

REVIEWS

Margaret May, Edward Brunsdon, Gary Craig (eds.), *Social Policy Review 8*, Social Policy Association, London Guildhall University, London, 1996, 339 pp. £9.99 (SPA Members), paper £12.99 (Non-SPA Members).

As the editors say, the country is gearing up for a general election and a likely change of government. It is a strength of this collection that it provides an up-to-date base line which is not going to date, whichever party wins the election. Anyone interested in where changes in social policy have got to will welcome this book. Without being in any way monotonous the contributors summarise and/or analyse changes in the ideology and organisation of welfare across services and countries. Readers will concentrate on the areas that interest them most and it seems unfair to single out any particular chapters. Those who want to see continuity as a theme in welfare policy will find support for their arguments. Change has rarely been as radical as politicians or ideologues have wished but there is a constant theme of shifts in boundaries – between users and professionals, between services, sectors, managers and unions and of course the equally constant pressure to move to better management and more market-like mechanisms of service delivery.

John Clarke sees policies of the past decade as attempts to 'realign a series of relationships: between the state and the citizen; between the state and the economy; and between the state and its institutional or organisational forms (including its labour processes)'. On the one hand, evidence for realignment builds up chapter by chapter. On the other, however, the evidence of a purposive attempt is less convincing. Many contributors highlight the conflicting nature of developments and the muddle involved in poorly thought out policies and means of implementation.

Social policy teachers will be glad of the authoritative up-dates on the new pressures for accountability in the voluntary sector (Marilyn Taylor, and the round-up of the new complaints procedures detailed by Hartley Dean). Oppenheimer and Lister highlight the conflicting aims of social security policies. Craig, Glendinning and Clarke do the same in their analysis of the mega cock-up with the Child Support Agency, and David Smith considers the confused but destructive changes in the probation service. Glennerster states that American experience shows that the individualistic approach of allowing parents to buy nursery education produces a more responsive service than the collective approach through changes in legislation. However, he regrets that the present government's scheme is designed to help well-off parents in Tory areas rather than the children who most need nursery education – as might be expected of the individualistic approach. Norman Ginsberg offers an analysis of developments in housing policy in terms of the interplay between ideology and negative popular opinion.

It can be argued that ill thought out and often misplaced ideologies have been the main driving forces in policy formation. This has been particularly true of the NHS, and Petchey in his chapter on the primary care led NHS highlights

once again the many conflicts in government policies and the lack of sound research or information on policy development or evaluation. Starting from an analysis of the little that is known about GP fundholding, he concludes that there is virtually no evidence that it is beneficial, however beneficial may be defined. Equally, however, there is no good evidence that it is harmful to patients. Something a little more definite might have been expected of a policy that is rarely out of the headlines. Petchey also casts doubt on whether a primary care led NHS will indeed deliver lower costs and whether it will actually come into existence at all.

In some policy areas it is hard to identify the most elementary policy rationale. For example, Bradbury points out that local government reorganisation is going ahead with virtually no consideration of the type or size of authority needed to deliver a service. She notes that in two cases social services, which are now the major spending service in local government, were not even mentioned in plans for reorganisation.

The attack on the public service ethos can be symbolised by the end of nearly eighty years of national pay bargaining in the civil service in 1995, but this was only one manifestation of the changes in public employment discussed by Sylvia Horton. The conflicts between managing for quality and commitment, and constant cost cutting, have demoralised services across the country.

The final chapters leave traditional UK social policy concerns to look at transport as a social policy issue (Linda Jones) and to take an international perspective. Eardly compares social assistance and work incentives across the OECD and concludes that there is no evidence that specific criteria such as work tests result in fewer or shorter periods of unemployment. The experience of the Czech Republic (Castle-Kanerova) is that even a newly designed, post-communist social security system is not immune from conflicting aims and political controversy. Sykes points out that the Italian welfare state does not fit into the Esping-Anderson classification of regimes and suggests a new look at welfare in southern Europe while Peele foresees incremental rather than radical change in the American welfare state.

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Robert M. Page, *Altruism and the British Welfare State*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1996, vi + 179 pp., hard £32.50.

The role of altruism in the welfare state has become increasingly problematic during two decades when concern for the welfare of others has been recast in more proximate and selective ways. The right stress the individual's responsibility for self and family over that of society, thereby obscuring the difference between selflessness and self-interest. Communitarians argue that altruism is contingent on social membership which can exclude non-members. Some feminists promote a politics of difference which appeals to altruistic motives of gender rather than universal human nature. Postmodernists argue that Enlightenment's liberal commitment to an impartial welfare universalism that treats all equally is indifferent to the demands of difference and endangers interpersonal acts of altruism. Even the leadership of a Labour Party, which was once the repository of welfare universalism, now no longer talks of universal provision in its bid to modernise the welfare state at no extra cost, and instead stresses

the civic nature of altruism. In place of compassion for the universal stranger go more contingent and pragmatic concerns. What remains of the altruistic motive which once supported the contention that state and society have a responsibility for the basic needs of all? Robert Page provides a timely appraisal of the prospects of altruism.

Page examines this important issue from a historical perspective that traces the altruistic impulse from the poor law to its high point in the postwar decades, and finally to the nadir of uncertainty that marks the British welfare state at the end of this century. The study follows the conventional narrative of social policy history from nineteenth-century poor law, philanthropy and working-class self-help, through the Liberal Reforms in the early twentieth century and the postwar universal welfare state, to the present perplexities of the Tory welfare reforms. At each point he summarises the state altruism has reached, noting the continuities and changes affecting its fortunes. Though the historical ground has been well covered before, the presentation is readable, well informed and draws together a wide range of recent research and interpretation. The second half of the book moves beyond historical assessment to examine several key debates in contemporary social policy for which altruism is a crucial test: Titmuss' notion of welfare as gift; left and right critiques of modern welfare; the middle class's capture of state welfare; and the implications of the British public's abiding commitment to the welfare state.

Though important, the phenomenon of altruism poses intractable problems of analysis which inevitably limit the scope of this interesting study. First, the formation of collective altruism differs from that of individual altruism, and calls for different methods of analysis. Historical study seeks to explain the role of collective sentiments in shaping the formation of social institutions, and places the action and motivation of individuals in this broader context. Therefore what purpose is served in the first chapter by examining the biological and sociological evidence for altruism and analysing what counts as altruistic action? The chapter discusses the speculations of philosophical anthropology about the dominant motivations governing human nature, only to arrive at a level of generality which proves unamenable to the task of contextualising the historical evidence of altruism. It then offers an analytical approach to the definition of altruism in terms of the motivations driving the archetypal rational individual. The analytical distinction between altruistic and self-interested action in individuals may have little bearing on wider altruistic movements. It is only when tackling the high point of welfare altruism in the Second World War and its aftermath that evidence of unconditional altruism allows Page to employ his earlier conceptual analysis to effect.

A second problem lies in knowing whether the phenomenon of altruism is the same in different periods. Is what Page terms variously charity, philanthropy, collective welfare and community spirit the same as altruism or different?, and if different in what sense? Page tackles this problem squarely. However, does it help to begin in chapter 1 with an essentialist definition of altruism that sets the standard for appraising all actual expressions of collectivism. The study calls for some discussion of different theories of the emergence of collective motivation within the wider civilising process. Without a theory of altruism, the issue is easily reduced to one of ideology. Titmuss, for example, saw the altruism of the postwar welfare state as a decisive step in the culmination of a long-term process

that had earlier given rise to more fragmented expressions of altruism. By contrast, writers associated with the libertarian right see the postwar welfare state as the very antithesis of the spirit of voluntary altruism and self-help that they long to see resurrected in civil society. An account of the different theories used to explain the rise of collective impulses such as altruism would go some way to move beyond ideological dispute.

Thirdly, how is one to avoid the temptation to elevate altruism into a singular all-embracing theme in welfare history? Page resists this by charting the multiple factors shaping the contours of welfare. His conclusion is that altruism can only be understood as one motive among others such as self-interest and individual expediency, which must be examined together to understand the processes shaping welfare this century. Indeed the prospects for welfare next century depend on getting the balance of welfare outcomes right so that, as Page says, 'any "acceptable" welfare strategy will have to appeal to self-interest as well as selflessness' (p. 146).

Page's thesis, in this balanced, realistic and yet optimistic study, is that the spirit of altruism is kept alive in the collective experiences of sport, fraternity and public protest and in the human encounters of everyday life which help to resist the demeaning and at times self-interested spirit that seems to pervade much of welfare provision at this century's close.

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Gosta Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Welfare States in Transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies*, Sage, London, 1996, vii + 276 pp., paper £13.95.

The role of the state in the provision of welfare services has always been, and always will be, a subject of intense and vehement debate. On one side there are those who seek an extension of the state's activities and on the other those who want it rolled back – and it usually appears that there are few if any in the middle who find the present degree of involvement about right. Moreover, both sides often make use of 'evidence' drawn from the experience of other countries. It is therefore an appealing feature of this book on welfare provision around the world that one is able to get a feel for the welfare systems in many different countries, their historical development and the current problems they are facing. Seven chapters cover policy in the developed world, specifically North America, Scandinavia, Continental Europe and Australia and New Zealand, and the fast developing countries of Latin America, East Asia and Eastern Europe, along with an introduction and conclusion by the editor. While there are some odd omissions, such as Britain, which, given recent policy, might be regarded as essential in a comparative study, the book is sufficiently comprehensive to make it a very useful introduction to the field.

Being based on a study for the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), however, this book is much more than an introduction to the principal welfare systems of the world. Its central theme is to examine the current pressures on welfare states which in many countries are in various stages of disintegration, crisis or reconstruction. As Esping-Andersen shows in his excellent scene-setting introductory chapter, the pressures come from a number of sources that can be broadly classified as follows: the changes in social structures

affecting the types of welfare services demanded (e.g., the effects of divorce and single-parent families); the demographic trends, primarily population ageing and the effects on the dependency ratio; and sluggish economic performance, which has been manifest in poor employment prospects and reductions in competitiveness. These, at least, are the problems from the point of view of the advanced Western economies.

Elsewhere in the world the pressures are of a rather different order, such as the effects of the collapse in the economic system in Eastern Europe. Here there is a need to rebuild social policy from the ruins of a profligate universalist system that was ultimately unworkable because of its distortionary effects on economic incentives. Guy Standing in his chapter on the former communist bloc countries provides a helpful essay that documents the impact of the economic collapse on poverty and other social indicators and discusses the policy choices open to, and being taken in, these countries, particularly with regard to the extent of state involvement. Similar questions face the Latin American countries and those in the Far East, although the contexts are rather different. Indeed, this book makes it abundantly clear that in many countries the welfare system is at a crossroads and that serious choices have to be made between the major alternative approaches to social policy: that is, between state or private provision; between a universalist or selective system; and whether welfare is orientated towards income maintenance or improving life chances. Some countries have already made their choice, as in Chile, with its neo-liberal economic and social policies introduced by the politically repressive Pinochet regime, and Australia and New Zealand, with their emphasis on targeting. In others there have been distinct shifts in emphasis, although Esping-Andersen's contention is that, with a few exceptions, these have been marginal. Marginal changes, however, add up, and perhaps more importantly and especially in Western Europe, the pressure for greater labour market flexibility and the need for budgetary stringency are likely to mean that major shifts may not be long in coming. One gets a very strong impression from these essays that many countries have not really got to grips with their welfare problems.

Some clues to a solution to the future direction of welfare policy, particularly in Western Europe, can be found by examining the causes of the current crises. On this, however, the authors are not entirely convincing. They rightly dismiss a unicausal explanation, but on reading the book one is struck by the significance of overall economic, and especially employment, performance for the ability of a country to sustain a welfare system. The pressures brought by poor performance are shown very clearly in the chapter on the Continental insurance-based system, pressures heightened by repeated errors in social policy. But there is a tendency to underemphasise the negative effects the welfare system can have on economic efficiency. The evidence on income tax may not be supportive of the work disincentive argument, but there is good reason for thinking that benefit levels and their duration as well as non-wage employment costs produce sluggish labour market adjustment. Similarly, minimum wages are deleterious to youth employment.

There is also excessive concentration on increasing female labour market participation as a solution, or the lack of it as a cause of Europe's problems. The argument is based on a comparison of Sweden (high participation) with Germany, France, Spain and Italy (low). But it seems both to ignore experience

elsewhere and to be the product of confused logic. On the first, the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand have had rising female employment, but have neither solved long-term (male) unemployment nor youth unemployment, and many of the jobs created have hardly been secure or fulfilling. On the second, there is a confusion of supply and demand factors: making it easier for women to enter the labour market does not necessarily increase the demand for women workers. Once again we are back to the general slackness of labour demand as an explanation either because overall demand is low – perhaps due to a tough anti-inflation stance – or because of high wage and non-wage costs. In the case of Sweden, the high participation rate seems a very special one. Here the rise went hand in hand with the rise in the growth in public sector employment (see pp. 11–13), but this in turn is part of the problem. The tax consequences of making the state the employer of last resort are unsustainable, and the excessive liberality of the social support required produced unacceptable distortions such as absentee rates double those of Germany or the Netherlands.

Globalisation, on the other hand, is included as one of a number of pressures and is rightly not elevated above others as in so many discussions. Not only is it one that is relatively recent – deindustrialisation and rising natural rates of unemployment predate the main NIC challenge – the levelling down of wages and welfare are not inevitable. Competitiveness can be maintained by labour quality and hence productivity (see Freeman, 1995).

At a time when many commentators are suggesting that a reorientation of social policy is in order, the conclusion that the status quo will be maintained in the Western European welfare systems seems overly optimistic. In fact the contributors to this book offer some useful suggestions as to the form of welfare state that might be acceptable in a world where governments (and their electorates) are unwilling to sanction large-scale redistribution through the tax-benefit system, but where poverty and inequality of US proportions are highly undesirable. One policy strand is the promotion of 'social investment' which is 'designed to optimize the self-reliant capacities of the citizenry' (p. 264) with the lead here being taken by Sweden and some of the Far Eastern countries. Another is a move towards more selective income maintenance programmes as in Australia, which, as Castles demonstrates, offer support 'at least as satisfactory as those of most other types of welfare state' (p. 132).

All in all, then, this very useful volume examines, either explicitly or implicitly, the problems facing welfare systems around the world. It identifies the main issues and points us in the direction of some solutions. It also offers a timely reminder that changing the welfare system is no easy matter, and this is not only because of the dreaded vested interests blocking reform, but also because welfare policies reflect deep-rooted social expectations and are often the product of coalitions between social partners. The knack of implementing effective reform therefore is to harness measures that are both economically efficient and socially cohesive, what Esping-Andersen calls "Positive-sum solutions", in his intelligent conclusion.

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R. Freeman (1995), 'Are your wages set in Beijing?' *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 9:3, Summer.

David Taylor (ed.), *Critical Social Policy: A Reader*, Sage, London, 1996, vii + 240 pp., paper £12.95.

This is a collection of articles previously published in CSP and, as might be expected, reflect CSP's interest in developing anti-discriminatory analyses of welfare policy and practice. The reader is in two parts. The first points to a range of discriminations and exclusions within the welfare state and social policy. Entitled *Social Policy and Social Relations*, it covers discrimination on the grounds of gender, 'race', religion, sexuality, disability and age, in essays by Mary McIntosh, Steve Cohen, Fiona Williams, Jenny Morris, Colin Barnes, Jean Carabine and Jay Ginn. The second part, entitled *Citizenship, Needs and Participation*, discusses issues surrounding social inclusion – how it might be achieved and given institutional backing – in pieces by David Taylor and Ruth Lister on citizenship, Suzy Croft and Peter Beresford on participation, Martin Hewitt on new social movements and Paul Spicker on particularism.

The range of these articles is quite interesting but curiously bland. This may be because the rationale for the inclusion of particular articles in the volume is not apparent. For example, the first essay by Mary McIntosh was originally published in 1981, and during the 1980s CSP published numerous pieces dealing with various aspects of discrimination and anti-discrimination in social policy. Why these particular articles were chosen for inclusion rather than others is not at all clear. The introduction to the volume stresses the important role of 'social relations' in unequal and exclusionary processes and comments that the selected articles 'do not represent a unified approach to social relations, and in some cases appear to occupy contradictory positions. Yet despite the diversity of prospects employed there are a number of issues raised in common by all contributors' (p. 2). I found this rather confusing. Why shouldn't the positions be contradictory? Understanding 'social relations' is a theoretical exercise, and theoretical understandings of inequity are subject to vigorous debate. Bringing together contributors who disagree on the causes of, for example, women's inequality, would have highlighted competing schools of thought in a way that would enable understanding of the debates as they have developed since Mary McIntosh's contribution in 1981. The emphasis on exclusion and discrimination is part of a broader movement in social thought examining these questions in a range of disciplines – women's studies, literary criticism, sociology, cultural studies and linguistics, for example – where academic readers on the social relations of inequality represent a range of positions and debates on the causes and reproduction of such inequalities. The sense of debate is lacking in this collection, which remains firmly issue based, and perhaps explains what was, for me, its blandness. One gets a sense not of the liveliness of contemporary debate, but more of an implicit 'line' on the issues of discrimination, although I wasn't sure what this line actually was.

Clues might be found in the second part of the volume. Here there are theoretical pieces which lean towards a Habermasian view of the possibilities for inclusion, rights, citizenship, etc., to which some of us might reply 'dream on'. Whilst dreaming is by no means a bad thing, having got through the first part of the volume and the catalogue of discriminations upon which modern institutions and their policy frameworks are embedded, it is not at all clear how we might attain a Habermasian universality. Martin Hewitt, in a piece which will

be difficult for those not familiar with new social movement (NSM) theory, rues the existence of such movements but fails to take on board their critical force. Whilst struggle for equality is acknowledged as necessary for improved social conditions, the struggle of the NSMs is seen as antithetical to developing desired goals of universality. However, much NSM activity, as well as the usually reviled post-modern theoretical literature, suggest that political and social struggle is inherently fractured: it is here that post-modern writings are at their most sophisticated and I have yet to see a convincing critique of them. Such writings may be unpalatable, but they do not represent intellectually invalid positions.

They could, however, be of great relevance to the concerns of CSP. The justification for the selection of articles in this collection seems to be that 'they make a powerful critique of the white, male, heterosexist, ablist and ageist assumption of much social policy' (p. 3). Is there anybody who isn't familiar by now with this refrain, other than first year students? We need to go further than this observation to engage in debate about how this state of affairs arises, and it is here that theoretical debate has much to offer, particularly in relation to unpacking concepts. The place to start might be with the concept of socialism underpinning CSP, along the lines evident in journals such as *Rethinking Marxism* and *Passages*.

These quibbles aside, each of the articles in this collection is good, and will be of interest to students as an introduction to the extent of discrimination within the welfare system and its policy frameworks.

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Pete Alcock, *Social Policy in Britain*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1996, vii + 319 pp., paper £12.99.

Pete Alcock has written an excellent new introductory textbook. Intended for students at all levels from NVQ or BTEC, through first year undergraduate to postgraduate, its overwhelming strengths are its *realist* approach to the politics of policy-making and its grounded account of welfare structures and outcomes. The author's strong grasp of policy issues make this very much a text *for* social policy – as an academic enterprise and a political project about meeting human need.

The book is divided into five sections dealing broadly with: the nature and content of the study of social policy; structures of provision; 'contexts' – ideological, economic, international and local; 'issues' – social divisions, paying-for and delivering welfare; and 'futures' – academic, geographical and ideological. Whilst the grouping together of topics like social divisions based on class, gender, race, age and disability with practical concerns like sources and distribution of funding in one section entitled 'issues' is somewhat arbitrary, the book nevertheless hangs together and the approach is at ease with itself. In fact, where others are less confident about the status of the academic subject, Alcock suggests that the move away from a *social administration* focus to *social policy* is one component of the establishment of the subject as a *discipline*. The changing political reality of diverse forms of provision and funding is another. As Alcock suggests, 'social policy in the 1990s and into the future ... encompasses theoretical diversity and organisational heterogeneity. It is the social policy of the *welfare mix* and not the *welfare state*' (p. 302). This academic and practical disengagement

from 'the perspective of the state' (Taylor-Gooby, 1981) has begun to establish the self-confidence to deal with the theoretical diversity that characterises social science disciplines.

The first section situates the development of the discipline in its political history from Fabianism through New Right and New Left critiques to 'critical perspectives' which draw attention to divisions of gender and 'race' within the discipline and content of social policy. It goes on to emphasise the increasing recognition of the need for a comparative perspective. It concludes with a consideration of the content of social policy extending the traditional five areas to include a discussion of employment and family policy.

The second section addresses the current structure of the welfare mix. This is one of the strongest sections. Discussions of the role of the state and the market are handled carefully with the author pointing out the important historical inter-relationship and the changing contemporary balance between the two. 'The debate about the role of the state in welfare services in Britain, and indeed in other advanced industrial societies', he points out, 'is a debate about the extent of state welfare – not about the overall *need* for it' (p. 58). It is the discussion of the voluntary sector in this section, however, that stands out as particularly useful for new students of the subject. Addressing the problem of definition and the role of this 'third sector', the author provides an excellent schema and diagrammatic representation of its 'intermediary role' between the public, market and family sectors, relating this to the formal/informal, public/private and profit/non-profit divides. The sector is best conceived, he argues, through the notion of 'independence', which 'emphasises the value of operating outside the constraints of public accountability or the profit motive' (p. 86). This is set in the context of political history and a trajectory which poses dilemmas for what are a very diverse range of organisations – 'not so much how to maintain their independence but rather how to negotiate their relations with the other sector' (p. 94). Alcock lists five potential roles: alternative, complementary, partnership, contractual and advocacy. The following chapter which explores informal care as another 'sector' is similarly helpful in understanding the diverse structure of welfare provision.

Section three on 'contexts' is a mixture of the geo-political (local and international) and ideological aspects of welfare. The chapters on European Union and on the local control of welfare are excellent, but Alcock is less at ease when dealing with 'ideology'. His rejection of post-modern analyses of welfare as founded upon an 'ahistorical myth' (p. 125) that new and diverse forms of politics are the direct product of late capitalism, does little justice to the complexity and possibilities offered by the variety of issues thrown up by the various 'post' literatures. It is all the more surprising given his somewhat *relativist* account of particular welfare ideologies as no more 'right or wrong than any ... others' (p. 120).

The chapters in section four on paying for welfare and delivering welfare are again the author at his best. He clearly indicates the contradictory outcomes of the introduction of quasi-markets, which frequently simply shift the financial burden of provision from one area to another – for example, the shift in cost from the NHS for cleaning and catering services to Housing Benefit and Family Credit which subsidise reduced wages paid by the private sector.

Despite the massive changes confronting welfare systems in the next century,

Alcock concludes optimistically about the future role of social policy, both as provision and as discipline. Emphasising the central importance of comparative study, he argues that in the future we will 'know more and more about what is happening in policy development in other countries', but importantly, he believes, 'this will also strengthen the prescriptive role of social policy in policy making' (p. 297). It is a topic which is firmly back on the political agenda for the 1990s and beyond, and Alcock's textbook provides the wider perspective which should inspire students with a sense of optimistic political realism and enthusiasm for a developing discipline.

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P. Taylor-Gooby (1981), 'The empiricist tradition in social administration', *Critical Social Policy*, 1:2.

Brian Nolan and Christopher Whelan, *Resources, Deprivation, and Poverty*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, viii + 261 pp., hard £35.00.

Readers of this journal will be all too familiar with the questions which have bedevilled research on poverty since the publication of Townsend's *Poverty in the United Kingdom*. Is poverty best conceptualised in terms of income or, more directly, in terms of living standards? Can measures of poverty based on deprivation indices be combined with measures based on income? How should the statistical relationship between current income and deprivation indices be specified? This authoritative study makes a significant contribution to these and related questions, while simultaneously placing poverty analysis where it properly belongs – in the mainstream, alongside research on social class, social inequality, labour markets and unemployment.

The book is the culmination of a programme of research on poverty, income distribution and usage of state services in the Republic of Ireland undertaken at the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin where the authors are based. While the empirical survey data refer to Ireland, the substance of the work has a relevance beyond this context. In chapter 1 the authors firmly locate their study in the debate instigated by Stein Ringen (1987), who insisted on a clear distinction between direct (life-style) and indirect (income) measures of poverty: they set themselves the task of showing how *both* types of measures can be used, and of clarifying the relationship between these types of measures. Earlier studies had reported somewhat tenuous associations between income and deprivation measures. Chapter 2 offers a brisk review of the literature on the meaning and measurement of poverty and this is followed in chapter 3 by a brief survey of the main findings about income poverty in Ireland.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 comprise the core of the study. The authors firstly add to a Mack/Lansley-type scale of enforced deprivation four specific items designed to reflect acute deprivation. They then use factor analysis to show that deprivation is not simply one dimensional and they identify three separate dimensions of deprivation which they characterise as basic, housing and secondary dimensions. A number of distinct analytical advantages flow from this procedure; an extreme form of 'real' poverty can be observed by scaling households on the basic dimension; a more satisfactory approach to correlating income and deprivation is achieved when this correlation is expressed in terms of the separate dimensions of deprivation; and, analysis of the variation in deprivation scores

can be more fully undertaken using the separate dimensions. Chapter 5 concludes with a rich analysis of the impact of a range of independent variables on the variation in deprivation scores, with separate analyses for a total, twenty-four item scale and for the three different dimensions. In chapter 6 the income and deprivation criteria are simultaneously applied to identify households which are poor on both criteria or on one criterion – this yields a very interesting description of those who are ‘consistently’ poor (poor on both criteria) and those who are ‘inconsistently’ poor (poor on one criterion).

Chapter 7 shifts the focus somewhat by placing the poverty data in the context of concerns about the ‘underclass’. In the Irish context this concern is invoked not only by those on the right who fear the emergence of mass, welfare-driven dependence, but also by poverty activists and advocates who see in the underclass concept a rationale for area and community based interventions in ‘pockets’ of poverty or ‘areas’ of high unemployment. In a rigorous test of the underclass hypothesis the authors point to the existence of a sub-group of the working class experiencing general marginalisation. However, there is no evidence to support the underclass view that levels of fatalism among this category are significantly affected by the interaction between marginalisation and location. The authors therefore firmly opt for a perspective on the social and psychological consequences of long-term unemployment which emphasises large-scale processes impinging on all social classes. This analysis is one of the most convincing critiques of underclass formulations in recent years – its strength derives from its careful specification of the processes implicit in the underclass perspective and from the integration of measures of poverty with measures of class position and employment history.

This book should make a significant contribution to the analysis of poverty and social inequality. It offers a rigorous, ingenious and original contribution to some of the more stubborn methodological problems in recent poverty research, and by keeping a clear focus on the ‘bigger picture’ of class and the impact of unemployment it keeps poverty analysis out of the ghetto of poverty arithmetic. It would not be easily read by the average undergraduate who would find the analytical techniques a little daunting – although the broad approach is well discernible throughout. For the ‘professionals’ in the poverty research business, however, the book is, quite simply, essential reading.

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Stein Ringen (1987), *The Possibility of Politics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Bill Jordan, *A Theory of Poverty and Social Exclusion*, Polity Press, Oxford, 1996, vii + 276 pp., hard £45, paper £13.95.

This is a substantial book of 276 pages, including the index and a wide-ranging and useful bibliography. The seven chapters are well organised and clearly written, with one proviso, concerning the degree of explanation of fundamental economic concepts provided for non-economists. The most important concepts deployed are shared by, and will be familiar to, many sociologists as well as economists (theory of groups and theory of clubs), and are well explained. However, some further explanation of the concept of economic rent, and an explicit discussion of utility functions (which are implicit in much of the

discussion about rational individual decision-making), would be useful to non-economists.

The title of the book is very ambitious, aiming to provide a theory that will embrace poverty and social exclusion. The methodological approach is that of orthodox economics, largely treating poverty and social exclusion as phenomena which can be predicted as outcomes, using a utility maximising model of rational decision-making by individuals. The theoretical framework used is a development of work by Olson and Buchanan on cartel behaviour. Persons maximise their welfare and minimise their costs by forming clubs which exclude certain kinds of individuals, in this case, the poor.

The strength of the book is its modelling approach, and it will be a means for members of the economics teaching profession, increasingly constrained within the orthodox approach, to re-insert questions of poverty and social exclusion into the syllabi of economics undergraduate courses. However, precisely this constituency of economists would find the book more useful if it was presented using the standard economics graphical and mathematical toolkit. Chapters 4, 5 and particularly 6, concern the behaviour of club members, both the non-poor and those excluded from non-poor clubs, that is, the poor and the 'underclass' (unfortunately these terms are used rather interchangeably). Formal presentation would clarify discussions of the really interesting questions, which include, what makes the clubs' existence stable or unstable? what determines the shape of the utility functions (what's in the bag labelled 'tastes and preferences', how are they determined) and the slope of the income-leisure trade-off? (what factors make for a 'corner solution', that is, a choice not to participate in the labour market). Many of the determinants, such as income inequality, the benefits system, income risks attached to certain decisions, are referred to in the text, but, perhaps in deference to the more general audience, are not explicitly modelled.

Jordan claims on page 69 that 'the economics of group interaction...make a coherent theory of poverty and social exclusion feasible'. However the book's strength, in bringing to bear the orthodox economics toolkit on a subject, which, from an academic economist's perspective, can be judged to have developed little beyond 'enriched description' of the world, is also its weakness.

Early on, the book asserts that relative poverty (increased income inequality) is caused by globalisation, which enables economic rents gained by workers in advanced countries with redistributive welfare states to be competed away. This outcome (increased relative poverty) is then used as an assumption underpinning club formation behaviour. Thus, though not explicitly stated, the causal chain is, for Western economies, rising relative poverty causes exclusion. However, on page 81 Jordan states that 'exclusion arises from the need to set boundaries (of family, clan, club, community or nation) around interdependency, and from the technological capacity to partition goods for private ownership and use'. It would be interesting if Jordan had said explicitly how *social* exclusion relates to exclusion as defined by him, and to poverty as presented by him. Not all exclusions are equally interesting in this respect, or equally important.

Many political and social theorists will not find the book to their taste. Despite the focus on exclusion, Jordan's book remains firmly in the Anglo-Saxon tradition of poverty analysis, concerned with material resources (in this case resource maximisation and cost minimisation) more than with relational

matters. It is also firmly within the orthodox economic tradition of comparative static analysis of individual decision-making; the system is a 'given', the dynamics are not treated. Power as a tool of analysis is conspicuous by its absence.

The International Institute for Labour Studies, testing the relevance of the concept of exclusion in poor non-European countries, found incidence of great poverty, but little evidence of what they defined as social exclusion. However, in chapter 4, Jordan is rather dismissive of those developing an analysis of social exclusion in the context of the role and transformation of welfare states. Yet, even from an economist's perspective, there is surely much mileage in an analysis of the impact for social exclusion of the attempt to deliver 'goods' with public or merit characteristics through a market system. More broadly, the processes of decommmodification and recommodification could be useful in an analysis of poverty and social exclusion, in Eastern and Western European states.

Further, in Jordan's book the 'outs' or excluded, are a rather undifferentiated lump whose survival strategies consist of informal clubs of the dispossessed. However, an analysis of the structuring of the socially excluded, for example, through categories such as citizen, resident, alien, or luxury-insured, basic-insured, uninsured, might be a fruitful means of understanding the dynamics of social exclusion and its place in social policy in transforming welfare states.

Jordan is also a little casual with evidence of the 'collapse' of welfare states and in particular of the Scandinavian system, allowing Norway and Finland, with their different recent experiences, as special cases, but Sweden as the general case of collapse. An analysis of the timing of recession, or the preparations for entry to the European Union, might have produced equally or more convincing arguments about the recent growth experience of Scandinavian states. He is equally casual about the nature and extent of free markets and redistribution in the 'Tiger' economies.

For those, especially amongst non-governmental organisations, who believe consideration of poverty or social exclusion must start from a different set of assumptions: for example, that human dignity is one and indivisible, that from this derives a concept of social justice and social rights, and from this arises an analysis of the three mechanisms of inclusion (state, market and family and personal networks), Jordan's approach misses the essence of social exclusion. Nevertheless, it has policy implications they must address. It recommends welcome acceptance of a *fait accompli*, the fragmentation of welfare states, and, interestingly and controversially in the present climate of increasing social authoritarianism, it implies deregulation not only of formal markets, but of the survival strategies of the poor.

Economists in the field of poverty have been criticised for concentrating on counting the poor rather than accounting for them. Jordan's book does neither of these things; it offers a behavioural theory of exclusion in terms of resource maximisation by the non-poor and the poor. The book is lively and very readable; it will stimulate theoretical debate and development, in an area much in need of it.

KATHERINE DUFFY

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M. Olson, (1965), *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

J. M. Buchanan, (1968), 'An economic theory of clubs', *Economica*, 32, 1–14.

G. Rodgers, C. Gore, and J. B. Figueredo, (eds.), (1995), *Social Exclusion: Rhetoric Reality Responses*, International Labour Office, Geneva.

Nirmala Rao, *Towards Welfare Pluralism: Public Services in a Time of Change*, Dartmouth Publishing Company, Aldershot, 1996, vii + 199 pp. paper £15.

Revisionism takes many forms. Who now defends centralised public services? In this interesting book Rao claims that the dominant interpretation of the Thatcher years, 'as an era of unmitigated centralisation, and see her rhetoric of decentralisation as inauthentic..(this).. is to misunderstand the nature of the project' (p. 176). Academic assessments of the reform of public welfare services have tended to vary dramatically. Some authors offered polemical assaults on the reforms, both in terms of the principles that underpinned them and their consequences for users. Others tried to chart the choppy waters of theoretical debate in order to speculate about the nature of welfare in late modernity, while others made more modest attempts to describe the changes without appealing to any wider conceptual debates about the nature of welfare. This book falls firmly in the latter camp. In place of speculation or condemnation, Rao attempts a balanced assessment of the ways in which the search for welfare pluralism impacted upon the local authorities whose powers were to be so dramatically transformed after 1987. The book grew out of a Joseph Rowntree Foundation research programme on *Local and Central Government Relations* and in it Rao tries to evaluate the 'most dramatic set of changes in the history of British local government' (p. 123).

The author spurns any broader theorising for a careful assessment of the empirical changes occurring in the provision of public services, and the book shows how the new agenda for the welfare state in Britain emerges most clearly in the third term of the Thatcher government. The book is organised into chapters covering education, public housing, local authority 'contracting out' and social services. The author makes good use of material drawn from fieldwork, interviews with key informants and previously unpublished data from the Local Government Management Board. Rao is surely correct to emphasise that there is a complex picture emerging, with, from the standpoint of supporters of the reforms, some striking successes and failures.

Rao is trying to answer a key question as to whether the moves towards diversity, decentralisation, competition and consumerism, 'amount to the replacement of bureaucratic decision-making by market processes' (p. 178). Her answer is deceptively simple, 'Taking the reforms as a whole, the result is a patchy one' (p. 178). Whilst she is convinced that structural changes to create new market mechanisms, particularly in competitive tendering, have been significant, the development of internal markets has proven more elusive. With reference to education, she concludes that it is a mixed picture; 'the dynamic of delegation to schools is not working to promote opting out and the withering away of the LEA' (p. 45), yet, 'the revised, decentralised, system of local government (of schools) appears to be firmly established' (p. 178). In housing, despite the success of the policy of council house sales and the boost to owner occupation, attempts to shift the control of public housing has been a complete failure; 'despite voting arrangements which are heavily weighted in favour of a change

of status, tenants showed remarkably little interest in a transfer away from local authority control... Tenants Choice had become an embarrassing failure' (p. 177). Other areas can, from the perspective of supporters of the reforms, be deemed more successful. In the case of competitive tendering, 'Local authorities have shaped up, reluctantly or otherwise, into a competitive mode' (p. 123), and Rao concludes that, 'The dynamics of competition have proved powerful beyond all expectation, and we shall not see the old familiar patterns of public service management again' (p. 126).

Whilst the author charts the impact of these reforms on public services there is no attempt to take on the challenging task of accounting for the relative success or failure of the reforms. Why were some areas of public service reformed more easily than others? Was it the nature of the client group? The organised interests of professionals? the enthusiasm of the private sector? or simply poorly thought out legislation. It is easy to speculate, much more difficult to explain the mixed picture that Rao presents us with. Also, it is a surprise to see any book on local authority public services not engage with debates about the evaluation of services and their 'quality'. There is little critical analysis of the concept of new public sector management nor a recognition that managerialism may be best viewed as a type of ideology. On a minor point, the exclusive UK focus prevents the reader from grasping to what extent such reforms are part of a wider 'global' shift in the management and delivery of public services.

There is plenty here to persuade the sceptical reader that the real achievement of the reforms was the rise of the new public management and the creation of a new cross party consensus about public services. Rao is not alone in believing that the real triumph of the Thatcher agenda for local authority public services can be seen in the policy convergence between the Labour and Conservative parties on most of the reforms. Students will get a lot out of this modest, thoroughly researched, carefully argued and well-balanced account of 'welfare pluralism'.

ROBERT MEARS

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Gerald Wistow, Martin Knapp, Brian Hardy, Julien Forder, Jeremy Kendall and Rob Manning, *Social Care Markets: Progress and Prospects*, Open University Press, Buckingham and Philadelphia, 1996, viii + 200 pp., hard £45.00, paper £14.99.

This volume is the second reporting the results of a continuing study of the development the social care market in England following the implementation of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. The first (Wistow *et al.*, 1994), was reviewed by Juliet Cheetham in *Journal of Social Policy*, 24: 1, 143–4, and reported on data gathered from a sample of local authorities in 1991. The main object of this book is to describe and evaluate how the same sample of twenty-five authorities was coping in 1993 with the consequences of the community care reforms which came into full operation from 1 April that year. The focus is on provision for the elderly. Also reported here are the results of a study of the activity of fifty-eight private and voluntary residential homes in eight local authority areas and of sixty-two interviews conducted with the owners or officers in charge of the homes.

The 1990 Act and the Department of Health guidance that followed it, require local authorities to take the lead, through their social services departments, in developing more varied markets in social care. The emphasis is on a more enabling role for the departments, a growing market share for private and voluntary providers, particularly in the provision of domiciliary services, all leading to greater choice and better outcomes for users and carers within the resources available. It is on this market development role that the book concentrates and the information is largely drawn from fifty face-to-face interviews with directors of departments and with the local politicians chairing social service committees.

This is research and analysis of a very high order. The authors are economists, but this perspective and the technical expertise that goes with it, is not used to intimidate non-economist readers, but very much Occam's-razor-fashion, to separate out the issues and weigh the answers. Included in the course of the analysis are what are effectively excellent short essays on the intellectual origins of 'government by the market', the logic and potential range of purchasing arrangements, theories of professional and organisational motivation, and on the special transactional cost problems that affect social care markets. Despite the many authors, the quality of the writing is uniformly high and lucid. Nonetheless this is not a book for undergraduates; it assumes a substantial knowledge of the history and nature of social care services and the conclusions reached are complex and provisional. The authors' tone is dispassionate and their clinical coolness could become very wearing were it not for the frequent and picturesque quotations from the interviewees. As well as being very much a report-back to the Department of Health on how the reforms are progressing, this volume should be of great value to directors and managers for the way in which it sorts out the difficult technical and procedural tasks that need to be carried through. This is achieved without forgetting the practical realities social services departments face. It is not advice from the ivory tower, but embedded in the practical realities of social care services.

In 1991 the researchers found social service managers and professionals very resistant to the greater use of market mechanisms. By 1993 they show that, at least amongst the directors, two-thirds of their interviewees could see some advantages: largely in terms of cost awareness and control for local authorities and in terms of potential choice for users. The directors had become 'market pragmatists' if not 'market enthusiasts'. Evidence is also provided to argue that the public sector image of a private residential sector primarily driven by profit-maximization is wrong. A combination of evidence about 'expressed preferences' (what they said) and 'revealed preferences' (what they are doing) is used to show that home owners are as muddled a mixture of the selfish and altruistic as everyone else. Overall, the conclusions reached are tentative. The last three chapters ask 'is the market working?' and, summarizing crudely the subtle but clear analysis, the answer is 'not yet', in 1993, and that there was still a chance of significant, if partial, policy failure.

While there is no doubt this study represents the best in social care research, two observations might be made. The use of qualitative interview material is seen by sociologists as raising particularly difficult methodological problems of selection and interpretation. This report offers no indication of how these were dealt with. The authors speak frequently of 'the development of a

mixed economy of care' but are surely aware that for most elderly with care needs it has always been mixed and the activities of local authorities have never been more than marginal.

JOHN BALDOCK

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G. Wistow, M. Knapp, B. Hardy and C. Allen (1994), *Social Care in a Mixed Economy*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

Tim Lee, *The Search for Equity: The Funding of Additional Educational Needs under LMS*, Avebury, Aldershot, 1996, 151 pp., hard £32.50.

This book, which is derived from Tim Lee's Ph.D. thesis, provides some fascinating detail and insights about the ways in which a range of LEAs has attempted to operationalise the government's instructions about creating a formula for funding schools.

The first five chapters of the book form a theoretical and conceptual background to the study. On the whole, I found these chapters more confusing than helpful. The concepts of 'equity' and 'needs' are reviewed, and Tim Lee concludes, rightly, that they are tricky and elusive concepts which are very difficult for policy-makers to get to grips with in any useful way. However, I feel that it might have been useful for policy-makers to have been given a firmer steer in the direction of operational definitions.

The chapters which give details of the ways in which a number of LEAs set about constructing and operationalising 'additional educational needs' (AEN) indices to use as part of their LMS formulae were absolutely fascinating and gave very useful insights into the ways such ostensibly rational and objective measures are created. The four detailed case-study LEAs approached this task in widely varying ways, using a range of indicators of social deprivation to construct indices of 'additional educational needs' or 'special educational needs' or a combination of these. What was strikingly similar about the LEAs, though, was that they all were working with unstated and unclear conceptualisations, of 'needs' and 'equity' and of the outcomes they were expecting from the differentials they were building into their formulae.

What was not discussed, though, until the final chapter, was the context in which this activity was taking place. The rough notion of equity built into the LMS formula is that children of the same age should be funded at the same level. However, LEAs are free to set the level of funding for each age-group, so that the basic age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU) varies widely between LEAs, as Thomas and Bullock (1994) have demonstrated. Therefore, the amounts given for AEN will vary, not just because policy-makers in LEAs have different views about needs and how to fund them, but also because the 'additional' element will also be dependent upon the size of the basic AWPU. So the difference between £10 spent in one LEA on AEN and £400 spent in another reflects, not just a conceptualisation of what would satisfy one unit of need, as Tim Lee argues, but also the relative level of funding for the majority of pupils.

In the final chapter, Tim Lee addresses this basic inequity and calls for a national system of funding schools, based on a national formula. This is already being attempted by the Funding Agency for Schools in the case of some grant-maintained schools. However, as he points out, some clear thinking and

decision-making about the sums of money needed to produce an adequately and equitably resourced education system will have to be done. Given the complexity and political sensitivity of these issues, it is likely that the current 'garbage can' model of policy-making will continue for some time to come.

Tim Lee's book is a valuable contribution to the debate about school funding and raises important issues about needs and equity, which policy-makers will have to address if they are serious about raising educational achievement.

JENNIFER EVANS

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H. Thomas and A. Bullock (1994), 'Money, monitoring and management', in P. Ribbins and E. Burridge (eds.), *Improving Education: Promoting Quality in Schools*, Cassell, London.

Linda Hantrais and Marie-Therese Letablier, *Families and Family Policies in Europe*. Longman, London and New York, 1996, vii + 222 pp., paper £12.99.

This is a substantial book, although it is not a long one. Drawing on both their own research and that of others in the field of family policy, the authors review a wide range of research evidence, seeking to identify how family structures, the relationship between the family and employment, and family policy are conceptualised both in individual member states and at the EU level. A large body of literature, including some very recent publications, is critically evaluated. A particular strength of the book, and one which students will certainly appreciate, is the provision of clear and well-referenced explanations of the structures of European Union decision-making, and the competence of the European Commission in the area of family policy.

Interest in comparing family forms has perhaps never been greater, and there is a growing body both of official statistics collected at the European level, and of academic research on the family. Hantrais and Letablier focus on the challenges posed by national diversity. Their discussion of the methodological issues raised by differing statistical, institutional and sociological definitions of the family is a model of clarity and attention to detail which should be read by anyone undertaking comparative research in this field. Problems of comparability exist for all cross-national research, but particularly in an area which is so deeply rooted in differing political, cultural and legal traditions. Both researchers and the consumers of research need to have this constantly in mind.

In going on to consider the various forms of support for families, the authors highlight the distinctive concepts and values underlying particular policies in the different countries of Europe and are keen to disabuse readers of the notion that policies can be simply transplanted from one country to another. They are also sceptical of both diffusion and convergence hypotheses, arguing that, above all, comparative analysis needs to take account of the distinctive ways in which national policies are shaped by cultural and institutional factors. The elusive nature of the relationship between fertility behaviour and family policy is debated, and in what must be a rather salutary conclusion for politicians and policy-makers, it is pointed out that factors related to the general social and economic environment, such as housing, unemployment and working conditions are often more influential than 'family-labelled' policies in determining whether a given country is perceived as family-friendly by its citizens.

The nature of the relationship between employment, particularly women's employment, and family life is explored from a number of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. Statistical data about trends in women's employment is discussed in the light of competing national and EU political priorities. The authors distinguish between countries where work and family life are juxtaposed and those where a sequential ordering of employment and child-rearing is supported by the state, also identifying a third group of countries which are non-interventionist either for ideological reasons or because of limited financial capacity. They also point out that similar outcomes may spring from different policy objectives, contrasting countries such as France, where juxtaposition of work and family life is possible due to family-centred policy measures, and those, such as Denmark, where policies to enable the reconciliation of work and family life are conceptualised as equality measures.

The third section of the book, which deals with the impact of family policies, is perhaps the least successful; the constraints of space are apparent in a rather condensed discussion of the outcomes of different policy options. Despite the breadth of its coverage, I would also hesitate to recommend this text as an introduction to this policy area; an interest in family policies is rather taken for granted, and the sheer amount of information could be off-putting to the novice. For those of us already concerned with family policy, however, whether as students, researchers, practitioners or policy-makers, it is likely to prove an extremely valuable resource.

HELEN BARNES

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Jonathan Bradshaw, Steven Kennedy, Majella Kilkey, Sandra Hutton, Anne Corden, Tony Eardley, Hilary Holmes and Joanna Neale, *The Employment of Lone Parents: a Comparison of Policy in 20 Countries*, Family Policy Studies Centre/ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, London/York, 1996, 64 pp. paper £9.50.

This study aims to 'learn lessons about how the United Kingdom might encourage and enable more lone parents to work outside the home' (p. 7) using a comparison of 'arrangements' in twenty countries – all the EU states plus Australia, Japan, Norway and the USA. The bulk of the report, however, lies in the presentation and analysis of cross-national variations in lone parents' employment rates, both in total, for part time/full time, and in comparison to married mothers.

Comparative work is to be welcomed where a simplistic British political discourse sees lone motherhood as necessarily producing poverty and social breakdown, for to admit difference at once challenges these assumptions. In Sweden only 3 per cent of lone mothers have incomes below half the average (compared to 56 per cent in Britain) and, even for the minority outside paid work, this figure reaches only 10 per cent (80 per cent in Britain). Denmark, Finland, France and Norway are much like Sweden, while Ireland and the USA are like Britain. So perhaps we should also have public child care (particularly stressed in the recommendations), paid parental leave, state advanced maintenance and all the other arrangements of social-democratic welfare states. This is the overall message of the study.

The authors use information from national informants to assess various explanatory factors – demographic (chapter 2), labour markets and training (chapter 3), child-care provision (chapter 4), tax and benefit policy (chapter 5), and, using model family data, financial incentives to work (chapter 6). As well as providing a lot of useful cross-national information in one place, the ‘visual correlation’ method of explanation via cross-tabulation generally supports the reformist case argued. The discussion of labour markets is least satisfactory, especially when demand is equated with lone parent unemployment rates. Nor is part-time work disaggregated – but there is a world of difference between better paid, secure, ‘long’ part-time jobs (cf. Sweden), and badly paid, insecure, ‘short’ part-time jobs (cf. UK).

The study also shows the limitations of analysis pitched at description of state policy and aggregate statistical information. We still do not know how lone parents act in different contexts, and why they do it. One response would be to translate the cross-tabs into multiple regression, although econometric analyses of lone parent employment end up with the same explanatory impasse – the explanation is multi-factorial, the researchers in effect choose which one to emphasise, and unexplainable but apparently crucial ‘socio-cultural’ factors remain lurking in the background. The study ignores the politics of different welfare regimes, despite (or perhaps because of) its ‘state fetishism’ where the only effective process is seen to be national policy. But lone parent employment rates show ‘little Swedens’, as well as ‘sub-Irelands’, in different local labour markets and neighbourhoods, and for different social groups in Britain. Fundamentally, like much of social policy, the study implicitly assumes rational economic man where lone parents simply react to cost-benefit structures. But lone parents are actually mothers, and some fathers, with various socially derived ideas about their responsibilities and possibilities. Will Rowntree fund a follow-up study on this theme?

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Sandy Ruxton, *Children in Europe*, NCH Action for Children, London, 1996, x + 517 pp., paper £25.

This book could be described as an encyclopaedia of almost everything you might want to know about children in the countries of the European Union. It looks rather like an encyclopaedia too, with a rather chunky, but very user-friendly format (apart from the lack of an index). Actually, it would be more accurate to say that this book will tell you almost everything that there is to know about children in Europe. It is based on compiling material from a very wide range of secondary sources and so what is here reflects the current state of knowledge: patchy in certain areas and variable across different countries. The book starts with a look at the legal, policy and organisational contexts, gives brief thumbnail sketches of each country, of family trends, and of different approaches to family policy. It goes on to examine issues of child care, poverty, education, health, homelessness, youth justice, residential and foster care, adoption, disability, violence, migration, child labour, and children’s rights. The material is mainly descriptive and the reader largely left to supply their own ideas about what it all adds up to in different countries. But it is certainly an achievement to have covered so much ground so comprehensively

and this is a valuable addition to the growing comparative literature on children and family policy.

JANE MILLAR

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Elaine Kempson, *Life on a Low Income*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, 1996, viii + 193 pp., paper £9.50.

This book attempts to illustrate the everyday reality of life for people living on incomes below half the national average, through their own words. Building on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Inquiry into Income and Wealth*, Kempson draws together qualitative evidence from thirty-one Rowntree studies claiming that this approach: 'provides a remarkably consistent, compelling and wide-ranging picture of life on a low income' (p. 9).

Divided into three parts, the study details the experience of poverty and managing a low income and then goes on to consider the effect of recent policy changes and makes recommendations for improvement. The first section provides a vivid picture of the skill, resilience and hard work needed to manage on a tight budget. Despite prioritising bills and cutting out all but the essentials, it means going without, with women as money managers often bearing the brunt of these worries. The result can be separation, children leaving home, debt, ill-health and social exclusion. Despite this, interviewees indicated that as little as £15 extra a week could make a significant difference to being able to make ends meet.

Although most unemployed people do not stay out of work for long periods, Kempson points to an alternation between unemployment and low paid work with no real escape from life on a low income (p. 163). However, this does not lead her to conclude that there is evidence for an underclass, rather, Kempson demonstrates instead that people on low incomes have aspirations similar to those of the rest of the population wanting a job, a decent home and an adequate income.

Her policy analysis covers changes in the labour market, housing policy, consumer credit, household utilities and social security. She concludes that the lack of any co-ordinated response to policy-making and the drive to cut public spending to improve living standards for the majority has led in turn to social security expenditure picking up the costs; accommodating, for example, the costs of changes in the labour and housing markets, care in the community and the privatisation of utilities. The continued demand for cuts means that the price is inevitably being paid by people on the lowest incomes.

The improvements suggested are drawn from 'the aspirations of poor people' (p. xvi). However, the level of minimum wage calculated from participants' own estimates of need (£4.75 an hour) is rejected in favour of a lower figure plus in-work benefits. Kempson's own shopping list includes recommendations to make the social security system more flexible, tackling barriers to work, the need for a larger affordable rented sector, a mortgage benefit, adequate benefit rates and the indexation of benefits. Above all, the book's strength is in the detail and should be required reading for students, teachers, practitioners and policy-makers alike.

ALISON GARNHAM

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Hartley Dean (ed.), *Ethics and Social Policy Research*, University of Luton/Social Policy Association, Luton/London, 1996, ii + 86 pp., paper £3.50 with p+p £5.00.

This is a useful and often lively discussion which I think researchers will want to read for the pleasure of 'talking shop' and of debating issues which are of particular interest to us. The publication stemmed from a workshop on the merits of adopting ethical guidelines in face of the complex issues and sometimes conflicting obligations which currently face researchers. A range of issues are tackled: who sets the research agenda; the relationship with marginalised groups, including confidentiality and anonymity, informed consent, respondents' participation from design to dissemination, and the limits on all of these; data, interpretation and the presentation of findings; the ethical basis of methodologies; and the necessarily political dimension of research.

The contributors do not offer ethical guidelines, but argue that we need to ensure 'the highest ethical standards and the most rigorous protocols' (Dean and Barrett, p. 35). To this end, the publication aims to contribute to sharing and openness to criticism and debate, to nourish further discussion which engages with the issues, and to help sustain and develop the debate. It succeeds in its aims.

Stephen Brown and I (1992) edited papers from a series of seminars held in the late 1980s. Researchers then were uneasy about the insecurity of their employment and their control of the research agenda, the approach and methods of research and the ownership and dissemination of findings. We tackled many of the issues in this current publication, and also examined the institutional contexts for the funding and management of research.

In my view, we still have reason to be concerned about these institutional contexts and I wish this publication had more to say about them. Put crudely, he who pays the piper, calls the tune. Funding and funders, and the organisation settings in which research is managed, all bear on questions of ethics and control. 'Whose side are you on?' is a question which runs right through any project, from inception to dissemination. Nor can we ignore the terms and conditions of employment of researchers: were we the first low paid workers on contracts, showing the way to the many? How can a career in research be achieved? The Concordat marks a step forward, but is only a step.

Despite the gaps, I enjoyed reading and responding to these papers. I wish the book had not fallen apart, but then it is cheap and that is a welcome innovation in itself.

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J. Vincent and S. Brown (eds.) (1992), *Critics and Customers: The Control of Social Policy Research*, Avebury, Aldershot.

Suzanne MacGregor and Arthur Lipow (eds.), *The Other City: People and Politics in New York and London*, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1996, xi + 237 pp. paper \$18.50.

This collection of essays emerged from the initial 1991 conference of the Michael Harrington Centre. The authors share Harrington's concern with social action along with analysis, and with the importance of public policy in

regulating economic and social life. The focus is on increasing social polarisation, the poor and the marginalised, in these two global cities. London and New York are identified as significant not only because of the growing social divide but because, as one is a capital city and the other a gateway to a nation, they highlight wider trends and the basis for comparative work and mutual understanding.

Although it has some obvious strengths, this ambitious project does not fulfil its promise, despite the acknowledgement that these are but 'fragments of a reality' (p. xv) and the editors' own lively opening chapter that establishes the overall framework. The contributors' deep concern with social and economic trends, and their commitment to social change, is well in evidence. Equally, the similarities in both cities in the assumptions governing recent public policies and their outcomes for both target populations and social democracy alike is strongly documented. As a whole, however, it lacks coherence. The contributors vary considerably in how much attention they pay to the idea of New York and London as signifiers of more general processes.

There are some stimulating individual contributions, such as Pearson's comparative review of drugs and disorder, or DiFazio's depiction of New York's soup kitchens. Their strength is in capturing the personal experience of marginalisation combined with an overview of the consequences of the dismantling of public provision, the loss of faith in and decline of social institutions committed to systematic public intervention. Yet such pieces might be more effective in outlets specifically aimed at the concerned citizen rather than in an academic publication. However, there is enough here, for example, Kornblum on New York's schooling, housing and neighbourhood disorder, Dunlap's portrait of a 'typical' family dependent on drugs, and Gaines on the dilemmas facing contemporary youth, to suggest that this is not meant to be another academic text. Other contributors fall more easily into this approach. Oppenheim's review of poverty in London, Solomos' parallel analysis of race and housing, and Lichten's more theoretical piece on shifts in class politics following Reaganite policies come into this category. Yet authors too often fail to draw out any comparative lessons. Consequently, chapters can appear too detailed and parochial. Similarly, the contributions of Church, on docklands regeneration, Goss, on models of empowerment, or Townsend, on official statistics and the relationship between British social policy and those of the European Union appear to use the book more as a vehicle for their particular interests. All of these contributions could be relevant; it is more that the authors have given insufficient time or thought to the difficult question of how to make localised concerns relevant to policy analysts and activists elsewhere.

CHRIS MILLER

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Peter Lloyd-Sherlock and Paul Johnson (eds.), *Ageing and Social Policy: Global Comparisons*. Occasional Paper 19, London School of Economics, London, 1996, 124 pp.

This collection of papers stems from a workshop with the same title, held at STICERD in January 1996, coincidentally just three months after the publication of a major report by the World Bank (1995). All the contributors to the

STICERD paper set their discussions in the context of this World Bank report to some extent. After an introductory chapter by the editors, Paul Johnson dissects the 'old age crisis', concluding that, if there is such a crisis, it is more political than demographic or economic. Peter Lloyd-Sherlock then examines the roles of public and private sectors in economic support for older people and offers alternative perspectives on the World Bank's three pillar model of pensions. Each of the subsequent five chapters is concerned with pensions in a specific country: (West) Germany (Bernard Casey); Chile (Armando Barrientos); Thailand (Tony Warnes); China (Shailaja Fennell and Liewi Zhu); and India (Kasturi Sen). One is left in little doubt that the global application of a common pension structure, as the World Bank seems to favour, is inappropriate in the face of enormous variations between and even within countries (for example, China and India). If this conclusion seems a little banal, it belies the depth of theoretical and practical analysis which the authors pack into this short and accessible volume. The papers take the reader painlessly through balanced economic arguments, giving coherent voice to alternative theoretical viewpoints which challenge, in a responsible fashion, the common emphasis on the 'burden' and 'crisis' of population ageing. My only quibble with this collection of papers is its title. The chief concern of all the contributors is pensions/income support in old age, although most point out the relevance of other aspects of social policy. From its title, the reader might reasonably expect rather more on, for example, health and social care. That said, Lloyd-Sherlock and Johnson have put together a volume which is well suited to the needs of social policy and gerontology students and others wanting a serious overview of theoretical and practical issues at the heart of the pensions debate. At the same time it provides insights into pension systems and their contexts from across the globe. Highly recommended and a good read.

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World Bank (1995), *Averting the Old Age Crisis: Policies to Protect the Old and Promote Growth*, The World Bank, Washington, DC.

Alan Walker and Lorna Warren, *Changing Services for Older People*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1996, ix + 184 pp.

This is the report of an evaluation of innovative domiciliary support services for the elderly. It is difficult to trace the exact history of this project, except it is clear that it pre-dates the overhaul of community care. The account charts the difficulties of evaluation in an area of service delivery subject to the vagaries of national and local policy change. However, it would have been more useful if the authors had used this as an opportunity to discuss the findings in the context of the current UK debates on community care. Interestingly there is an attempt to put the findings of the study into a European context, which helpfully summarises key points about services for elderly people in selected countries of Europe, but it would have been useful to have had a parallel chapter on the UK community care context.

The description of the aims and approach of the project were somewhat confusing, which was not helped by the puzzling decision to put the method in an appendix. The nature of the joint initiative between social services and the

health sector is unclear, which makes interpretation of the results difficult. There is some compressed presentation of data, for example, the activity data of support workers is displayed as charts without summarising commentary. There is a variation in style, and some lack of consistency in terms – the initial chapters use the rather cumbersome term *user*, whereas chapters 4 and 5 refer to older people.

Overall the book lacks the contemporary analysis that is suggested by the title and suffers from some lack of coherence, which may reflect the period of time that the project has been in the making.

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Jon Kvist and Adrian Sinfield, *Comparing tax routes in Denmark and the U. K.*, The Danish National Institute of Social Research, Copenhagen, 1996, 51 pp. Free of charge from the Danish National Institute of Social Research. In addition to providing resources for public spending, the tax system meets needs (e.g. children) and encourages activities (e.g. home ownership) through the provision of allowances and reliefs. These reliefs give rise to revenue losses – tax expenditures – which have the same effect on the budget balance as direct public spending.

In this interesting study Kvist and Sinfield compare fiscal welfare in Denmark and the UK. They provide a theoretical framework for analysing tax routes to welfare, and describe the extent of tax expenditures in eleven OECD countries: in Denmark they represent 31 per cent of total tax revenue, and in the UK, 25 per cent (Finland, with 38 per cent, has the highest level, Germany has an amazingly low 4 per cent). They list tax benefits and tax expenditures in Denmark and the UK, and consider the distributional issues they raise. Finally there is a discussion of tax subsidies for provision for retirement which is by far the highest tax expenditure in the UK and second highest in Denmark. In the UK generous tax reliefs for those contributing towards occupational and private pensions make existing inequalities even greater.

Kvist and Sinfield's principal argument is that tax expenditures 'tend to be those meeting needs identical or similar to those met by social security and other welfare state provision' and that these concealed subsidies should be considered alongside direct welfare spending. They argue that the question 'can we afford the welfare state?' should encompass 'can we afford these subsidies through the tax system?'. They highlight the 'upside-down effect' of most tax expenditures which go most generously to those who already have the highest incomes. This is particularly noticeable in Britain; recent reforms to mortgage interest relief and to the married man's (couple's) allowance have reduced the effect but it still applies to pensions contributions.

Comparative studies are a useful way of discovering different routes to social welfare, and the comparison with Denmark shows that tax expenditures need not be as regressive as in Britain. There is an obvious academic case for more research, in particular to investigate distributional effects. However, even more obvious is the case for the phased abolition of most tax expenditures; governments should be pressed to move to the direct expenditure route which is both more open and more equitable.

MARGARET WILKINSON

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Len Barton (ed.), *Disability and Society: Emerging Issues and Insights*, Addison Wesley Longman Limited, Harlow, Essex, 1996, vii + 265 pp. paper £13.50.

This collection of twelve varied chapters is about the purposes, strengths, limitations and uses of sociological theory in the research enterprise surrounding disability. Not everyone is speaking from the same starting point as can be evidenced in the volume, although some areas of agreement emerge. Drawing on existing critique, much social research is identified as oppressive and disabling and the authors search for solutions. They engage in a critical analysis of mainstream sociological theories. For depth and completeness, readers will find Oliver's chapter an excellent starting point. The limitations of theory lie in the 'theoretical problematic' within which they operate (Abberley). Rather than looking for objectivity and truth, the search should be for knowledge which arises from the position of the oppressed, whilst, at the same time, seeking to understand it.

The theme holding the volume together centres around the 'hegemonic influence' of mainstream sociological theory (mainly functionalism and interactionism) which have profoundly influenced the individualistic way disability is defined and understood. As a result, 'the hegemony that is disability' has permeated all aspects of social life, implicated in the educational focus of Part 2 which shows how it has permeated policy and practice, leaving the discourse of integration unchallenged and contributing to 'exclusionary' theories of disability in education policy. It is further implicated in Part 3 – Drake's telling critique of the role of voluntary organisations acting for the disabled, in normalisation theory (Fulcher) and in the 'industry' of professionals producing work on gender and sexuality (Shakespeare). Even work which represents an advance finds it difficult to shake off functionalism and interactionism (Oliver).

Two alternative frameworks are set out by Oliver which accord with the empowering philosophy of the disability movement. These are based on an intersection of materialist, feminist and post-modernist theorising without stipulating a 'fixed' form. The message is that in order to begin the research enterprise from a more coherent starting point, and in order to illicit more appropriate theoretical and societal responses to disability, theory needs to be underpinned by a re-evaluation of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions about disability and Oliver gives an understanding of how these levels interrelate.

The balance of the volume was disrupted by only allowing a single chapter on methods (Booth) which explores narrative methods in relation to learning difficulties. Frustration at the marginalisation of disability studies from mainstream sociology is evident and the book's critical approach might annoy those wedded to objectivity and truth, but it deserves attention. Perhaps too daunting for undergraduates, this book may interest sociologists teaching honours courses in methodology, but deserves the wider readership it is aimed at and it remains to be seen whether Oliver's paradigm will prove useful.

CYNTHIA MARTIN

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David Willetts, *Blair's Gurus: An Examination of Labour's Rhetoric*, Centre for Policy Studies, London, 1996, 73 pp. paper £7.50.

This pamphlet provides a set of short, polemical essays on the contemporary intellectual influences upon Tony Blair. It contributes to a growing literature on Blair and is evidence of a widening interest in his philosophy and general approach to politics. It is not surprising to find that Willetts is critical of Blair: Conservative MP for Havant, he was once a member of the Downing Street Policy Unit (1984–6) and Director of Studies for the Centre for Policy Studies (1986–92). The pamphlet is written from a radical Conservative perspective.

Willetts regards the Blairite philosophy as taking ideas from a disparate set of 'thinkers', bound together by their common questioning of Thatcherism (John Gray, Will Hutton, Frank Field, Simon Jenkins, Andrew Marr, David Marquand, John Kay and Peter Mandelson). He fears a win for Blair in the fight for the battle of ideas due, in large part, to the intellectual climate afforded by these 'gurus'. Yet such a victory would be a grave misgiving, for in reality Blair exaggerates the use and importance of only a few concepts, and for Willetts, this is illustrated by the popularity of buzzwords, beneath which lie hollow and often inaccurate messages. Whilst each 'guru' comes under criticism, Willetts holds more concern for their amalgamated impact on Blair, and it is through the profile of each that Willetts thus attempts to unmask the Blairite concept and reveal it as false, dangerous and contradictory.

For the readers of *JSP*, 'community' and 'stakeholder welfare' are perhaps the concepts of greatest interest. Blair's emphasis on the buzzword 'community' is, for Willetts, an illustration of an uncritical adoption of Gray's stance (that communities are threatened by the free market) and ignores the damage done to communities by 'social regulation' and 'social intervention'. The buzzword 'stakeholder' has also been adopted, and in the context of welfare, proves to Willetts that Blair and his 'gurus' not only yearn after foreign alternatives to what Britain already offers (reflected in Labour's tinkering with Singapore's welfare ideas), but also shows a contradiction within Labour's stance on means testing (illustrated by Labour's suggestion of a guaranteed minimum pension). For Willetts, the concept of 'stakeholder welfare' also translates into a rightward shift by Labour in its policy-making to incorporate much of Field's views, yet is a policy idea which has little grasp on reality due to the lack of any real costings programme.

Willetts' attempt to undermine the intellectual respectability of Blair reflects an inevitable incompatibility between the beliefs of a true Thatcherite and those of a Christian Socialist. Yet his attempt to give an intellectual critique has ignored 'gurus' who perhaps will have greater impact on the world of social policy than those cited here. Of greater importance to Blair's stance on 'community' and 'social inclusion', for example, are the positions of the American Communitarian Amitai Etzioni, the Christian Socialist Richard Tawney and the moral philosopher John Macmurray. It is towards these 'thinkers' that any examination of Blair's future politics (and Labour's future social politics) should be directed.

In conclusion, this pamphlet offers a lively and interesting discussion from a clear political perspective and is one which perhaps tells us as much about the author as about those for whom he writes.

EMMA HERON

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Denise Magill and Sarah Rose (eds.), *Fair Employment Law in Northern Ireland: Debates and Issues*, Employment Equality in Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland, vol. I, 1996, v + 202 pp. paper £14.99.

Eithne McLaughlin and Padraic Quirk (eds.), *Policy Aspects of Employment Equality in Northern Ireland*, Employment Equality in Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland, vol. II, 1996 v + 297 pp. paper £14.99.

John McVey and Nigel Hutson (eds.), *Public Views and Experiences of Fair Employment and Equality Issues in Northern Ireland*, Employment Equality in Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland, vol. III, 1996 v + 170 pp. paper £14.99. Special price of £40.00 for all three titles purchased together.

These three volumes are the result of research undertaken as part of the five-year review of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 and the Fair Employment (NI) Act as amended in that year. This review was carried out under the auspices of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) at the request of the secretary of state. The SACHR was established in 1973 with the purpose of advising the secretary of state 'on the adequacy and effectiveness of the law for the time being in force in preventing discrimination on grounds of religious belief or political opinion and in providing redress for persons aggrieved by discrimination on either ground'.

Taken together these volumes provide a comprehensive review of fair employment law and its consequences in Northern Ireland. Each opens with an excellent introduction. Volumes I and II have concluding chapters which draw together the key issues analysed throughout. Volume III ends with an excellent review of the operation of the Fair Employment Commission.

Volume I, edited by Magill and Rose, gives a comprehensive account of the development and character of Fair Employment Legislation in Northern Ireland. The first section – a chapter by Rose and Magill – provides an historical account of the development of fair employment legislation – the 1976 Fair Employment (NI) Act, its 1989 amendment and the 1989 Fair Employment (NI) Act – and significant related events including the 1987 SACHR Report on the 1976 legislation and the 1988 White Paper. Despite broad coverage – public and private sectors – the 1976 Act prohibited only direct discrimination. Several other limitations were identified in the 1987 SACHR review of this legislation. The 1989 legislation established the Fair Employment Commission which had greater powers of enforcement than the Fair Employment Agency which it replaced. This Act established a Fair Employment Tribunal within the Industrial Tribunal System, which was charged with responsibility to draw up a code of practice to promote equality of opportunity. The legislation was broadened to cover indirect discrimination but in a weaker form than recommended by the White Paper which was in turn weaker than the SACHR recommendation.

The second section on legal concepts includes chapters on the merit principle (McCrudden), fair participation (Cassidy) and a chapter on the case law of the Fair Employment Tribunal (Bell). This chapter concludes with identification of the limitations of the present legislation, in particular the provisions relating to indirect discrimination and security certificates and the inaccessibility of both the legislation and the Fair Employment Tribunal cases to the lay reader. This is followed by three chapters on implementation and procedures,

including a comparative review of the law on equality of opportunity by Fitzpatrick, Hegarty and Maxwell. This is wide ranging with considerable attention to the Canadian and US experience but also attention to legislation in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and some European Union countries.

Volume II on Policy Aspects of Employment Equality in Northern Ireland (McLaughlin and Quirk (eds.)) illustrates clearly that 'parameters of a review of employment equality stretch much wider than fair employment legislation' as Norman Gillespie argues in his introductory chapter (p. 1). Reflecting this fact the volume is broad in scope, including case studies on access to employment for the unemployed, studies of long-term unemployment and associated policy measures, training, the implementation of policies to promote equity in public policy-making and to implement equality of opportunity (Osborne), the targeting of special need (Quirk and McLaughlin), the impact of public sector job losses (Dignan and Murphy), local councils' economic development activities (Scott and Hope) and policies and constraints on job creation in Northern Ireland.

Shuttleworth, Shirlow and McKinstry point out that the registered unemployed are only part of a larger pool of unemployed people and the concept of local labour market used by policy makers may not conform to 'the spatial and social reality of recruitment behaviour of either employers or the unemployed' (p. 48). Sheehan and Tomlinson argue that supply-side interventions, such as the Community Work Programme are inadequate responses to long-term unemployment and conclude that successful labour market policy must address the demand side of the equation. This would entail a shift in policy which would involve employers sharing more of the responsibility for targeting the unemployed. In advocating this shift they argue that 'the general social desirability of reducing long-term unemployment *per se* can be matched to the specific fair employment objective of dealing with unemployment differentials' (p. 106). McLaughlin and Quirk reach a pessimistic conclusion in their analysis of the TSN programme: it has had little impact on the spending priorities and decision-making of departments. They attribute this to the reluctance of most departments 'to monitor or research expenditure, programmes and policies in terms of their impacts on the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. TSN has not been ... a public expenditure priority – rather it is a principle awaiting definition, operationalisation and implementation' (p. 183). The absence of appropriate performance indicators is also identified by Simpson in his analysis of job creation policies; he concludes that '[t]his suggests either an unwillingness to expose the evidence to scrutiny or an unwillingness to collect the necessary evidence' (p. 271). In the concluding chapter, Borooah highlights a theme which pervades this volume, namely, the need to recognise the dual aspect of unemployment in Northern Ireland – high levels and differential distribution by religious affiliation. This chapter provides an insightful overview of the issues covered throughout the volume including future directions for policy.

Volume III on public views and experiences of fair employment and employment equality takes a broad focus including analysis of the degree of change of public and party political opinion, the experience of the fair employment process by complainants and employers, and an analysis of how the Fair Employment Commission has operated. Several of the findings relating to political party and organisational views on fair employment policies, as reflected in documentary material and interviews, are noteworthy: Broad

support for the 1989 Act, 'a compelling level of agreement concerning the centrality of affirmative action to fair employment policy', the absence of support for quotas and the common recognition that 'job creation has a vital role to play in fostering greater levels of social, if not political, stability' (Wilford and Gillespie, p. 45). Despite some ambiguous findings in relation to moderation of attitudes over the 1989-94 period from the analysis of the public attitude data, the 1994 data indicate clearly that there is broad support across the religious divide for having fair employment laws and a belief that both communities receive equal treatment under the legislation (Miller). The concluding chapter on the Fair Employment Commission concludes that 'it has substantially fulfilled' the tasks assigned to it by the 1989 ACT (Metcalf, p. 165). Despite this, Metcalf makes several recommendations for change, including an expansion of its remit in several areas, a more active role for employers, a removal of the male bias in registration and monitoring and a continuation of measures to ensure individual access to redress for discrimination irrespective of ability to pay.

While fair and equal access to jobs across religious divisions in Northern Ireland has unique aspects, these studies provide useful insights into the public policy aspects of equal access of other under-represented groups in other jurisdictions. As the most innovative element of UK employment equality law the Northern Ireland legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment on the basis of religious belief and/or political opinion has useful insights for policy-makers, researchers and practitioners and third-level students.

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Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (ed.), *Good Enough Mothering? Feminist Perspectives on Lone Motherhood*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, x + 214 pp., hard £45.00, paper £13.99.

This volume's contributors tackle questions important in both academic and political debates: can single mothers be good mothers? Why the increase in single motherhood across many countries (including Britain and the US)? How does social policy affect single-mother families? How does the situation of single mothers vary across time and place? How do the children of single mothers fare compared to those from two-parent families? They have come up with answers unusual in contemporary discussions in which single motherhood is understood as either cause or concomitant of general social breakdown. Carolyn Baylies offers a telling illustration of this view: 'the percentage of single-parent homes is featured in a table entitled "weakening social fabric"' in a recent United Nations publication, alongside measures of social disorder like murder and juvenile crime (p.76). By drawing on gendered analytic perspectives, the authors come to much more positive conclusions about single motherhood. For while mainstream analysts may connect social change (sometimes positive) with increasing proportions of women working for pay, they usually miss other features of gender relations, particularly gender ideologies and men's power. The contributors reject the common sense notion that traditional two-parent families are best and that marriage is the unproblematic, natural result of the right mix of economic opportunities and policy incentives. Although acknowledging that the prospects for single-mother families are often far from optimal, women's choices to become single mothers at least partially

reflects their expanded social and sexual autonomy and improved economic options (as compared with the pre-Second World War period, where marriage was almost the only option for women to survive and support their children). Many more people are experiencing the situation of living in a household headed by a single mother than in the past, and for many, single motherhood is an acceptable situation.

A number of the essays offer historical and theoretical perspectives on motherhood, single and married. Editor Elizabeth Silva describes the recent history of mothering as reflecting contradictory trends affecting single mothers and other women. Women have increased autonomy and greater choices about when, how and with whom to mother, and single motherhood is both more common and more accepted; at the same time, there is lack of concern with the needs of women who mother in a context where paid work is valorised above unpaid caring. Carol Smart offers a deconstruction of motherhood, showing that the assumed natural links between sex, childbearing and mothering have been socially constructed, and documenting the history of women's resistance to compulsory motherhood, reflected in the use of contraceptives and abortion. 'Historically speaking there has been such a heavy weight of machinery brought to bear on women to force them into motherhood we must ask why these measures were necessary if motherhood itself was simply a biological process like ageing' (pp. 38–9).

An important strength of the collection is its attention to diversity. Baylies draws on available data to compare the prevalence of single motherhood (it is quite rare in some places), the situations of single mothers and the causes for single motherhood in several countries from a number of regions of the world and in the UK and Zambia, where ethnic and rural–urban divisions create internal variation. Single motherhood by choice characterises some situations, while in some contexts, mothers are single by default – because of labour migration or men's bad economic prospects combined with their unwillingness to share the costs and work of raising children (points echoed by other authors). Henrietta Moore describes single mothers' economic vulnerability, and the greater responsibility for children and social reproduction they share with most women. Jane Millar usefully analyses the distinctive policy configurations affecting single mothers across the developed world. She notes that their situation largely reflects the ways in which all mothers and parents are treated in a given policy regime; gender rather than family status is key.

Rosalind Edwards and Simon Duncan explore the diversity of situations within Britain for single mothers deciding whether to work for pay or rely on social assistance, and argue against common analytic frameworks which assume that single mothers operate as 'rational economic men'. Their analytic framework goes beyond women's economic incentives (including local labour markets) to include the character of informal and familial support networks and 'gendered moral rationalities' – understandings about the identity and responsibilities of mothers; this could be usefully applied to a wide variety of contexts. These gendered moral rationalities, which favour the identities of paid worker or full-time, stay-at-home mother echo Millar's descriptions of the models of motherhood embedded in national policy regimes.

Issues that have featured in contemporary social policy debates are dissected in the second half of the book. Lorraine Fox Harding looks at the Child Support

Act of 1991, a celebrated Conservative initiative, and argues that it was directed more at rolling back the state than at reasserting 'private patriarchy'. Mary McIntosh uses the debates about single motherhood to expose and refute the implicit assumptions about married motherhood and family, calling attention to the tensions inherent in marriages and families under conditions of gender inequality. Louie Burghes offers a review of research on outcomes for children of lone mothers, showing that these are not necessarily more negative than those of their counterparts from two-parent families when other factors (e.g., income, instability) are taken into account. Comparative analyses of popular discourses targeting single mothers in Britain and the US are offered by Ann Phoenix and by Sasha Roseneil and Kirk Mann. Phoenix shows the different ways in which racialisation plays into the two national policy discussions. The somewhat puzzling lack of explicit reference to race in Britain is explained by the status of black families as outside the British nation, while in America, African Americans may be stigmatised but cannot be dismissed as immigrants. Roseneil and Mann discuss how single mothers have been tied to the emergence of a so-called underclass, reflecting concerns to cut back the spending of the welfare state and to roll back feminist gains. They also highlight the issue of single mothers' agency, arguing that to construe these women only as victims of circumstances is to misunderstand their situation. That many women are choosing single motherhood, even with its attendant difficulties, reflects a 'cultural climate in which women are more able to live autonomous lives', the product, in part, 'of slow but deep-rooted social change that feminism has promoted' (p. 209).

There are a few missteps. For example, several of the authors mention a New Jersey welfare reform that supposedly refuses benefits to women who have another child while on welfare; in fact, this reform, the 'family cap', denies additional benefits for additional children, thereby – in its proponents' views – recreating the 'logic of the market' under which wage-earners do not get extra pay when they have more children. This seems quite consonant with the view, discussed by several of the authors, being promoted by pro-market forces internationally that families should be autonomous units responsible for their own survival in the market. I've certainly come across American misunderstandings of British conditions, so these may simply point to a more general difficulty in getting reliable information across the water, even in our electronically connected age. But especially as welfare state restructuring intensifies, we need accurate data for our analyses. I also note that American conditions are generally held to be 'worse' than British. The US welfare system has now gone further towards recreating the poor law than elsewhere, but this does not give the entire picture of gender relations. For example, the legal framework promoting women's increased access to favoured employment positions and offering protections against sexual harassment, defined as a matter of gender equality, are relatively more developed – advances which have been important for at least some women's enhanced autonomy. If we are to understand the overall character and trajectory of gender relations, including that relevant for single mothers, we will need to account for such mixed outcomes across a range of countries. This will require, I think, sharper instruments than notions of 'private' versus 'public patriarchy'. Millar notes that 'there is a need for a more systematic analysis across a wider range of countries' (p. 112); I very much agree.

Roseneil's and Mann's conclusion – the last words in the book – quite aptly capture the tenor of the whole: 'We believe that it is time to shift the agenda of debate towards consideration of ways of enhancing the choices available to lone mothers, rather than seeking to deny them choices or to deny that they have ever exercised choice' (p. 210). The material collected in this very useful book makes the case for this position forcefully and well.

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