and review where we have got to since interest in citizenship exploded in the 1980s. Given its range I suspect that the book will find an audience beyond those modules dealing only or largely with citizenship.

It might have been useful to have identified specific questions that students could take away for further reflection; as it is I suspect many will not feel impelled enough to explore too far beyond the book's horizons, using it more as a 'final word' map than as a provisional compass. Even in this respect, though, the approach is sometimes uneven. For instance, in reviewing possible transnational forms of citizenship the position defended by Soysal is critiqued but not that of other contributors (pp. 169–170). And some of the mapping exercises performed by Dwyer himself left me feeling a bit uncomfortable.

'Marxist thinkers' are portrayed as an example of 'left communitarianism' (p. 75) but this is a highly simplistic depiction of a broad tradition that a few references to Offe and Bottomore do not dispel. Marx himself was as inspired by liberal thinkers as he was by republicans such as Rousseau. In both cases he believed that only historical materialism could fulfil the promise offered by these traditions but which neither could realise by itself. Conservatism, too, is lost in the dash to provide basic conceptual co-ordinates. The richness of this tradition is reduced to the New Right and to those called the 'new communitarians', e.g. Etzioni. (As an aside, could we finally drop the label 'New Right'? Apart from the fact that most of them are now fertilising the daisies it confers a freshness upon ideas that began to moulder into other forms long ago.) Liberalism is depicted in terms of capitalism and the nation-state but its religious origins and characteristics are omitted. And sexuality is reviewed in the chapter on gender, the justification for which is not convincing. In short, a few more 'handle with care' warnings were needed.

Finally, while the post-nationality chapters are adept it would have been useful to have identified more of the strands that are leading the debate about social citizenship in new directions – in terms of my own interests I would make a plea here in favour of environmentalism (see Dobson, 2003). The best textbooks resemble badly wrapped birthday presents that readers can enjoy so long as they perceive that the box can never be entirely enclosed. Whatever the usual constraints imposed by publishers (and tyrannical series editors) *Understanding Social Citizenship* is a bit too neat in this respect.

Still, this is a comprehensive, effective and timely overview of a concept that deserves to appear in many reading lists, and will undoubtedly do so, including my own.

Reference

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Brian E. Dollery and Joe L. Wallis, *The Political Economy of the Voluntary Sector*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2003, x + 195 pp., £49.95 hbk, ISBN 1-84064-7930-0.

Adalbert Evers and Jean-Louis Laville (eds), *The Third Sector in Europe*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2004, xi + 266 pp., £66 hbk, ISBN 1-84376-400-8.

Lester M. Salamon, *The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2003, 113 pp., £12 pbk, ISBN 0-8157-7679-9.

One sign that an issue or policy territory is becoming more intellectually mature is the extent to which there are different, even contested, perspectives about it. These three texts clearly signal that the variously (and theoretically significantly) labelled 'Nonprofit', 'Voluntary' and 'Third Sector' has come of age. The authors write from institutional bases in Australia and the United Arab Emirates (Dollery and Wallis), Europe (Evers and Laville) and the USA (Salamon). Their perspectives range from economics to politics and philosophy, whilst their gaze extends from social services to broader issues such as civil protest. Underpinning all the books are assumptions about the relative usefulness of the very concept of 'sector'; whereas Dollery/Wallis and Salamon are relatively comfortable with a sectorised view, Evers and Laville prefer to talk about a 'third system', characterised by 'dynamics, openness, hybridisation and constant change as opposed to closure and the determination of the boundaries of the system' (Peter Lloyd, in Evers and Laville, p. 193). They conclude that a concentration on sector is less important than 'the balance of competing principles that structure a policy field and the organisations to be found there' (p. 251).

Dollery and Wallis do this reviewer a great favour by neatly summarising most of the perspectives associated with 'homo economicus' as they apply to the voluntary sector, though often to the point of suffocation. For example, the penultimate chapter (the largest in the book) contains summaries of no fewer than ten different commentators within the space of thirteen pages. Similarly, the conclusion reads more like a reprise than a true coming together of their thesis about leadership and its applicability to voluntary organisations.

The strength of this book lies in its comprehensive and very well referenced coverage of such old favourites as the relative explanatory significance of demand and supply-side theories of voluntary organisation. On the one hand, market and government failures are discussed, whilst, on the other, voluntary failures are neatly summarised. Hopes are raised by frequent (if minor) references to the need to break away from a narrow economic rationalism (p. 38), and much is expected of the chapter on leadership. The latter, seen as overlapping with, but distinct from, management, is offered as a way of synthesising the potential of demand and supply-side theories. But, what are we to make of statements such as: 'Since the leader will also know the shape and position of the declining marginal benefit function this person will be able to set the optimal intensity of manipulation where marginal benefit equals marginal cost' (Dollery and Wallis, p. 70). Clearly, a certain kind of rationalism is alive, well and apparently free from self-doubt, if we are to accept their conclusion that: 'compared to sociological and other non-economic theories of the voluntary sector, economic theorising represents a rather rare success story in the conceptual analysis of voluntary organisations' (p. 34).

Such a conclusion is not easily reconciled with that of one of the few British sociologists to have specialised in the study of economic perspectives on the voluntary sector, that is: 'In addressing the question of why voluntary organisations exist, sociology is better able than neo-classical economics to accommodate explanations that incorporate different combinations of explanatory factors' (Halfpenny and Reid, 2002, p. 540).

All in all, readers of Dollery and Wallis will find much to wrestle with and admire in this rather dense text. There is a huge economics-based literature of relevance to students, and a

degree of digestion is available via a close reading, particularly if the focus is on larger, more formal, service-delivery organisations. However, as the authors candidly admit, much of what they sought to understand is 'beyond the scope of economic discourse' (p. 169).

Much less troubled about 'scope' is Salamon's post-11 September review of *Nonprofit America*. His extremely accessible little book has a deceptive lightness of touch, as the reader is presented with a summary of a larger study published in 2002. The deceptiveness inheres in both superficial and more substantive matters. In the first instance we are introduced to the book via back-cover endorsements from a former President (Jimmy Carter) and a special adviser to the existing one (George W. Bush), yet the connectedness of these political figures to the content soon evaporates. Secondly, *Nonprofit America* quickly becomes synonymous with service delivery and the market economy, rather than the full spectrum of organisations with more advocacy, campaigning and pressuring roles; even where service delivery involves inequality, discrimination and injustice, the centre ground remains with fiscal and human resource issues.

Key themes are about challenges, opportunities and responses. These are neatly discussed via headings covering fiscal change, inter-sectoral competition, performance measurement, technology, legitimacy and human resources. For an undergraduate student, wanting to begin thinking about voluntary sector service delivery in the USA, this text is a good starting point. It represents some of the strengths and limitations of those scholars associated with the massively important Johns Hopkins University research programme, described by Dollery and Wallis as 'one of the most promising and important avenues of research into the voluntary sector' (p. 116). Nevertheless, a largely structural–functional, statistically dependent approach rarely surfaces. Large, formal agencies appear centre stage; medium–smaller ones are virtually invisible. Dynamics, contests and conflicts are seldom mentioned, and the state becomes a technical complexity without due consideration of it as a system: 'bend the rules, subverted the law and undermined the worldwide raising of standards it was always intent on promoting?' (Jonathan Power, on the UK in its relationships with civil society in Northern Ireland, Power, 2001, p. 180).

With the caveats outlined above, Salamon's book remains a useful and clearly written review of the main policy and practice dilemmas facing service-delivery agencies in the USA. The tensions between distinctiveness (what Dollery and Wallis call the non-redistribution constraint) and survival are sensibly drawn, and will surely help students to avoid simplistic generalisations. Yet, the worry remains that, given the cover celebrities and the throw-away remarks about 11 September, there must surely be more to life than economics!

Evers and Laville do provide some potentially fruitful stepping-stones. Their aim is to link economic, political and moral concerns by: 'freeing entrepreneurship from its traditional exclusive link with economic action. Politics are needed that open the way for social and civic entrepreneurs' (p. 38). This is an ambitious, but necessary aim, although a cautious note is sounded by Dollery and Wallis when they almost dismiss Evers' work as a 'nascent paradigm . . . too underdeveloped to yield concrete assistance to policy-makers' (p. 126). Such caution is reciprocated in the very first lines of Evers and Laville. The US-derived use of a non-profit vocabulary is seen as too negative, rational, individualistic and economistic. In its place, they argue for consideration of four linked elements: i.e. the concept of national variations in welfare mix or regime; the significance of labour and social movements in helping to shape phenomena, such as coops and mutuals; a third system (rather than a discrete sector) operating in an intermediary role; and the salience of political and moral values. All of these ingredients are regarded as likely to experience changes over place and time.

Three definitional and theoretical chapters serve as 'book-ends' to country (Chapter 6) and EU (Chapter 3) studies. Despite the traditional centrifugal tendencies of edited collections,

there does seem to be a degree of coherence across chapters, especially around the concept of 'sector'. This is not so much abandoned as relegated to a lower division, in favour of the concepts of 'intermediateness' and 'tension field'. Boundaries to a specific sector then become less important. Instead of searching for the third or voluntary sector's supposed uniquenesses, we are urged to consider the impact of interdependency within a policy field. Civil society becomes less of a separate space and more a field of interactions between the state, markets and third systems. Inevitably, organisations in well-defined intermediary roles may exhibit signs of 'hybridity' in terms of their resource flows, goals, steering mechanisms and corporate identity (pp. 246–7). Finally, one emphasis of research, policy and practice can be less exclusively on the more formal and professional, in order to pay more attention to the 'everyday' forms of civil society (pp. 251–2).

Texts like these reveal, in their differences, the growing intellectual maturity of voluntary sector scholars. Perhaps an even more hopeful sign is the announcement of a conference in Paris (1), which will be jointly sponsored by two of the present strands of writing. Now that really is a sign of maturity!

Note

1. The International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), with its administrative home in Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, will co-sponsor the event alongside EMES (The Emergence of Social Enterprises in Europe) at the end of April 2005.

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The role of the voluntary sector within social policy in the UK at the beginning of the twenty-first century is more important, and more high profile, than it has been at least since the beginning of the last century. The sector is growing in size and scale, both in financial and organisational terms and its relationship with the state, in particular in the development and delivery of public services, is of increasing significance to policy makers and practitioners on both sides. It is therefore critically important for students and researchers in social policy to have an understanding of the sector and its policy role. However, although there has been a growing interest in the sector amongst social policy academics and a developing research agenda within the field, there has not until now been a comprehensive guide to the sector, bringing together information and analysis in one single volume. Kendall's text aims to do just that. It is therefore timely; and what is more it largely does the job.

The book provides a comprehensive review of academic work and empirical research on the sector within the UK, setting this within a broader international context. Kendall is able to

do this, in part because he has been one of the leading academic researchers working within the field for a number of years now. In particular, for instance, he was involved in the UK dimension of the major international comparative study of the sector led by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in the US (Salamon *et al.*, 1999). Kendall is also actively involved in the new grouping of academic researchers working on the sector in the UK, the Voluntary Sector Studies Network (VSSN), which now has its own website and membership list. His knowledge of the sector is therefore extensive, and this is abundantly clear from a reading of his book. This is a very thorough and well-informed (and hence well-referenced) review of the scholarly research that has been conducted into the voluntary sector in the UK, organised to provide a comprehensive guide to the current state of academic understanding of the sector. Despite Kendall's involvement in comparative research, it is not a comparative text. The focus is the on UK; but analysis of this country is informed by reference to the international context throughout the book.

The book is organised into three parts – in practice really two. Part I, 'Inputs and processes', looks at the structure and policy context of the sector. Part II, 'Impacts and outcomes', examines the operation of the sector, focusing in particular on three key policy areas – social housing, social care and support for older people, and environmental action. Part III is a very informative conclusion. Much of the discussion in Part I deals with the major changes in the sector which have been taking place since 1990, and with the changing policy context within which this has been situated – and in particular the new policy agenda of the post-1997 Labour governments. This is a thorough and perceptive account of the new world in which the sector finds itself. Not much is provided by the way of a longer-term history of the development of the sector however, and for such a perspective readers will have to look elsewhere.

As Kendall points out, there are increasing expectations amongst policy makers of the policy role that voluntary organisations can, and should, fulfil, from mainstream service delivery to democratic renewal; and it is far from clear that these are always complementary or achievable. There is also increasing support for the sector from government, both in terms of direct funding and more general support and guidance; and there is increasing recognition of the need for this relationship to be clearly and consistently managed – evidenced by the introduction of the *Compact* to guide government relations with the sector. Kendall makes a useful distinction here between the 'horizontal' agenda of the government, in providing support and development for the sector as a whole, and the 'vertical' agenda of policy development within particular policy sectors. And here too consistency of planning and delivery is not always present. Some of these issues are explored most interestingly in Part II, where questions of practice and delivery are explored in more depth.

Throughout this major part of the text the thoroughness of Kendall's approach is always in evidence. Arguments are carefully explained and weighed and the findings of a wide range of research studies are sifted and summarised. There is a lot in this book, and readers will find that a careful reading repays the attention to detail that has gone into the writing of it. It is not inaccessible, however. Indeed the style and structure make for rewarding reading; and the use of boxes to highlight and explore key points, chapter summaries to point up what is to follow, and detailed numeration of sections of text, all help to guide readers through the wealth of material.

In the concluding section Kendall aims to pull together the strands of the argument and the research findings. In an earlier text Kendall and Knapp (1995) described the voluntary sector as 'a loose and baggy monster' – its very diversity and dynamism forever eluding any clear theoretical categorisation. Kendall returns to this conception here, referring to the sector as a monster (a friendly one of course!). Throughout the text his reference to the fact the research frequently reveals gaps between policy intentions and policy practice within the sector

means that we cannot jump to generic or generalisable assumptions about the sector or its practice. In the conclusion, however, he does explore five broader perspectives on the sector, drawn from the work of existing scholars or commentators on the sector. These are neatly summarised in a table on pp. 226–7, and are contrasted with Kendall's own position, which he characterises as 'contingent realist'. As one might expect the conclusions of the contingent realist perspective are rather more guarded and cautious than the others, and following Kendall's summaries of the contingent nature of many of the research findings discussed in the book this is only to be expected. It is not a perspective likely to achieve much immediate popularity with politicians and policy makers however, for whom simpler answers will always be wanted.

In essence it is this contingent realist perspective that is at the heart of this book throughout. Kendall is himself first and foremost an academic researcher. This book provides us with an understanding of the UK voluntary sector and its policy context drawn from research findings. It is therefore a rich mine of data and discussion. It will serve as a comprehensive guide for all academic social policy scholars; and all of us with an academic interest in the sector will find it an essential source of reference.

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This widely used textbook builds on the strengths of its past editions and success. For a reviewer, it is always difficult to fairly discuss a book that has been adopted as standard text, for there is little she/he can add to the fortune of such an accomplished piece of work.

Solomos' effort to keep his work up to date with historical, social and political events and to adapt his analysis to these changes is a praiseworthy and worthwhile enterprise. Solomos' deconstruction of politics and discourses is an incessant work of collection, analysis and revision, which brings the study of race and racism to the centre stage of public discourse in the face of evident and substantial changes. His work continuously challenges conventional interpretations of the politics of race, even when this word has lost its appeal and has been replaced by preoccupations with minorities' integration and migration (or 'the influx of asylum seekers' syndrome'). As assumptions once related to race and now relating to ethnicity and culture persist, it is important for Solomos to pinpoint that the former endures as a social construction in socialised practices and in the current language.

The growth of both academic research and public debate proves to Solomos that a new dawn is breaking in this area. This re-birth has paid heed to calls for the abandonment of assumptions *a priori* in the exploration of race and its gangliar pervasiveness in socio-political studies (and further) in favour of an analysis which focus on contextuality and recognises this

dense network of theory and practice ('a dialogical analytical framework', p. 3). The author is very eager to remind the readership that his research endeavours to include theoretical discussions along with an in-depth analysis of the historical context and, in doing so, avoid the traps of theoretical proliferation. The latter, he maintains, are devoid of an attentive analysis of social processes and changes.

As in its past editions, each chapter includes evidence from a range of historical sources as well as current scholarship and research ('partly historical and partly conceptual', p. 3). Yet, the arrangement and content of chapters is different in each edition, whereby an expansion or a concentration of the argument occurs with the intent to keep the subject matter accessible, clear, comprehensive and, most importantly, updated (e.g. Solomos provides figures for black minorities elected political representatives up to the 2001 elections).

Solomos' preference for a 'pragmatic' (or, more appropriately, factual?) and comprehensive approach to the theorisation of race relations and its contexualisation in Britain proves very effective once employed in the analysis of delicate changes or/and new political passages. Two years ago, in *The Guardian*, preoccupied by Third Way Labour discourse on multiculturalism and Britain, Solomos intuitively explained and commented on the contemporary politics of race and the role of research within it with the following words:

> New Labour is riven with incommensurable commitments and aspirations. This is not simply a matter of spin politics and bad faith. The government's predicament is fed by the paradoxical impulses that animate British politics in an era of intense economic globalisation, European integration and geopolitical uncertainty. Despite New Labour's gestures towards cultural diversity and inclusion, its body politic beats to the rhythm of a white heart. It cannot mourn its imperial ghosts, nor embrace a democratic and truly multicultural future. In this climate it is incumbent on scholars to look critically at what is happening in relation to both immigration and racism in British society. (Back, Schuster and Solomos 2002)

Throughout his work, Solomos has illustratively charted the deep unease of Left thinking on race and class relations, not simply at a theoretical level, where he is eager to pinpoint that the main theoretical conundrums have not been yet resolved, but also with his review of political events (e.g. the Rushdie affair, p. 214). Once again, the changing nature of dynamics between culture, religion and identity in contemporary Britain seems to continuously challenge rigid frameworks of interpretations as, in turn, they are challenged by such diverse occurrences as the 2001 War in Afghanistan, the refugee issue, the growth of Europeanising strongly opposed by Conservative Euro-phobia and the urban riots.

Most importantly, Solomos views this process of development as a two-fold process in which racial ideologies and practices have contributed to structure the socio-political relations post-1945, and have, in turn, been shaped by specific discourses on immigration and minorities' integration with its different degrees and characteristics. The common ground between past and recent developments remains however the persistence of racialised inequalities in employment, housing, education and social welfare and the constant disagreement among scholars on the paradigmatic definition on what racism and hence discrimination are and what they consist of.

Solomos recognises that there are no easy answers to these questions and that no final paradigm will receive unanimous support (p. 235). Yet, this book endeavours to review what has been researched and stored so far in order facilitate the co-ordination of action in the future. Furthermore, it does not allow the debate on race and race relations to rest on its laurels. It would be interesting to know if this co-ordinating effort could produce a new volume and not

a new edition of this masterpiece and finally see the much invoked radical reorientation of policies (or the cross-cutting and joined up approach) emerge.

Reference

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István Pogány aims in this book to provide an overview of the formidable difficulties confronting the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe in recent years and to convey some sense of how they understand their lives and problems.

He accepts that many of the problems that Roma encounter are chronic – severe and squalid living conditions, lack of sanitation, decent water, and medical care, police brutality and so on. They are, as many commentators have observed, Europe's untouchables living under third-world conditions. Although in Professor Pogány's opinion these problems cannot be viewed simply as a function of 'the abandonment of centrally planned economies and the switch to the often exploited forms of capitalism', nevertheless a central thesis of his book is that 'any balance sheet would reveal that overall Roma have been spectacular in catastrophic casualties of the transition process'.

The book seeks to recount these difficulties using personal testimonies. Each section contains interview material with Roma of diverse backgrounds and experiences. This approach provides a contextual depth to the analysis and avoids the glib generalisations and disparaging stereotypes that can undermine such accounts. In doing so he seeks to demonstrate that Roma comprise a multiplicity of minorities and that this lack of a single identity is often poorly understood.

The individual stories are fascinating. They highlight the complexity of the lives either blighted by acute poverty or lived from the perspective of the possibility of poverty. The very preoccupation with poverty is, in István Pogány's opinion, one of the reasons why many Roma have erased from their collective memory the significance of their Holocaust and the countless other atrocities that have dominated their recent and not so recent history. What one is left with, is frequently folk tales that the Roma tell and which in his view they 'can believe in independently of whether they are true', indeed often these are stories without any grounding in fact whatsoever. Pogány believes that Roma are therefore characterised by a remarkable disinterest in history.

Even those Roma whose lives have not been afflicted by poverty appear intent on drawing a veil over their ethnicity and (again) erasing or indeed denying their history. The 'successful' Roma interviewed are reluctant to discuss their ethnicity, even with their own children; possibly because they provide bleakly negative and discouraging role models. They seem to consciously distance themselves from other Roma, regarding them as culturally different if not inferior. Here again the book's theme is developed, that Roma in reality comprise a multiplicity of minorities.

Professor Pogány critically analyses the 'minority rights' discourse, which he accepts does not represent an instant panacea for the severe and wide-ranging problems experienced by Roma. In his view minority rights have inevitably been marginalised in the post-communist rush for national aspiration; since nationalism loses its compelling purity when mixed with the complexities of oppressed minorities and cultural diversity. He also questions the value of the right to 'chose to be treated as a national minority' (enshrined in the framework convention) in a world where identity remains a crude uni-dimensional stereotype. Despite these misgivings he accepts the emancipatory potential of the human rights discourse: 'recognition and enforcement of a range of basic rights must form an integral part of any concerted programme directed at overcoming the social and economic problems experienced by the region's Roma in the transition from Communism'. Such recognition is, however, only one strand in the pro-gramme – since 'the chronic difficulties experienced by the bulk of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe – including poverty, undereducation, mass unemployment and social marginalisation – are not simply a function of the denial of rights'.

This is an important and readable book. The style, of using individual Roma commentators, is successful in conveying the ambiguity – the bleakness and at times the squalor – of the Roma existence. His commentaries deal directly with the prevalence of domestic violence, abduction and male exploitation of Roma women, as well as seeking to dispel myths concerning musical traditions, pollution practices, funeral rights and so on.

In the end the conclusions are oblique and suggestions of the likely way forward are tentative – as they must be. It would be wrong however to be unduly pessimistic. The plight of the Roma has been a dreadful one – of slavery and genocide and unbelievable poverty and oppression. It may be that the recent past is yet another poor period for Roma. However at no time in their history has such a widespread acknowledgement existed of the wrong that has been done to them and the demand for these wrongs to be righted. Today – more than at any time in their history – there are very many remarkable Roma activists, remarkable NGOs and remarkable commentators challenging the extreme social exclusion and discrimination experienced by Roma. István Pogány is one such commentator and his book deserves a wide readership.

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This is an extremely interesting and useful book for anyone involved in planning or delivering family services to people from an Irish background. The author aims to focus the reader's attention on the race and ethnicity issues involved in working with the Irish in Britain. The book covers a span of almost one hundred years, from the 1920s until the present day. It is roughly divided into two parts, the first focusing on the particular policy initiatives of the 1950s and 1960s and the second on the current social work approaches to working with families with Irish roots. The discussion is based on data from a number of different sources: interviews with social work staff; questionnaires completed by directors of Social Services Departments; and the records of statutory and voluntary organisations tasked with the responsibility of providing services for mothers and children who emigrated from Ireland to England.

In the first chapter, entitled 'Fleeing Ireland', the reader is presented with statistics showing clearly that before the legalisation of adoption in Ireland in 1952, many pregnant women chose to emigrate to England rather than face rejection and unnecessarily punitive institutionalisation at home. For example, the Liverpool Society for the Prevention of the International Traffic in Women and Children, reported meeting 1,947 Irish expectant mothers on the docks or at the railway station between 1926 and 1930 (p. 28). During the 1930s, projects to repatriate these mothers and their children were initiated, projects that continued for the following three decades.

Under these schemes, hundreds of young women were helped to return to their families in Ireland, with arrangements made for the adoption or fostering of the children. In two chapters outlining the different arrangements made by voluntary (e.g. the English Catholic Rescue Society) and statutory (e.g. London County Council) agencies, Garrett explores the experiences of the women and the perceptions of the social workers during the 1950s and 1960s. The outcomes for the mothers and children were not always happy, as the purpose of the repatriation programme was to ensure that this group of people did not become a burden on the British state. The needs of the children were often overlooked in the process.

Having set the scene historically, the author uses the discussion in the second half of the book to explore issues of race, ethnicity and Irish 'invisibility'. Garret is critical of current social work practice in Britain. He argues that though the discourse of social work education and practice is permeated by a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and to the recognition of cultural and ethnic diversity, many social workers and their managers fail to integrate this discourse into their work with Irish families. This is due mainly to the fact that Irish people have not been identified as an ethnic minority, because they are (mostly) white.

The current situation is explored by looking at the policies and practices of 75 Social Services Departments in England and Wales in relation to working with children and families from an Irish background. Based on the findings from a study supported by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS), a number of important issues are highlighted – the visibility/invisibility of Irish families in the system, the monitoring/lack of monitoring of anti-discriminatory practice, the training/lack of training of staff in relevant cultural concerns, and the awareness/lack of awareness of specific problems in relation to Irish Travellers. Though some SSDs are involved in innovative projects, aimed at combating anti-Irish racism, the majority fail to 'recognise' the particular needs of this group, as shown in a low level of input in the areas outlined above.

In the concluding chapter, the author suggests that the way forward is for social workers, social work educators and policy makers to reject the current black/white paradigm that permeates social work practice in favour of a much more flexible approach to race, colour and identity. This will not only help children from an Irish background but other 'white' children from migrant groups seeking refuge in Britain.

As someone who did my social work training in London in the late 1970s, where I had the good fortune to work in a mental health team that did 'recognise' the particularly Irish dimension in some of the problems that came to our attention, I can only welcome this book. It should be essential reading for those providing social services to families with Irish roots. However, I have two criticisms that may affect the sale of this book. The first is that the chapters do not hang together as easily as they might, due to the wide range of topics and the difference in style of presentation from one to the other. It is very difficult to integrate historical material into current debate. The second is that the title is misleading as it implies a more general approach to social work issues than that contained in the text – the sub-title is more accurate than the main title.

In spite of these difficulties, which could be overcome in the next edition of this book, I have no doubt that the findings of the excellent research that formed the basis for this book will

enhance our understanding of Irish women, who have emigrated to another country for social and economic reasons, and will stimulate the wider debate on working with families whose home is in Britain but whose cultural roots are elsewhere.

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Chris Philipson, Nilufar Ahmed and Joanna Latimer (2003), *Women in Transition: A Study of the Experiences of Bangladeshi Women Living in Tower Hamlets*, Policy Press, Bristol, 107 pp., £14.99 pbk, ISBN 1 86134 510 0.
DOI: 10.1017/S004727940433847X

This book is the report of a study of the family lives of Bangladeshi women living in the East End of London. The research was carried out by the authors with funding from the Nuffield Foundation, and involved interviews with 100 women who migrated to the UK from the Sylhet area from the 1970s to the early 1990s, group interviews with young Bangladeshi women in their late teens and early twenties who had been raised in the UK, and interviews with leaders of community organisations in the area. It paints a vivid picture of the lives of a group, which has consistently been identified as having a disadvantaged socio-economic profile. The daily hardships of bringing up children in overcrowded and unsuitable housing emerge strongly from women's accounts of their lives, and the sheer quantity of domestic work involved in caring for large families with few labour-saving tools sheds a fresh light on the economic inactivity rates of Bangladeshi women. However, the report also drew out many positive aspects of living in this community, highlighting the proximity of friends and neighbours, and access to amenities such as health services, mosques and food shops, as things which made women's lives easier and more sociable, and the vast majority of those interviewed did identify positive aspects of living in Tower Hamlets. Older women's concerns about the area included not only the familiar issue of racism from white residents, but emerging worries about intra-community gang violence, and inter-generational and cultural tensions between Bangladeshi parents who came to the UK as adults and their children who have grown up in the East End.

The chapter on the costs and benefits associated with transnational migration was particularly revealing, identifying the range of beliefs and behaviours which Bangladeshi women in London deploy in constructing and maintaining their identities and roles across two communities. Among the first-generation women interviewed, many had been bereaved, and most felt keenly the loss of regular contact with parents and relatives in Bangladesh. Many described a lifetime of worry, and this was reflected in high scores on the GHQ score, which measures possible mental health problems. Women were seen to be making a considerable amount of emotional and financial effort to sustain transnational relationships, although these were often the source of additional stress. Narratives of loss and struggle were weighed against women's accounts of the progress they had made and the greater personal freedom they enjoyed in the UK, and, more particularly, the hopes that they had for their daughters' futures. This was mirrored by the younger women's accounts of their greater access to education and employment opportunities, and by changing attitudes to marriage. At the same time, it is clear that the contrasting expectations and experiences of their daughters had the potential to create tension and misunderstanding on both sides.

Much small-scale research on discrete communities or subgroups, particularly those which have been under-researched, is characterised by a pragmatic, or even opportunistic, approach to sampling, which can lead to concerns about its validity and reliability. The

clear rationale and rigorous design and sampling procedures employed in this study stand in welcome and refreshing contrast. The authors also provide a concise and reflexive account of the methodological issues in carrying out the research, including a consideration of the cultural issues involved, which would be of benefit to anyone seeking to undertake a similar study.

One issue I did have with the report was that at times the qualitative material from the interviews appeared under-interpreted, in the sense that lengthy quotes from several speakers were presented one after another, with little comment from the authors. This does have the benefit of foregrounding the voices and experiences of the women themselves, but I felt that in some instances the reader would have benefited from slightly more guidance in drawing out the similarities and differences in women's accounts.

I also had some concerns about issues of anonymity, given the fact that this is a close-knit community, living in a named local authority, and that the actual names of educational institutions and community organisations were cited. While I assume the names used for individuals were pseudonyms, as this is standard practice, I could find no reference to this in the text. It would have been helpful for this to be clearly stated.

Overall, this is a valuable account of research with a neglected and important sector of the community. It will be of interest to academics and policymakers concerned with issues of gender, ethnicity, migration, health, poverty, employment and housing. It should also be required reading for all those providing public services to the Bangladeshi community in the UK.

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G. Hague, A. Mullender and R. Aris, *Is Anyone Listening? Accountability and Women Survivors of Domestic Violence*, Routledge, London, 2004, 180 pp., £19.99 pbk, ISBN 0-415-25946-0.

H. Stalford, H. Baker and F. Beveridge, *Children and Domestic Violence in Rural Areas: A Child-Focused Assessment of Service Provision*, Save the Children, London, 2003, 101 pp., £7.50 pbk, ISBN 1 84187 079 X.
DOI: 10.1017/S0047279404348476

Given the enduring and distressing nature of domestic violence, many researchers, policy-makers and practitioners are seeking evidence and ideas from which to develop and review their work. Many will welcome these two publications.

Reported levels of domestic violence remain high. Research suggests that about one in four women in Scotland will experience domestic violence at some point during their adult years, and it is accepted that these figures are likely to under represent the prevalence of this violence. Domestic violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women known to them. Children and other family members and friends can witness this violence, and may also be victims.

The book by Hague *et al.*, demonstrates how the experiences and voices of women who have experienced domestic violence can be heard, and form the basis to improving policies and practices. Drawing upon a study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), as part of the Violence Research Programme, the book comprises three parts. In the first part, on conceptual issues, two chapters consider the growth in the concept of user involvement in determining policies and services and, subsequently, the obstacles to women being involved and actually heard. In the second part, evidence is provided across two chapters on women's

views and experiences of using domestic violence services. What becomes evident is the way in which the very experience of violence seems to render women as physically present but their views and ideas are framed as marginal to service developments. Workers, and women noted how the emotions and unresolved traumas resulting from violence – the very issues that should be addressed – result in women being labelled 'unreliable' and their experiences and views largely discounted. The third part offers a wealth of ideas and practical advice on how to listen to women, and develop policies and services that truly draw upon their experiences. Fundamental is dignity and respect for abused women, and, from this basis, to work towards 'strategies to develop survivor involvement'. Examples of innovative practice are reported, thus demonstrating that the goal of user involvement is possible.

This is a well-written book that is organised in an accessible fashion. I could imagine a range of groups and individuals reading the book as a whole or dipping into one or more of the three parts. Academics will appreciate the discussion of conceptual issues on user involvement and the presentation of the research, with findings linked to contemporary debates and policies. For those working in the women's movement and voluntary sector many of the issues raised, and evidence reported, will resonate with their experiences of being positioned at the inter-face between women and their dependants, and statutory services. Policy-makers and service delivers will find evidence on the ways in which the views of women who use domestic violence services can be listened to. In addition, the practical advice and ideas in part III demonstrate that change is possible and innovatory practice achievable.

The report by Stalford *et al.*, is based upon research funded by The Countryside Agency and Save the Children. The central aim of the research was to give voice to children and young people who experience (generally witness) domestic violence in rural areas so as 'to identify and articulate their own specific service needs'. The views of service providers were also sought and, on the basis of a literature and policy review and the research findings, implications for policy and practice at local, national and regional levels are drawn out. The report provides useful data on the particular issues facing those experiencing the consequences of domestic violence and residing in rural areas. Data from children and parents involved in the study demonstrate how limited information and restricted access to services combine to leave many feeling isolated and vulnerable. Additional costs associated with living in rural areas also present barriers. The safety and security provided by refuges comes across strongly in the data, but this must be tempered by the paucity of places available in rural localities.

The chapters reporting data are illuminating and make for poignant reading. From these data a series of recommendations emerge. At this point I found myself uneasy, for some far-reaching suggestions were made from limited data. A key recommendation is that at a national level 'strategies for tackling domestic violence should be child-focused and reflect the need for longer-term funding for the development of new domestic violence support services in rural areas'. I would agree with the need for service development in rural localities per se. However, it could be argued that existing services are child centred and could be criticised for ignoring the plight of childless and older women who currently receive the lowest level of support from domestic violence services. Many would argue that the safety and security of children triggers action on the part of police, health and education services to a degree not offered to women alone, whether or not they are mothers. Given that the research team reviewed human rights legislation they might have considered the inequities facing women and children in general. Violence, an accepted part of the male repertoire of behaviours that is called upon in particular situations, might need to be tackled at both a structural as well as a service level. Men have to negotiate the boundaries around violence and masculinities, and accept greater responsibility for that at both an individual and collective level. Wider social and governmental practices must address the permeable boundaries between good family man and violent male. This is

particularly important for work with boys and young men. I would not wish to be too critical of this report – it does provide unique data on the double jeopardy of being a child living in a rural locality, and witnessing and experiencing the consequences of domestic violence. However, many of the recommendations, while relevant to the development of services, are offered with limited consideration of the implications for implementation and the broader context of a continued focus by many upon violence in public spaces as opposed to violence in the home.

Domestic violence has achieved recognition in a range of legal, social and public policies and services, but aspects of these can be criticised for failing to tackle the wider social and economic practices that result in silencing women and witnesses. There remain practice and resource issues that pose barriers to supporting women to move on, most notably a continued adherence to notions of the two-parent family as the one in which care is best provided. This combined with economic inequities between men and women can make leaving difficult. Further, work with male perpetrators struggles to achieve recognition among them that they are responsible for this violence. Domestic violence does not have the emblematic quality of violence committed in public spaces and violence committed by strangers. Intimacy and domesticity seem to dampen interest. Given this context both publications have evidence and ideas to offer the lecturer, researcher, policy maker and practitioner.

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This book portrays children as a misunderstood and misrepresented group. It argues that, because, in the UK, there is 'no-one left to legitimately persecute (as women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and religious groups all have state protection), oppression finds itself another outlet in the treatment of the most vulnerable and least protected of all – children' (p. 55). John criticises governments, the public and international bodies for their apparent ambivalence concerning children's plight, suggesting that children are seen as the 'witches' of the twenty-first century in order to justify adults' vindictive exercise of power and control. She concludes that 'for children to be powerful, adult–child relationships have to change substantially' (p. 248).

Leaving aside the possibility that these claims are hyperbolic, the book touches on issues of growing importance for research, policy and practice in children's services. One is the invisibility of children in many official socio-economic statistics and the value of taking the child rather than the household as the unit of analysis. For example, it is known that some children in poor households are not poor and *vice versa* (Middleton *et al.*, 1997). Another theme explored is the impact of supra-national organisations, such as the European Union and United Nations, on children's well-being. The literature on this topic is thin compared with that in other policy areas, notably the labour market.

There is also the importance of seeing the world from children's perspectives. In this respect the book informs the sociology of childhood by stressing that children are people in their own right and arguing that 'it is for the academic to find out about and respond to the issues as experienced by such groups themselves' (p. 58). This places a responsibility on researchers to develop creative techniques to explore children's worlds in authentic ways, with significant

progress already made here as the author points out. It also requires thought about the content of measures relating to all aspects of children's well-being. For instance, the study of childhood social exclusion is poorly developed and has relied largely on administrative categories (e.g. children looked after), indicators devised for adults or whatever data happen to be available in official statistics, irrespective of whether they capture adequately the concept and phenomenon of exclusion. The book helpfully cites work that seeks to identify 'geographically significant' differences between children against categories such as land-use, behaviour, economic position and politics. Others have shown how standard deprivation indices are inadequate for identifying levels of need among children and that specific child-related indicators are required (e.g. Hall, 2000).

There are two particular areas where the book's arguments might be challenged. The first relates to the recurring critique of needs-led as opposed to rights-based provision for children. John contends that the professional focus on children's suffering means that they are portrayed as dependent, relatively powerless and in need of protection; while the intention is often to help, the effect is to usurp the agency of children. She portrays rights as an 'antidote' to deficits that are imposed, in that they highlight children's aspirations and encourage self-determination. She dislikes the way in which children 'have their needs and requirements defined by educators, professionals, policy-makers, etc.' (p. 57), arguing that the expert-orientated view smacks of the so-called 'psy complex' – the application of psychological technology to people's problems as a form of social control.

An alternative view would be that need focuses attention on children's health and development rather than on processes and structures, and that it prompts recourse to the evidence about how to solve problems in children's lives. A rights approach can also be antagonistic to the point of actually undermining children's support networks, notably family relationships (Cooper, 1998), and can encourage the execution of professional tasks in a rather clinical as opposed to caring manner (Smith, 1997). It might be added that meeting children's needs is concerned ultimately with enhancing children's autonomy – defined as the ability to reflect on one's life and make choices. In reality, need and rights are both valuable lenses through which to view child well-being, although one should not underestimate the contradictions that may arise in policy if both are used.

A second criticism relates to the over-simplistic portrayal of how children develop. John cites approvingly work suggesting that maltreatment should be accorded greater policy attention, because dangerous historical figures such as Hitler endured violent abuses as children. She suggests that insufficient attention is paid to children's present experience, partly on the grounds of the 'genetic fallacy' – the view in developmental psychology that 'anchors present life in individual past histories' (p. 59). Resilience is described as the 'personal powers which ensure that . . . one continues to count' (p. 20), with the author requesting that psychologists give more emphasis to children's hopes and aspirations as opposed to their needs and deficits.

This perspective underplays the sophisticated understanding that has been built-up in child psychiatry and psychology of how children develop, with a focus on the interaction between risk and protective factors – note that strengths are by no means ignored – and a recognition that there are both continuities and discontinuities in children's lives (e.g. Rutter 1989). The discussion of Suedfeld's work on human behaviour in challenging environments is engaging, but what of the now considerable body of work on childhood resilience, showing how not all children succumb to risks (e.g. Fraser, 1997)?

Overall, this is a stimulating book but one that I will return to more for its examples than for its insights. For me it displays too many of the features that characterise much of the children's rights literature. It is prone to endorse sweeping statements without supporting empirical evidence, and in places the style verges on the polemic, with anecdotes and examples

from eclectic sources marshalled to support the thesis without being interrogated for alternative interpretations. Considerable use is also made of despairing rhetorical questions concerning adults' apparent contempt for children; arguably a more constructive approach would have been to posit hypotheses that invite research, thereby generating light as well as heat.

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A good deal of the discussion featured in *Child and Family Assessment* is derived from qualitative research undertaken by the author, between 1997 and 2001, which looked at how social workers carry out in-depth assessments of children and their families. The book is divided into three parts. The first part explores different approaches to assessment work, outlining policy changes and the implications for working with children and their families. In the second part the focus is on those involved in child and family assessments: children and their parents and the relationship between the assessors and the assessed. The final part of the book outlines the process of assessment, concentrating on planning, assessment methods, analysis and critical evaluation.

Substantial parts of the book are made up of revised pieces that have previously appeared in social work journals. Overall, though, the book does cohere and is a fully integrated project. Furthermore, *Child and Family Assessment* draws on and usefully brings together a range of international research, particularly from the United States, to support the interpretations and perspectives being developed. Helpfully, there are also concise and critical summaries of key social work tropes, such as that on 'attachment theory' (pp. 78–80). Worthwhile and interesting comparisons are made between analysis in social work assessments and analysis in research (Ch. 9). The section on social workers' needing to undertake a 'cultural review' of themselves prior to undertaking assessments is also an accessible summary for students and practitioners (pp. 129–31).

The author briefly, but lucidly, outlines how social theory can illuminate aspects of social work. We are advised by the book's blurb that the 'book has a student friendly structure and includes a set of exercises that encourage readers to apply their learning to practice'. However, when the book explores more abstract and speculative areas it is, for me at least, at its most interesting (e.g. when comparing parents role in assessments with that of penitents going

to confession, pp. 62–3; the section on the construction of 'time' in social work encounters, Ch. 4). Perhaps these excursions hint at the areas where the author will develop her work? More generally (and perhaps somewhat unusually in a textbook of this type), the tone and reflexive hesitancy, underpinning a number of its sections, is to be welcomed.

One problem with the book is that it appears a little dated. Understandably, given the processes of book production, there are no references to the green paper *Every Child Matters*, published in October 2003, which outlined the government's plans for the reorganisation of children' services (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003). However, what is more surprising, given the book's focal concern, is the absence of any references to the Victoria Climbie case. The child died in February 2000 and the Laming Report, inquiring into the circumstances surrounding her death, was published in January 2003 (Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2003). It is, therefore, rather puzzling why a book, published in 2004, fails to interrogate some of the 'messages' for the assessment of children and families which are conveyed by Laming. Indeed, neither Victoria nor the Laming Report features in the book's index.

A more expansive and political analysis of the book's subject might also have been preferable. How, for example, can some of the developments in relation to the assessment of children and families be related to neoliberalism and New Labour's 'modernisation' of social work and social care (see, for example, Jordan, with Jordan, 2000)? Perhaps also, the author is too dismissive of some of the criticisms of the new assessment schedules and related documentation introduced to 'aid' social workers' assessments. We are told, for example, that there 'may be weak points in specific wording or advice' but that this is 'almost inevitable in guidance of such ambitious breath' (pp. 22–3). Here, it might be countered that this is a somewhat generous interpretation of 'tools' for practice, characterised by the whiff of social authoritarianism, which blandly advise social workers to try and detect the 'ideological environment' in families and to inquire if parents' relationships with 'those in authority' is 'generously harmonious' (see Garrett, 2003).

In short, *Child and Family Assessment* is, however, a thoughtful, sensitive and clear articulation of core issues relating to the theory and practice of assessments in social work with children and their families. It will, no doubt, become a key text on the reading lists of student social workers and practitioners both in Britain and elsewhere.

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Alison Gilchrist, *The Well-Connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2004, 176 pp., £18.99 pbk, ISBN 1 86134 527 5.

The Well-Connected Community is an ambitious attempt to re-make the case for community development in the contemporary context, and specifically to argue for the centrality of

networking to the community development practitioner. With 35 pages of references following 120 pages of the main text, it pitches for the academic as well as the practitioner market.

Gilchrist builds on New Labour's rhetoric of community empowerment and social capital to present a model of the 'well-connected community' and the idea of 'meta-networking' as the core of community development practice. A well-connected community, she argues, 'is able to solve problems through reasoning, experimentation and strategic engagement with external bodies . . . In the long run, community development offers a cost-effective and sustainable strategy for regenerating communities, and renewing civil society but it will need better understanding and more resources than are currently available.'

This is a strong pitch, and in many ways a welcome counterpoint to the current orthodoxy of performance management, performance indicators, targets and milestones and the rest of the New Public Management toolkit which currently dominates urban renewal and regeneration. The book provides a detailed syllabus, based on both theory and the author's practice, to enable community development practitioners to raise their game. This is, however, a book which situates itself firmly within the world of community development, and, while this may be the source of its strength, it is also the source of some limitations.

In the first place, while Gilchrist discusses – albeit briefly – some of the criticisms of the concept of community, this is a limited critique, which she does not allow to seriously challenge the view that 'community' is the best way to talk about those groups of people who are the subjects of contemporary regeneration programmes and initiatives. Yet this is by no means self-evident. In many such cases, there is no or very little 'community', merely an alienated, excluded, fragmented and churning population, the flotsam and jetsam of successive waves of socio-economic change. The very notion of 'community' in such contexts is much more problematic than Gilchrist allows, and indeed the objective of 'producing order out of chaos', which is one of the ways she describes community development, can easily become part of a managerialist strategy rather than a process of empowerment. While Gilchrist makes passing reference to radical perspectives, which recognise such potential outcomes, she neither really takes them on board nor satisfactorily refutes them.

A curious absence from the book is any substantial discussion of local party politics and specifically the role of political parties and local councillors. Clearly, political parties have their limitations as networking institutions and builders of social capital, but, if we are serious about developing networks which link poor places to powerful people and institutions, can they just be ignored? If their role is rejected, then surely this needs arguing.

Finally, this book is clearly designed to have a practical impact. One of its strengths is that it seeks to link an academic analysis of community development with recommendations for policy and practice. The concluding chapter, in particular, offers ten recommendations to enhance a networking approach to community development. Some of these – such as the need for substantial commitment of time and resources to community networking in the early, formative stages of regeneration projects – are widely accepted in principle, but still frequently ignored in practice. Recent research on Labour's flagship New Deal for Communities programme, for example, highlights the fact that many residents in many NDC areas know little or nothing about initiatives which are supposed to be transforming their areas for the better. While this book does not always live up to its ambitious aims and while in particular a fuller recognition of the ways in which community development can be part of the problem not part of the solution would have been helpful, its attempt to restate the basis for a public policy, which is more engaged with marginalised social groups, is to be welcomed.

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