Book Reviews


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When the first edition of this book was published in 1973, it made the author’s colleagues – if such emotions can be openly admitted in a respected academic journal – green with envy. Stimulated by the vibrant inter-disciplinary debate of the time, here was a work by a master craftsman who hit every nail on the head and, equally galling, had an unfailing eye for the telling quotation. The result was a textbook which addressed a major issue; provided a structure for serious analysis; and equally provided the stimulation and the information for independent thought. It was, in short, a perfect textbook, as has been confirmed by its continuing popularity amongst sixth-formers and undergraduates.

This new edition promises ‘comprehensive revision’ in the light of recent research and a new concluding chapter on the welfare state from Beveridge to Blair. The first promise has not been fully kept. In the bibliographies to the major chapters, there are few publications after 1990. A reference to ‘recent research’ in the foreword alludes to an article published in 1977 (p. xxxii). The documentary appendix still ends in 1945. For those seeking comprehensive coverage of new historical research, as well as a sensitive handling of statistical material, a forthcoming work from the same publisher will perhaps prove more rewarding: B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State*. The Council at the University of Teesside, in other words, need not be over concerned about the past moonlighting of their vice-chancellor, although their gain is the reader’s loss.

By the author’s high standards, the concluding chapter is also a rather disappointing routine canter through ‘the facts’. There are three principal reasons for this. First, the book’s structure is at fault because, whereas the nineteenth is covered thematically, the twentieth century is covered chronologically. This prevents a focussed analysis of each policy area. Secondly, the author too infrequently stands back to place postwar developments in their full historical or conceptual perspective. This omission if foreshadowed in the foreword where he admits that his dominant interpretive framework is the pragmatic model of incremental change punctuated by sudden bursts of radical reform. Such bursts are noted in the 1830s, the 1910s and the 1940s but not, rather surprisingly, in the 1980s. There are some telling historical allusions. The Job Seekers Allowance is described as an effective reincarnation of the interwar ‘genuinely seeking work’ clause and Samuel Smiles, it is noted, would have been cheered by New Labour’s emphasis on self-help. However, some of the larger issues prompted by history – and its various interpretations – are evaded. Was, for example, the classic welfare state simply an aberration rather than a preordained stage in the onward and upward march of history, as assumed by Whig commentators on both the left and right? To what extent did the interwar period – for so long dismissed contemptuously as the ‘devil’s decade’ – in fact develop a mixed economy of welfare far more in keeping with British culture and traditions? The author’s consideration of recent developments in relation to the ‘manipulative’, ‘capitalistic’ and ‘democratic’ models, identified in the foreword, would also have been valuable. Finally, the opportunity could have
been taken to correct some myths, which remain testimony to the continuing power of party rhetoric over reality (and thus a rational debate over welfare reform). The precedent for ‘milk-snatcher’ Thatcher, for example, was set by Labour’s withdrawal of milk from secondary schools and Keith Joseph – as well as being a major financial backer of CPAG – took over plans for Family Income Supplement prepared by the Wilson government (pp. 274–8). Behind the rhetoric, there was even more ‘consensus in action’ than has been conventionally recognized.

Interdisciplinary collaboration between historians and other social scientists is as vital today as it was when the first edition of this book was first published. Pierson’s concept of path dependency, amongst others, underlines this. To make their work fully accessible, however, historians must place British welfare policy in international perspective so that its peculiarities can be fully appreciated. Its outcomes must be closely questioned. Moreover, as Glennerster has argued, it must also be placed in the context of economic policy and broader social legislation. With his eye for a telling quotation, Fraser highlights an expression of popular discontent in 1911: ‘we wants more money and . . . they pass laws how us shall behave . . . What we want is proper pay . . . to work out our own life according to our own ideas, not theirs.’ This could indeed provide a historical starting point for a challenging examination of the fate of welfare recipients, and indeed professionals, under the increasingly centralized regulation that has characterized policy – under both parties – since the early 1980s.

RODNEY LOWE
University of Bristol


In one sense it is very easy to produce a review of a descriptive introduction, followed by three sections each containing four chapters. Write one or two sentences on each chapter whilst lamenting the ‘compression effect’; then conclude (somewhat ironically)

It has been impossible to do justice to twelve very different articles in a short review, even though it has gone over its word limit.

(Hill, 2001, p. 348)

Michael Hill’s massive overrun (all of 250 words or at least 30 per cent ‘too much’) of last year’s Social Policy Review concluded, rather despairingly, that greater coherence and more rigorous refereeing (‘weeding’) might be one answer. I simply don’t believe it.

If we want annual collections of articles within fairly loose editorial frameworks (and, I suspect those are inevitable in the circumstances), then this collection is probably worth its money. It provides a way out of that incipient narrowing (or is it more appropriate to talk of ‘specialising’?) which seems all pervasive. I found it a privilege to cover, however unevenly, chapters on primary healthcare, devolution, Northern Ireland and Learning Disabilities (Part 1: UK Developments). Then, two perspectives each on globalisation and Europe (Part 2: International Developments), before concluding with Part 3 and conceptual developments concerning inclusion/exclusion, Green Welfare, social capital and participation.

But could an annual collection look any different? As I searched for Michael Hill’s review, I couldn’t help thinking that it might be cheaper to put new covers on a few issues of Journal of Social Policy, and add one or two new sections. No doubt Cambridge University Press might be less than sympathetic, but if we only have one annual collection does the present
model require radical surgery? I was reminded of Janet Newman’s piece in the excellent Social Policy and Society, and her concern that the real substance of social policies ‘the dynamics of policy process itself…’ (Newman, 2002, p. 353) tends to be hidden by official documentation. Maybe our academic essays, so deeply embedded in referencing, do us less than justice. We see little of the contemporary dynamics, whether in the neighbourhood, town hall or cabinet office. Moreover, even in chapters on participation by seasoned old campaigners such as Peter Beresford, the experiences of users and policy academics are not fully realised.

Even as many undergraduates opt for ‘sexy’ Criminology, inspired by wall-to-wall TV crime dramas, we still squeeze the life out of our potentially exciting inter-disciplinary territory. Two examples from different parts of this collection reinforce the point that we may be in danger of painting too grey a picture of Social Policy.

The first example comes at the end of Rosemary Sales’ chapter on migration policy in the UK and Italy; after a review of the respective legislative contexts, she notes how:

personal circumstances were also important: one Bosnian woman graduate had been able to refrain and take up professional employment in Rome, while her sister, another graduate who arrived at the same time, was confined to menial jobs. (p. 161)

Now, there’s the substance of a chapter!

A second example is almost hidden at the end of Chris Crowther’s rather dense but extremely stimulating essay on policing the underclass. For all the talk of structures and the subordination of the social to the economic, we are urged to pay more attention: ‘To the situated activities of a range of policy makers and practitioners’ (p. 213). Over and against ‘structure’ is ‘The creative capacity of social agents…’ (p. 215). Yes, indeed, let us bring people back into Social Policy.

Michael Hill’s wisdom is undoubtedly greater than mine; whereas he called for greater rigour, I’m more interested in an annual review of Social Policy institutions and agents, not just of their academic commentators. But, as the shadow of professional uncertainty hangs over every page, new directions may be hard to take. As a compromise, how about a section which majors on the personal, situated and dynamic elements? We could collapse the faintly old-fashioned distinctions between the UK and International developments to create the space. But, whatever editorial framework is adopted, let us make sure the generalisations sit more firmly on both their theories and their evidence.

At the end of the day, despite my pleas for a new look, these essays are worth reading. For all their collective incoherence, compression and uneven quality, they remain excellent and well-referenced reviews of key issues in contemporary academic social policy. All specialist undergraduates should be encouraged to purchase a copy, at a discounted price – ‘cheap as chips’, as Mr Dickinson would say, but well worth it.


DUNCAN SCOTT
University of Manchester

Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford (2003), Social Policy, Social Welfare and Scandal: How British Public Policy is Made, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, xi + 244 pp., £47.50.

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Scandals offer insights into public policy processes, particularly in comparatively unpolicised areas of public policy yet, as the authors show, their exposure through press publicity and subsequent public inquiries contributes little to the policy process in the long run. This analysis is of scandals in limited areas of public policy: child care and care for people with mental illness or learning disabilities. While it takes an historical long view much of the detailed analysis is of recent scandals, with a particular focus on the contexts and work of the Committees of Inquiry into events at Ely Hospital (1969), the death of Maria Colwell (1974), the murder of Christopher Clunis (1993) and the ‘Pindown’ practices in Staffordshire children’s homes (1991).

The analysis of events has three objectives, each explored explicitly in the final chapter, to examine how scandals emerge, how they have been investigated by Committees of Inquiry and the impact of their exposure and exploration upon future public policy. These are three important, but complex, subjects, more than enough for one small book. My comments will be organized here in relation to these three objectives.

The exploration of the emergence of scandals is handled better than the other two topics. The authors offer a sophisticated analysis of the chance events here, and of the roles of ‘moral entrepreneurs’ and of sometimes quite unexpected ‘whistle-blowers’ (who often suffered much for their contributions), putting all that occurred into the wider contextual issues about changing policy agendas. They highlight some paradoxes about this process, in particular the fact that whilst on the one hand attention to defects in the system need systematic exposure, as one publicised event triggers other revelations the whole process is blunted by ‘scandal fatigue’ (particularly on the part of the press) where an absence of novelty diminishes attention to scandals in the same policy area over time.

There are some important observations on how official inquiries work, noting the tendency to reconstruct events as a coherent story and to focus upon individual rather than system failings. The authors’ perspective is a ‘constructionist’ one, seeing inquiries as providing accounts to satisfy institutional needs. The problem here seems to me to be that they do not entirely explore the implications of their own perspective here. Are they taking an essentially relativistic position, seeing one account as being as good as any other? Or have they a more critical view that ‘truth’ is obscured by institutional needs? They offer a sympathetic reading of Olive Stevenson’s reservations about the ‘findings’ of her two colleagues on the Colwell Inquiry, acknowledging that it ‘reintroduces some of the context and complexity of the circumstances’ (p. 91). Surely that is a suggestion that she offered a ‘better’ account of events. From a research perspective there is a difficult issue here. The particular ‘case’ emphasis in the book leaves little scope (except in the special case of the Colwell Inquiry with Olive Stevenson’s reservations) for examination as to whether, as pursuits of the truth, some inquiries may be better than others.

Of course the key issue here, as far as policy recommendations from such a study are concerned, is about public inquiry methodology. The difficulties about maintaining a low key ‘inquisitorial’ approach to an inquiry as opposed to an adversarial one are heightened by the fact that witnesses need legal protection against the dangers of incriminating themselves. Paradoxically therefore practices designed to protect individuals may put them, and their very specific actions or inactions, rather more in the spotlight than might otherwise be the case. There are a lot of issues here about how public inquiries are conducted that social policy scholars could give more attention, which this book only just touches upon. The existing literature is very dominated by the perspectives of legal scholars.

Ian Butler and Mark Drakeford’s conclusions on the impact of scandals on policy can be summed up as ‘not a lot’: such impact as they have seems to need to be explained in the context of other policy developments. As they show, for example, the evidence scandals exposed about institutional care need to be related to other factors moving policy away from that form of care. It is in relation to this part of their work that the apparent claim in their sub-title seems
particularly unfortunate. There have been two important developments in policy studies to which their work needs to be related. One is the analysis of the relatively chaotic way in which policy issues get on the agenda, particularly the work of John Kingdon (1995). The other is work on ‘policy fiascos’ (particularly Bovens and Hart, 1998). The ‘claim-makers’ and ‘moral entrepreneurs’ of Butler and Drakeford’s work need, in order to have some impact, to be able to connect up with the ‘policy entrepreneurs’ whose roles are explored by Kingdon. Equally there are questions about the circumstances under which ‘scandals’ become ‘policy fiascos’. In the social care areas with which Butler and Drakeford are concerned there are questions that need to be raised about the implications of politicians and journalists’ attention spans and about the peculiar complexity of the issues that underlie the scandals. After all in the last analysis, once you move away from the big ever-present issues about under funding and the failure to address the socio-economic conditions that create victims, the key middle-level policy issues are about the rights of the vulnerable (whether adults or children), about managing risk (and levels of acceptable risk) in social work and community care and about managing institutional care.

This is an original and thought-provoking book which is very much to be welcomed. Critical comments – partly provoked by an over-ambitious sub-title – stem from an appreciation of the way it opens up some important issues. It is to be hoped that the authors, and others, will follow these up further.


MICHAEL HILL
Health and Social Policy Research Centre
University of Brighton


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This is a timely contribution which explores the extent and dimensions of social exclusion in six European countries. As Jane Millar and Sue Middleton note in their introduction, almost 60 million people across the European Union live in poverty inasmuch as they have incomes which are less than half of the average for their country. The actual volume of poverty, however, varies from country to country and there is also some variation with regard to which groups are more at risk of poverty. Based on the work of a group of international researchers, the material presented is essentially about exploring these differences.

The theoretical framework for the research is provided by the concept of social exclusion so that the work relates not only to income poverty but also material and other non-monetary indicators of deprivation. This framework is deployed in the analysis of data for six countries which include representatives of four types of welfare regimes: Austria and Germany (‘corporatist’), Norway (‘social democratic’), Greece and Portugal (‘rudimentary’) and the United Kingdom (‘liberal’). This allows the authors to explore the links between different policies and configurations of welfare on the one side and the volume of poverty and social exclusion – and variations with regard to risk – on the other. Finally, building on the basic data, there are a series of chapters which provide closer, comparative analysis of the material relating to the four life course risk groups identified: young adults, lone
parents, disabled people and the retired. The data set used is that for the second wave of the European Community Household Panel Survey together with a comparable data set for Norway.

Overall the approach works well. Matt Barnes contributes the opening chapter reviewing the evolution of the theoretical debate from absolute poverty to social exclusion and the significance for our understanding of poverty and social exclusion of life course analysis. Additionally, the point is well made that the efforts of the European Union to promote the concept of social exclusion have not been accompanied by the substantial comparative research required to underpin the discourse which has developed. The potential of the Panel Survey is therefore apparent and the heart of the book is the cross-national analysis by Tsakloglou and Papadopoulis. This charts the prevalence of income poverty, non-monetary material deprivation and multi-dimensional disadvantage, together with some assessment of the impact of social transfers in alleviating poverty amongst the four risk groups in the five EU countries.

The clearest point to emerge is that in all five countries lone parents and disabled persons are significantly more at risk of poverty than the general population. The picture with regard to the retired varies though the UK data are predictably depressing. Young adults figure disproportionately amongst those on lower incomes in Germany but not elsewhere – a finding that saves the UK from having the lowest mean equivalent incomes for all four of the risk groups. With regard to material non-monetary indicators of deprivation, lone parents and disabled persons in the UK appear to be particularly disadvantaged though this is not the case for the retired. The importance of social transfers in alleviating poverty is demonstrated in the closing sections of the analysis.

In the following chapters the data for each risk group are reviewed more closely and located within a comparative discussion of policies and services in each country. Sue Middleton argues that, whilst the data do not indicate that young adults as such are disadvantaged, there is a need to focus on particular sub-groups, such as young lone parents and young people living alone, and adjust broader policies accordingly. Jane Millar concludes that the data suggest a need to expand our definitions of lone parenthood to include lone parents with grown up children to take account of the circumstances of women in Greece and Portugal. Additionally, attention is drawn to the ongoing need for better services and benefits as employment does not necessarily eliminate poverty amongst lone parents. With regard to disabled people, perhaps the most significant point to emerge from this chapter is the extent to which the material deprivation evident exceeds what would be predicted from the level of income poverty amongst this group. The need for closer attention to the costs of disability is clear. Finally, in her review of the data on retired people, Sue Middleton argues for less emphasis on cutting the costs of pensions and a greater focus on cutting impoverishment amongst the elderly.

In the closing chapter Heady and Room pull the discussion together and address the puzzle that runs through the data – the limited fit between income poverty and non-monetary indicators of deprivation. For example, the elderly in the UK score badly on the first element but do rather better on the second and, more broadly, poverty seems to have little effect on social isolation. As the authors note the answers may well lie in the different histories with which people may encounter and experience income poverty. However, given the current preference for the concept of social exclusion – and within this for non-monetary indicators such as social isolation – much more work is needed on why different bits of this jigsaw do not seem to fit together. This book is a useful start.
In 2002, the poverty debate gathered considerable momentum in Britain. For example, Paul Spicker (see Catalyst, 2002) argued that there is no such thing as a permanent underclass and that people's poverty was temporary. Furthermore, policy-makers are directed that they need to devise a universal policy framework to assist all people rather than having a fixation with helping the poor. Tom Startup argued in Poor Measures (SMF, 2002) that a better definition of poverty is needed if government policy is to be more effective in addressing poverty.

Interestingly, an almost identical debate on poverty has been raging in Australia. The debate there, described as a 'cerebral battle' (Arndt, 2002), has involved two protagonists with identical names but who are in quite different ideological corners: in the 'leftist' corner are Professor Peter Saunders from the Social Policy Research Centre (University of New South Wales), The Smith Family and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling. In the 'rightist' corner are Peter Saunders (Emeritus Professor of Sociology at University of Sussex) and Kayoko Tsumori from Centre for Independent Studies who have thrown down the gauntlet by challenging orthodox intellectual thinking in Australia on poverty.

Saunders and Tsumori’s overriding argument is a controversial one: Australian social policy researchers and policy-makers have got it ‘wrong’ about poverty in terms of its definition, measurement, extent and policy prescription.

In Chapter 1 – What is Poverty? – a critical dissection of orthodox definitions of poverty is undertaken. Absolute poverty is regarded as an effectively redundant concept, even for the poorest (i.e. Aboriginals) in Australian society, due to the existence of the welfare safety net. More importantly, relative poverty is argued to be an ‘ill-defined and chaotic’ concept (p. 21). This is due to a mix of subjectivity and arbitrariness in how relative poverty is defined and measured. Specifically, the common techniques of measuring relative poverty, (i) minimum income – the Henderson line and the indicative budget standard (the latter devised by SPRC); and (ii) median and means-based percentile poverty lines are argued to produce over-inflated and varying levels of the extent of poverty. Furthermore, it is contended that poverty researchers are confused about poverty and income inequality. A robust and convincing line of argument is put forward.

In Chapter 2 – Poor Research – the discussion moves on to arguing that the accuracy of the extent of poverty within Australia is blighted yet further by the datasets used (i.e. the Australian Bureau of Statistic’s (ABS) Surveys of Income and Housing Costs and Household Expenditure Surveys) and not used by leftist researchers. Four fundamental problems are identified. First, there is a failure to recognise that poverty is a temporary phenomena – this resonates with Paul Spicker’s recent position. Second, indirect incomes (that is, government services such as housing, education and health care) are not included in the total income streams of the poor. Next, when peoples’ income and expenditure are compared a glaring contradiction prevails: the poor are found to be spending just over twice the income they claim to have. Finally, and most crucially, the official datasets (since the mid 1990s) that researchers have relied upon to make their claims that poverty is increasing and deepening are contended to be flawed – an admission by the ABS no less! Yet, the poverty lobby have refused to acknowledge this and/or adjust their research findings accordingly. Cumulatively, this leads to the conclusion that ‘exaggerating the poverty estimates does no favours to those who really need help, for faulty statistics are likely to result in misguided and poorly designed policies’ (pp. 43–4).
In Chapter 3 – *The Myth of Social Exclusion* – it is noted that social exclusion has come to dominate Australian social policy discourse in recent years. Yet, it is argued that social exclusion is a misnomer when applied within an Australian context. This is because the concept is grounded in a ‘[European] continental tradition of thinking about citizenship and the requirements of national unity’ (p. 60). Furthermore, like poverty, social exclusion is difficult to define and measure with any degree of accuracy. This is because it is too multidimensional a concept. It, consequently, is because of this multidimensionality that everyone, not just the poor, has the potential to be socially excluded in one way or another. As a result, the term is viewed as having little true meaning or value. Ultimately, for Saunders and Tsumori, social exclusion is no more than a social construction that has managed to sustain currency due to an ideological commitment that it exists and not the existence of ‘hard’ empirical evidence.

In the final chapter – *Redistribution or Self-Help?* – attention turns to what policy strategy should be used in order to alleviate poverty. It is highlighted that redistribution has been the strategy of choice in Australia (and Britain) since the 1940s. This approach has been adopted because of a moral and supposed egalitarian cultural disposition (i.e. the ‘fair go’) within Australian society. This viewpoint is challenged and rejected. Drawing on Nozick’s (1974) conceptualisation of social justice and the idea of meritocracy, the redistribution strategy is argued to be inhibiting the prospects of reducing poverty. I am somewhat inclined to concur with this viewpoint. If, after almost 60 years of income redistribution policy poverty is still increasing, as is generally claimed, then something must be seriously deficient with this approach. Saunders and Tsumori go on to argue that redistribution is extending and perpetuating welfare dependency and penalising those who work. As for a solution to reducing poverty, it is posited that serious consideration must be given to a self-help strategy. This is viewed as a more ethical and fairer (in a Nozickian sense) for all in society than redistribution. And, it will help to reduce welfare dependency.

In conclusion, Saunders and Tsumori’s standpoint is undoubtedly provocative. For many, if not most, readers of this journal there may well be a predisposition to view this monograph as another polemic piece from Saunders. This, however, is too easy an option to take. Yes, Saunders has a record for taking a controversial standpoint on sociological issues (see Saunders, 2001, 1990; Saunders and Williams, 1988). But, his previous works are thoroughly researched, well-written, have stimulated debate and, most importantly, contributed to advancing understanding and knowledge. *Poverty in Australia* is a concise and thought-provoking critical review of how poverty should be defined, measured and tackled. Colleagues may not like what Saunders and Tsumori say but it does make one sit up and think. It is for this key reason that it is a valuable and welcome contribution to the intellectual and policy debate on poverty.


PAUL J. MAGINN
Edith Cowan University
W. Australia

* The views expressed herein are written in a personal capacity.

In the Irish Motown film *The Commitments*, one of the eponymous band tells a colleague in the band, ‘the Irish are the Blacks of Europe’. Well, yes and no. For one thing, the native Irish did not generally have a black skin and this allowed them to remain invisible in many situations where racism was at work, including in Britain; for example, I recall my grandfather coming home late one evening chuckling as he recounted an incident he had observed outside the local underground station where several Irish (and he was part Irish himself) were kicking the hell out of a black man and telling him loudly that that ‘would fucking teach you to go back to your own country’. The Irish, as the 2001 UK census will have revealed by the time this review is published, have been the largest but hidden minority in the UK for many years. The place of the Irish in the folklore and history of racism in Britain is nevertheless a prominent and complex one, where the categories of Irish, traveller and gypsy for example, have often been conflated to the disadvantage of all and the shame of the majority.

But what is it like to be black (or a member of any minority) in Ireland itself? That is the subject of this detailed, meticulous historical account by Bryan Fanning and one which challenges, for one thing, the image of the Irish as victim. Fanning has set himself the task of confronting many of the myths of Ireland as a warm-hearted, welcoming nation of people which receives oppressed people from elsewhere with an open heart and friendly *craic*. His demolition job is a pretty complete and well-substantiated one. His account of the treatment of Travellers in the island of Ireland has been rehearsed elsewhere and is probably the least-illuminating, though necessary, part of the book, at least to this reviewer. But, his account of the treatment of the Jews at the time of the Holocaust, of minorities entering the country during the period of Black and Asian immigration of the 1960s and since, and, more recently, of refugees and asylum seekers is disturbing.

I read the book shortly after taking part in several events to mark Black History week during which a constant theme was the need to make the invisible history of minorities visible and Fanning does this excellently, bringing to light some shameful episodes in the history of Ireland’s structural racism towards others. For example, he recounts the determination of the Irish state, egged on implicitly and sometimes explicitly by the Catholic church, to try to ensure that Ireland replicated to some degree the stance of Hitler in Germany, to make Ireland *judenfrei* (free of Jews); and he provides a series of well-documented cameos demonstrating how the initial myth of welcome was rapidly replaced by an oppressive, hostile and excluding regime of treatment. Cameos such as that of the group of Pakistani businessmen locked up in Montjoy prison over a weekend, or of the Hungarian refugees allowed to enter in the wake of the events of 1956 who were treated so badly that by 1957 they were organising hunger strikes in their barrack like accommodation; the Irish government’s response was to seek to deport them to Canada – or anywhere else.

One of the central conclusions to emerge from Fanning’s important book is that racism has to be understood – and confronted – within the specific cultural and historical context in which it emerges. Thus, and ironically, given the contribution of the Irish to American nation-building, racism in Ireland is fed strongly by the desire of the Irish state to create a national identity free from its colonial associations with Britain. This informs an, at best, weak multiculturalism which fails to challenge racism and leaves minorities on the margins, regarded typically as a ‘subversive and disruptive’ element – save, as in the case of the Gaeltacht, where the minority is an ethnically Irish minority. The main task of the state was, and still seems to be, to assert a monocultural Irish identity and, in the process, to deny its part in creating the
conditions for racism to flourish. The complex relationship between nation building, citizenship and exclusion across Europe and indeed globally, which has begun to be discussed elsewhere,\(^2\) is one which the Irish state appears, from this account, barely to be on the political agenda. In that sense Ireland lies fully within the European tradition.

Gary Craig
Professor of Social Justice
University of Hull

Notes


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This author commands attention, both literally – from those who have the opportunity to meet him – and figuratively, thanks to the sheer range and quantity of his current and scheduled literary output. Readers visiting the website www.cssp.org can discover the scale of operations encompassed by what seems, in effect, to be Aspalter’s personal Research Center on Societal and Social Policy; together with the variety of publications currently in process and yet to come. By British standards, if not universal standards, Aspalter seems exceptionally determined to make his mark in the shortest time possible.

His activities can and should give other academics pause for thought. The notion that comparative social policy ought, ideally, to be engaged in either by ‘teams of natives’ of the countries in question, or else by single authors well-read in the international literature and well-versed in the techniques and practicalities of cross-national review, has not been one easily arrived at – or universally accepted – over the short history of this subject’s development as a branch of applied social science, still in need of firmer academic credentials. But Aspalter’s drive for the short-cut and the ‘quick-fix’ in comparative social policy stands out. He does not hesitate to pronounce with the same assurance on countries he has visited only briefly (if at all), as on those (e.g. Hong Kong and Taiwan) wherein he has at least been resident for a time. This, for a writer whose standard of English, although ample for international conference purposes does leave something to be desired when it comes to the niceties of written expression. It may be part of the same linguistic/cultural complex that there exists no ‘perhaps’ or ‘maybe/maybe not’ in Aspalter’s internal English language phrase-book. Everything, in his judgement, is absolutely clear-cut.

In the light of the above, the following review consists of two separate exercises, in respect of two quite different publications: Aspalter’s own *Democratization and Welfare State Development in Taiwan*; and Aspalter’s edited collection, *Discovering the Welfare State in East Asia*. 
Democratization and Welfare State Development in Taiwan proves to be strong on factual detail but short on explanation, for all the author's insistence (e.g. p. 15) that it is precisely 'qualitative', 'in depth' analysis that the book is all about. The chronological details, more or less succinctly presented, may (in so far as they are verifiable from sources additional to the few referenced in this book) prove useful to – and thence much sought after by – graduate students of comparative social policy, interested in Taiwan. Yet the very selectivity of these factual accounts leaves the author's quality of judgement at best unproven.

Noticeably, Aspalter's dismissive introductory chapter on 'Welfare State Theory' to date, takes up just eight pages of this 171 page book. No less striking is the fact that the two so-called 'intensive case study' chapters 5 and 6 – designed ostensibly to demonstrate the importance of party politics for social policy development – offer a wealth of circumstantial detail, but nothing approaching the much-heralded level of 'in-depth analysis' promised. The details offered are often fascinating and may prove valuable in themselves (to the extent that their under-referencing can be made good), to continuing students of political and policy development in Taiwan. What they do not begin to demonstrate are any clear, provable patterns of relationship between electoral styles and events, and particular political/policy outcomes thereafter. For this, it would seem (in despite of Aspalter), we should continue to rely on home-grown specialists in Taiwan.

Aspalter's inspiringly titled, edited collection Discovering the Welfare State in East Asia represents a different facet of his industry: the ability to secure the services of academics more experienced than himself. Unfortunately, Aspalter's willingness to make up the numbers by contributing country case study chapters of his own renders this an uneven book in every sense.

He opens by proclaiming the utter novelty of the subject under review.

The information on the development of welfare systems in East Asia available in Western countries is insufficient and unsatisfying. (Aspalter, 2002b: 1)

It seems odd, therefore, that all of the contributors to this volume, aside from Aspalter himself, are well-known international names in the field of Asia Pacific social policy. Each of them – Ito Peng on Gender in welfare state restructuring in Japan; Huck-jo Kwon on The Korean Welfare State; Raymond KH Chan on ‘The Struggle of welfare development in Hong Kong’; Yeun-wen Ku on; ‘Towards a Taiwanese welfare state’ – offer half-way familiar accounts, to the already interested, of what they have each been on about, to international audiences, for the past decade at least. So much for the utter novelty of Aspalter’s enterprise in this case; though the familiarity of his contributors may well help sell the book.

Inexplicably – from the point of view of either publishing or editorial logic – Aspalter has added in another chapter of his own, on Hong Kong: ‘The Hong Kong Way of Social Welfare: an NGO-based system which, to put it kindly represents some, perhaps innocent, deviation from recorded reality. After which, his own concluding chapter on ‘Singapore: A Welfare State in a Class by Itself?’ is worth reading, not least for the clues it offers to Aspalter’s modes of thinking and operation.

The theoretical introduction to this latter volume does take longer (i.e., some 28 pages) to dispense with the entirety of Western Welfare State Theory than did the equivalent, Chapter 2 of the previous volume here reviewed. Esping-Andersen still gets fairly short shrift, and the entire panoply of Confucianism is relegated to a branch of state-backed religion to be compared, if at all, to the alternatives of protestant versus catholic establishments in the west (pp. 9–10). Nevertheless, some of Aspalter’s succinct remarks, in his ‘Short Evaluation of the Explanatory
Capacity of Major Divisions in Welfare State Theory’ (pp. 20–6), will undoubtedly hit home somewhere.

In short, this man is possibly a genius; but possibly not.

Catherine Jones Finer


The subtitle nicely captures the flavour of this stimulating and absorbing analysis of the struggles over public and private social welfare in the United States. In a thoroughly researched study Hacker documents and explains the very different history and growth of pensions and health insurance in the United States. ‘Whereas private pensions built on top of the floor of protection provided by Social Security – a floor, employers quickly discovered, that offset much of pensions’ cost – private health insurance emerged as the core source of health security for workers and their families’ (p. 220). So employers became willing to see expansion of public pensions but not health insurance and the trade union movement weakened its drive for public programs as it negotiated for private coverage.

The study is organised in four parts. The first examines the nature of ‘American Exceptionalism’, comparing the traditional academic focus on state welfare with the everyday reality of private as well as public social benefits, and outlines the path dependence approach which provides the theoretical framework for the analysis. ‘Private social benefits, like public social programs, have policy feedback effects that alter the subsequent landscape of political conflict’ (p. 277). The next two parts examine the politics of public and private pensions and health insurance: each is some one hundred pages long with an introductory chapter and two substantive ones, analysing the developments before and after 1945, and is supported by a wealth of notes. In the final part Hacker reviews and compares the earlier analyses in the light of his theoretical framework in chapter 6 and then discusses the future of the American Welfare Regime in chapter 7.

In what Hacker terms ‘subterranean’ politics and policy development, ‘the prominent place of tax expenditures in the provision and subsidization of private social benefits’ (p. 294) receives particular attention. He builds well on Christopher Howard’s innovative study, The Hidden Welfare State: Tax expenditures and social policy in the United States (reviewed JSP 28:1, January 1999, pp. 159–160). The two books complement each other well, with Hacker taking greater account of ‘the heavy distributional skew of tax breaks for private benefits [which] must be placed at the heart of any explanation of the distinctive political dynamics that Howard’s study identifies’ (p. 39).

In many ways this is a splendid case-study of major parts of the social division of welfare within the United States, bringing out very clearly the complex interactions between public, tax and occupational welfare over the past century. The first part opens with a quotation from Richard Titmuss, criticising the compartmentalism of social policy analysis, and discusses his ‘iceberg phenomena of social welfare’ (p. 12), but Hacker’s concern is more with the development of the public and ‘subterranean’ politics and the many groups involved.

While the comparative focus of the book is on pensions and health insurance within the one country, many of the questions posed in the study are also driven by cross-national comparison. I had thought that Hacker might return to this in Chapter 6, in many ways the concluding chapter. His discussion of the value of path dependency I found particularly
interesting and helpful here. He is very careful to reject a deterministic version: ‘not merely a fashionable term...but a powerful set of tools for explaining important features of political and social life’ (p. 305, emphasis in original).

The final chapter takes account of recent developments, well into 2001, and discusses the potential for change given that: ‘on nearly every front, the grand new alternatives of the present echo the rejected alternatives of the past’ (p. 314). Although Hacker has earlier raised the possibility that path dependence analysis can be used to help suggest probable future directions, its use is not explicitly developed to indicate where change may be most likely or most feasible. Since social security is now expected ‘to replace an ever smaller share of wages’ and to fall further behind private pensions (p. 332), reflecting and reinforcing increasing inequalities, future developments may reduce its core role to the residual one that Medicare has always held. This may be one of the feedback effects of the greater individualisation and reduced pooling in private pensions which makes them less dependent on a core of social security support.

Reading The Divided Welfare State alongside the current Green Paper on UK Pensions (DWP, 2002) made me wonder how far a comparative analysis could be constructed where health and pensions occupied opposite positions in the two countries. It would be very good if this impressive study could provoke more comparative work on the changing relations between public and private social benefits and the crucial ‘subterranean’ role of taxation.


ADRIAN SINFIELD
University of Edinburgh

Peter Saunders (2002), The Ends and Means of Welfare: Coping with Economic and Social Change in Australia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press xiii + 300 pp., £18.95 pbk, £50.00 hbk.

doi: 10.1017/S0047279403297105

This is an ambitious book that provides an extremely useful review of contemporary social policy thinking and developments in Australia. The book is primarily concerned with the correspondence between economic ideas, public opinion and social policy changes since the 1970s, although there are also examples and contrasts with earlier periods. Packed with useful data and survey results this text will be a vital resource for students on comparative social policy courses. Saunders guides the reader through the various debates that have been significant in Australia; the meaning of poverty, the rejection of social insurance in favour of means testing and targeting, along with the centrality of the wage award system and the importance of ensuring that the economy serves society, rather than vice versa. Clearly these are not peculiarly Australian concerns and Saunders recognises this fact. Indeed he draws on UK and US examples to illustrate many of his points.

Before outlining the book it may be as well to point out that the author is Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW, and not the ‘other’ Peter Saunders. Although it will not take the reader long to learn the author’s centre-left leanings.
The book begins by exploring the question of why it is that: ‘Increased material prosperity has not satisfied many of the needs that people regard as important to their well-being’ (p. 5). A big question, and in tackling it he structures the book into three parts, with nine chapters in all. Part 1, chapter 2, is concerned with whether the economy has provided the material basis for a ‘good society’ and by and large it seems to have done so. Except of course that the economic benefits of growth and efficiency have been skewed, with the poorest two deciles sliding deeper into the trench of poverty and social exclusion. Moreover, insecurity is not confined to the poorest and in this context Saunders argues that public opinion and the legitimacy of the welfare state (the focus of chapter 3) are important for anyone who wants to promote social policies that have a more egalitarian society as their goal. Part 2 ‘The changing socioeconomic landscape’ has four chapters that non-Australian readers will find most useful. Here Saunders is at his best, providing research findings on: income and resources, the labour market and unemployment, poverty, inequality and social exclusion; along with a sober, but gently critical, discussion of these. Chapter 7 concludes part 3 with a discussion of Australia’s standing in the international league tables of inequality. Based on the Luxembourg Incomes Series data, the good news (for Australians) is that they still have some way to go before they catch up with, let alone overtake, the USA in the income inequality stakes. The fact that countries continue to differ very considerably in the degree and depth of inequality emphasises the fact that social and political values matter. Globalisation does not mean, therefore, that societies are converging at a very rapid rate and common sense ideas such as ‘a fair go for all’ – a widely held and deeply felt Australian idea – continue to provide something of a buttress against convergence. Saunders wants to engage with these sorts of egalitarian and popular ideas (among others) and combine them with concepts of mutual obligation.

In chapters 8 and 9 – which form part 3 – he sets out the basis of a reform agenda for welfare in Australia. Drawing on Giddens’s Third Way and the need for rights to be accompanied by responsibilities, a familiar agenda for UK readers, Saunders argues for a renewed commitment to a redistributive social welfare agenda. The focus here is primarily on income and paid work in the formal economy and could be read as an attempt to attune ‘The wage earners welfare state’ as Frank Castles so aptly described Australia, to the twenty-first century.

The great strength of this book is the confident and clear presentation of survey data and of economic and labour market debates. Saunders is, however, still imbued with the Titmuss tradition and consequently deals rather casually with some complex sociological ideas. There are also a number of very strong assertions that could be contested. For example, ‘Those on the left have also accepted that public opinion must be mobilised behind support for a new (‘Third Way’) approach that seeks to balance state and market in ways that are more appropriate to contemporary social trends and community values’ (p. 62 parenthesis in original). A strong claim that I would query. Likewise the discussion of social exclusion and integration is handled roughly and without adequate consideration of the criticisms of these policy goals.

Consequently, I was not persuaded by part 3 and feel that my reading of Giddens and the Third Way project differs markedly to Saunders’. The paradox of material affluence alongside social inequality and feelings of uncertainty – the crux of the post-modern condition in a post-traditional society – is, therefore, described and detailed very well. However, a more detailed sociological analysis of this paradox – which is not peculiar to Australia – might have posed rather different questions, and a slightly different set of reforms, to those outlined here. Two other quibbles I had concerned the need for a more extensive debate about the provision of care (informal welfare) and the superficial treatment of superannuation (occupational welfare). The former is at the heart of social policy – its raison d’être – and if we are to rethink social policy then questions of care, and the profound changes in gender relations over the last 20 odd years, needed to be foregrounded. Second, the incomes and resources of older
Australians are closely tied to the system of superannuation. From a UK perspective ‘super’ looks very attractive but it is only touched upon here. This was the one policy area I felt that needed more data and detail – given that the means does appear to have had some very positive ends.

Despite my quibbles this book deserves to be a key text on comparative social policy courses. Finally trying to change the social policy agenda, particularly at a time when the Australian Federal government is pulling in the opposite direction, is an ambitious task with which Saunders bravely grapples. Although whether the ‘Third Way’ is the way to go, or not, is likely to be as hotly debated in Australia as it is elsewhere.

Kirk Mann
Leeds University

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This is a well-written and easily understood book primarily aimed at a service professional and line managerial audience. The book itself is the final part of a two-year project aimed at promoting a better understanding and use of economic evaluation in social welfare. The structure is broken down into three main sections. The first section briefly outlines the background and types of economic evaluation and its current role and use and examines why many practitioners regard evaluation of social welfare as such a challenge. The second section usefully explores challenges for economic evaluation; it also very briefly examines a few of the different approaches taken by other forms of evaluation as well as the economic. The final section provides basic guidance on the different stages involved in economic evaluation in social welfare with reference to a number of published studies and to four very useful case studies – in community development, homelessness prevention, foster care and fuel poverty. The authors have, however, not written a ‘how to’ book here. They are not prescriptive about the methods or strategies to use but instead highlight the main issues and discuss how these may be addressed in evaluation practice.

This work broadly achieves what it sets out to do – which is to inform the ‘unenlightened’ – and it does this well. However, for those who may see a smaller role for economic evaluations in the broader spectrum of evaluation methodological possibilities this work seemed to dash over some core issues. It did not, fundamentally, fully explore the theoretical underpinnings informing evaluation in the health and social care field. Theory driven evaluation (which may include the economic methodology outlined here) is not really addressed, instead there is a brief section dealing with the clarification of evaluation purpose and objectives. This, perhaps necessarily in such a guide, tends to skip over what is really the central issue in social welfare evaluations, which is the ways in which evaluation criteria are selected and how these impact upon the form of evaluation used. For example should evaluation be primarily about establishing the 3 E’s (effectiveness, efficiency and economy, as argued by Cochrane) or should other factors such as humanity (as argued by Strong and Dingwall) be dimensions against which social welfare should be evaluated. In practice there is likely to be a trade-off between these dimensions (for example between effectiveness and economy) and other values, including political values, that enter into the decision about which of these dimensions are to be given priority in any particular situation. In compiling this assessment it is usual to take into account three different aspects of the organisation being evaluated: structure, process and
outcome. However, in the UK it is fair to say that evaluation has been dominated by outcome evaluation. This reflects the ascendancy of utilitarian approaches to social analysis, especially from economics which often finds difficulty in acknowledging influences intervening between individuals and the incentives or sanctions of the market or its proxy in the shape of performance indicators imposed upon them. Such evaluation highlights the importance of efficiency as an evaluation dimension but lacks any real power to explain the relationships that they find. I have argued elsewhere that the overall mission of health and social care services are being subsumed to drives for efficiency. Emphasis upon economic evaluations facilitates this trend. It is factors such as this, which complicate evaluations in the field of social welfare.

However, it is true that service providers are under ever-increasing pressure to demonstrate that their work is meeting the required standards (particularly those established in contracting). Accordingly the emphasis of this work on methodology, which emphasises costs and outcomes, should provide the sorts of evidence on value for money that is increasingly required of service providers. As a consequence this work will be of interest to those involved in commissioning or conducting economic evaluation in the broad area of social welfare as well as students of the social sciences. I am certainly including it upon the broader reading list of my postgraduate ‘Theories and Strategies of Evaluation’ module.

IAN SHAW
University of Nottingham


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This book uses a ‘regulation theory framework’ (rf. Jessop, 2002) to analyse social security/income maintenance policies in a British context. The authors argue that such policies are closely linked to and, indeed, shaped by broader considerations of economic efficiency. A central argument of the book is that the state has long had and continues to play, a major role in supplying the cheap and acquiescent labour force that is required for capitalism to continue to flourish as it undergoes change. This is where social policies assume a central importance. Out-of-work benefits and, importantly, also in-work benefits (which the authors highlight as an increasingly significant element of contemporary welfare provision) are important instruments that the state uses to ensure that wider economic tasks are accomplished. According to the authors, therefore, income maintenance policies cannot be seen as being singularly concerned with meeting the needs of poor people; they are also centrally concerned with fulfilling the evolving needs of employers and capital. This approach is neatly summed up in the conclusion. ‘The bottom line is that in order to survive, capitalism must have, and its managers must ensure, a continuous and (fairly) compliant supply of labour . . . The state’s role in the construction of waged labour is historically continuous, the mechanism (what we have termed social modes of economic regulation) employed in the constitution of labour is historically contingent, depending upon the economic paradigm and the socio-economic factors that have to be managed within its confines’ (pp. 176–7). In contemporary British society this means that an essential element of social security policy is about ensuring that everyone understands the message that ‘work is the best form of welfare’ and that welfare dependency, more precisely a specific form of welfare dependency, does not pay. As the book points out, the provision of essentially state subsidised jobs via the New Deals and/or reliance on various means-tested subsidies and tax allowances for low-paid workers leads in reality to another form of benefit
dependency. A form of dependency which, because it meets wider economic imperatives, and,
simultaneously, reinforces the (paid) work ethic is actively supported by the state.

The authors set out their regulation theory stance in the introduction and apply it
consistently and systematically throughout the text. The bulk of the book deals with what the
authors see as the shift from the post-war epoch of economics premised on Keynesian demand
management to the current ‘neo-liberal accumulation regime’ and how first the Conservatives
and subsequently New Labour have developed ‘market workfare’ strategies in response to such
changes (chapters 2 and 3). It is also argued that two institutions are particularly important
in underpinning patriarchal capitalism, that is paid employment and the family. These are
explored in chapters 4 and 5 alongside interesting discussions on social security policy and
the regulation of lone mothers and young men. The final two substantive chapters give the
book another dimension in that they offer historical analyses of two important elements of
the social security system. Chapter 6 focuses on in-work benefits from Speenhamland to the
present provision of a national minimum wage. Chapter 7 looks at the introduction of family
allowances and the subsequent retention of child benefit.

I enjoyed reading this book. It is well written, it presents its arguments clearly and concisely,
and a great deal of detailed evidence is presented in support of specific claims. I have only one
minor criticism. On occasions throughout the book qualitative data from elite interviews with
senior civil servants is presented. These are drawn from one of the authors’ PhD work and
provide interesting but rather fleeting insights into the views of some of those at the centre of
recent policy making. It would have been good to have seen more of these data used. That said
the bibliography seems to indicate that a more thorough review of this work is now available
(cf. Groves, 2002) and I look forward to reading it in due course. I strongly recommend this
book and I shall be ordering copies to add to the reading lists of the undergraduate (level 2)
and postgraduate modules that I teach.

Aldershot: Ashgate.
the more sophisticated gaze now pursued by gerontologists that looks at later life within a life course context and that is examining the ‘nature of ageing’ as well as the ‘nature of old age’. Although I would agree that, in general, the editors are correct I think that we do a disservice to our predecessors by not acknowledging their work. What about, for example, another Open University book To The Good Long Life: What we know about growing old by Morton Pruner (1974)?

The second trend is developments in methodology where a wider range of sources, such as the use of literature and paintings are considered. The third trend is major changes in the context of research. Specific ones identified are issues to do with ethics, where the social sciences have fallen behind medicine, cultural differences and the involvement of older people themselves.

The first part of this book is entitled ‘The who, what and how of social gerontology’ and is written by Anne Jamieson. The second part is ‘Using existing sources’. Andrew Blaikie describes how documentary material can be used. These include Parish Registers and Poor Law ledgers. His two case studies are of old surveys of poverty and photographic images. Next Christina Victor describes secondary data analysis. She points to the ethical issues in gaining consent for the use of these data. However, there are now ethical issues being raised on whether secondary data can be used if the participants did not specifically give their agreement to this. Dorothy Sheridan then describes the use of Mass-Observation Archive and Mike Hepworth cultural images such as novels and television.

The third part of the book is concerned with creating new data. Mike Wadsworth looks at longitudinal research and why it is important to distinguish between age, cohort and period effects (pp. 102–103). Research, which uses the story of an individual life told in the first person, is well illustrated in the chapter by Joanna Bornat. She illustrates this by her own research on step families. Peter Coleman, who discusses a case study approach, shows the growing importance of psychology. His two case studies illustrate the changing self and self and identity in advanced old age. Bill Bytheway and Julia Johnson look at doing diary-based research. The final chapter in this part is by Ann Netten and is on doing evaluation of health and social care interventions. As this is often the type of research which funders want, it is salutary to examine the complexity of research in this area.

The fourth part of the book is on the roles and responsibilities of the researcher. Margaret Boneham discusses ageing in different cultures which is a topic becoming of growing importance in this country. Ethical issues are well described by Mary Gilhooly who starts by looking at general ethical principles and then goes on to consider consent, confidentiality and privacy. Finally she looks at how research is monitored and controlled. With new developments such an increasingly litigious society and more emphasis on the rights of research participants this is a particularly relevant section. The role of older people in research, of growing concern to funders, is discussed by Sheila Peace. Some very helpful examples of how this can be achieved are given. Finally Mike Nolan and Jo Cooke examine the use of gerontological research in policy and practice. For what use is research if it does not influence policy? They look realistically at the barriers to the use of research.

The blurb on the back of the book states ‘Researching Ageing and Later Life will be essential reading for those wishing for an insight into the realities of doing research in this area’. Unlike many blurbs I would agree with this.

Anthea Tinker
King’s College London


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The 1980s and early 1990s witnessed, in Tess Ridge’s words, ‘a devastating increase in childhood poverty and deprivation’. By the end of the twentieth century ‘children in Britain were some of the poorest in Europe and the “developed” world’. This disaster, for which an apology from the party in power at the time seems the least that might be expected, has been well documented. However, we know much less about what the children on the receiving end think and feel about poverty. This book sets out to remedy this shortcoming, its aim being ‘to develop an understanding of child poverty that places children at the centre of the analysis at all times’.

Ridge combines qualitative and quantitative methods. She has interviewed 40 children and young people in low-income one and two parent families, ranging in age from 10 to 17 years. She also talked with a number of their parents. The interviews range over children’s access to resources, including pocket money, earnings and transport; social relations and social integration, both at home and school, including friends, school meals and bullying; and family life. She also analyses data from the 1997 British Household Panel Youth Survey, covering 720 11–15 year olds, 112 of whom came from families living on benefits. The focus here is on experiences and perceptions of school life, including suspensions and exclusions, truanting, bullying, relations with teachers and expectations about leaving school.

Making extensive use of the children and young people’s own words, Ridge provides a vivid and comprehensive picture of what it is like to grow up poor in Britain today. I was particularly struck by three insights. Ridge argues ‘it is the social aspect of social exclusion that has been least developed and understood’, and shows clearly how this dimension is particularly important to children’s experience of poverty.

Ridge also shows how the surge in poverty coincided with increasing financial demands on parents for their children’s education and with a squeeze on the social aspects of school life due to the intensification of a narrowly academic agenda. The end result, Ridge argues, is exclusion for many poor children within school. For this, but also other reasons, ‘children living in households receiving low-income means-tested benefits are having qualitatively different experiences at school to their non-benefit peers’. The analysis of the BHPYS data shows that ‘benefit children’ are more likely to be excluded from school, to play truant, to worry about bullying, to not care what their teachers think of them and to plan to leave school at 16.

Ridge’s recommendations focus on the benefit system, in particular measures aimed to reduce exclusion within school, for example support for school uniforms, school trips and school exam projects. The provision of better out-of-school services and concessionary transport fares are also on her agenda.

My one reservation about the book was that the fascinating material might have been used to even better effect. The children’s own words are used in short quotes to illustrate main conclusions from the analysis. Yet while these often drive home the point, they are also very bitty. I would have welcomed the appearance of a number of children as cases of particular situations, giving the reader a holistic view of their conditions and experiences and exploring the connections across their lives – at home, in the local neighbourhood, and at school.

The book also raises, for me, two big issues. Ridge refers to both ‘poverty’ and ‘social exclusion’, but favours the latter as having ‘potentially much greater power to reveal the multidimensional nature of poverty and disadvantage in childhood than the narrower definition of poverty’. Her work certainly supports this contention. Yet what both miss is a third dimension – the issue of inequality. They can distract us from a full understanding of what has been happening in recent years, offering dualistic readings (excluded/included) of a complex situation. It is important to know what is happening not only to those in poverty, but also to those at the other end of the spectrum – as well as those in between. It would be fascinating – but also important – to replicate Ridge’s work with children at different points on the family income scale.
This leads to the second issue. Five of the ‘top’ seven countries for child poverty in the ‘developed’ world are English-language countries, including not only the UK but also the US, the richest country in the world. Other European countries with similar national incomes to ours (for example, Sweden) have much lower levels of child poverty. Thanks to Ridge, we now have a far better idea of what it is like to live child poverty – what we lack is a convincing explanation for the extent of poverty in the UK (and other English-language countries), and the rapidity of its increase in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Peter Moss
University of London


In a previous existence (as development co-ordinator for a south London housing association) I attended, along with other Wandsworth housing association representatives, a consultation with David Edmonds, then Chief Executive of the Housing Corporation, to discuss the implications of the then impending 1988 Housing Act. Some of our group expressed deep reservations about the planned introduction of private finance for housing association development programmes. In particular, we highlighted its inevitable consequences for the characteristic of housing association tenants (rent increases would mean more residents on benefits) and housing standards (which would deteriorate in response to cost constraints and ‘risk management’). At the time Edmonds expressed doubts about such effects, and, anyway, given the political climate (‘Thatcherism’), we had to be ‘pragmatic’. In 2003 we are living with the economic and human costs of socially and spatially disadvantaged social housing estates. It is no consolation now to say ‘we told you so’.

Edgar et al.’s account of housing and social exclusion is one of a series of reports produced by the European Observatory on Homelessness, established by FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) in 1991 to research homelessness in the European Union (EU). The book argues for access to affordable, decent housing as a condition of social inclusion. Its findings are based on an analysis of national reports produced by correspondents – ‘widely recognised as experts in the field of homelessness’ – from the 15 member states. Edgar et al. calculate 3m. people are homeless in the EU, with another 18m. inadequately housed. The aim of the book is to offer an explanation of the persistence of this situation in the EU, and to identify the policy and institutional reforms needed to address it. In respect of the former, the authors allude to the dominance of neo-liberalism in Europe in recent years and subsequent changes in the state’s role in welfare protection – including a decline in collective housing provision. This has intensified exclusionary processes for the most vulnerable. At the same time, recent EU social policy commits member states to improving living conditions and promoting social inclusion, including the removal of access barriers to decent housing. This commitment, articulated in the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam and reinforced at the European Council in Nice in December 2000, includes National Action Plans for Social Inclusion, submitted in June 2001.

Within the context of this seemingly contradictory position, Edgar et al. endeavour to identify EU-wide trends in housing provision and their effect on homelessness. They deploy Karl Polanyi’s (1944) notion of ‘spheres of economic integration’, distinguishing between market exchange, redistribution and reciprocity: Chapter 3 of the book highlights the increasing role of market exchange in housing provision; Chapter 4 highlights the changing role of the state in housing (from redistribution to risk management); and Chapter 5 highlights how many
vulnerable people have increasingly become reliant on informal social networks for assistance with housing (involving, for example, community organising and the development of social capital). In drawing together the lessons of their study for strategic development, Edgar et al. propose a five-pronged approach to tackling housing exclusion through:

- Facilitating access to housing – including legislation offering a right of access to housing.
- Facilitating participation in employment through training programmes, and the integration of employment and resettlement initiatives.
- Preventing the risk of exclusion through homelessness strategies that include preventative measures to avoid evictions and sustain tenancies.
- Housing-related social support for vulnerable people and areas.
- Co-ordinated action involving partnerships and multi-agency working.

Edgar et al. claim that these modes of intervention represent a shift in policy emphasis on homelessness to one that ‘recognises the structural and institutional causes of homelessness, rather than emphasising individual pathological explanations; a shift from a medical model to a social model’ (p. 125). Such a shift would surely be welcomed. However, Edgar et al.’s suggested approach would seem to belie the claim that it offers such a shift. For instance, to facilitate employment opportunity through training and integrated resettlement initiatives without concomitant measures at the macro level to address the labour market’s structural defects – some of which are acknowledged in this report (such as the lack of adequately paid and secure work), but also sexism and racism – continues to place the onus on individuals to make themselves employable. Collective responsibility for creating employment opportunities, in the form of demand-sided initiatives and effective equal opportunities legislation, is not considered a public issue.

Additionally, avoiding the risk of exclusion through adopting preventative strategies on eviction will remain marginal to mainstream practice so long as housing policies promote market values and moral conformity. In the case of the latter, Edgar et al. acknowledge that exclusion arising from ‘antisocial behaviour’ is increasing. However, they fail to acknowledge that ‘antisocial behaviour’ is a contested concept. At worst, it represents the moral values of oppressive ‘communities’, imposing their own notion of what is or is not acceptable ways of behaving and defining who is and who is not to be included. This lack of sensitivity to the specificities of individual ways of being (curiously, ‘mental health problems’ are equated with ‘antisocial’, p. 110), to difference and diversity, is consistent with the pathologising discourse of exclusion which Edgar et al. claim to reject. This is further evidenced by their enthusiasm to train ‘some households’ to sustain their tenancy (p. 110) – a return to the halcyon days of Octavia Hill!

Social inclusion and adequate housing are, as Edgar et al. rightly argue, contingent upon inclusion in ‘economic, social, and political structures’ (p. 23). Any strategy for housing and social inclusion must, therefore, promote financial security, tolerance for cultural difference and genuine political participation. In truth, current trends in Europe are moving in the opposite direction – with widespread withdrawal of social protection, low-waged and insecure labour markets, increasing intolerance of difference (particularly evident in asylum policies), and increasing disillusionment with representative ‘democracy’ (particularly amongst the young). Given this situation, proposals for further techniques of control over the ‘other’ are, I fear, somewhat irresponsible and dangerous. But then again, maybe I need to be more pragmatic.

Charlie Cooper
University of Hull
This book – written in the main by Whitty though several chapters are co-authored – appraises aspects of contemporary education policy from the standpoint of a specialist in the sociology of education. Given the current trends in education policy it is understandable that a major theme is the impact of the introduction of quasi-markets on access to schooling and the consequences of recent policy developments for civil society and the defence of primary values such as social justice. The book succeeds in setting major issues in the context of globalisation and fundamental changes in the nature of advanced industrial society. A strong, balanced defence is made of the relevance of the concept of class to an understanding of education policy, combined with a judicious account of how far education policy can change the educational experience and life chances of the disadvantaged without a sustained, significant attack on material deprivation associated with poor housing, ill-health and poverty. There is a balanced exposition and critique of the practice and principles of Conservative education policy prior to 1997 together with a review of Labour’s policy after that date. As a collection of essays the book identifies a solid spine of analytical reflections for readers who wish to place education policy in a broader, sociological perspective.

Whitty considers the significance of an increasing corporate involvement in schools; the corporate dimension is of increasing relevance to students of the social policy domain. Persuasively, and without complacency, he argues that the empirical evidence does not support the view that the corporate factor has brought about major transformations in education. There is a danger that this stance could obscure the character of corporate influence, which is insidious, often concealed and extremely difficult to measure. Sometimes corporate power manifests itself in a power to exclude from the political agenda debate which threatens powerful vested interests, thus shaping reform impulses in a fundamental way that sets policy parameters conducive to continuity of the status quo and its attendant inequalities. The longstanding assertion that the education system has failed the economy is an illustration of this phenomenon, powerfully expressed in James Callaghan’s much-noted 1976 Ruskin speech. Indeed, it is fair to say that cyclical failures in the economy invariably lead to castigation of the education system, precluding politically potent criticism of economic failure in terms of under-invested, management incompetence and corroding humanistic values of non-instrumental education, defensible levels of public expenditure and pursuit of social justice.

Also, Whitty acknowledges the indisputable power of resistance within the education system when confronted with marketisation. There is a dogged durability to street-level practices and great difficulty in orchestrating change in whatever direction, whether fundamentally misguided or definitively correct. This truth is not just evidenced by the felt experience behind Blair’s ‘scars on my back’ speech but even more forcibly by the consensus among previous politicians of the Thatcher/Major era who regarded the timescale of reform as generational. Changing the culture of public service provision was regarded as a ‘long march’. Both corporate involvement – not least in terms of the Private Finance Initiative – and marketisation have forced public service provision across a major threshold where continuity and consolidation of these new trends will prevail, despite resistance and the absence of dramatic transformations.

In this climate, the path of reform that Whitty advocates – such as greater investment in social capital, further exploration of the desirable characteristics of faith-based education, joined-up policies (the focus of a major government document in 1975 (CPRS 1975) it will be remembered) – will be difficult to accomplish. Especially given Whitty’s dual recognition
that it is ‘understandable’ (p. 123) that education policy must in political terms speak to
the middle-class and aspiring middle-class voters and that in the absence of a substantial
increase in expenditure a reduction of inequalities will require a transfer of resources from
the advantaged to the disadvantaged. The chapter on the current Labour government appears
overly optimistic about the ability and willingness of the government to square the circle that the
above dual recognition depicts, particularly with instruments of policy such as Education Action
Zones.


PAUL LODGE
Cardiff University

Stuart Lowe and David Hughes (eds) (2002), The Private Rented Sector in a New
Century, Bristol: The Policy Press, xi + 224 pp., £18.99 pbk. £50.00 hbk.
DOI: 10.1017/S0047279403367108

Stuart Lowe and David Hughes have collaborated before, as joint authors of a successful
text on social housing which is now in its third edition (Hughes and Lowe, 2000). This
time their focus is the private rented sector (PRS), and as joint editors they have assembled
contributions from established experts as well as relative newcomers. Essentially these are
’sand alone’ chapters, although the editors do attempt to identify themes in an introductory
chapter. Despite two chapters on Scotland (rural areas by Madhu Satsangi and licensing
arrangements by Hector Currie), this is essentially a book about England, with no comparative
analysis.

To what extent will the Conservative’s 1988 Housing Act prove to be a significant milestone
as far as the PRS is concerned? The Act aimed to reverse the decline in private renting
households (from 90 per cent to a mere 8 per cent in the course of the century) by deregulating
tenancies so that landlords could let at market rents and with significantly reduced security
of tenure. A.D.H. Crook notes, in the first of his 2 chapters, that the sector grew from 1.8
million dwellings in England in 1989 to 2.3 million by 1999. In decline the sector had been
associated with an above average proportion of households on low incomes, whilst its growth
has been accompanied by a higher proportion of tenants with above average incomes. Steve
Wilcox shows that virtually all the growth in the sector between 1989 and 1995 was supported
by Housing Benefit, but the growth in benefit spending resulted in rent restrictions being
introduced in 1996, since when there has been a marked reduction in lettings to benefit
claimants.

Deregulation has failed to attract corporate investors. David Rhodes and Peter Kemp argue
that, although rents have risen in line with wages and the RPI, the increase in capital values has
meant a decline in the gross yield to investors. The PRS still provides lower rates of return than
other investments. The growth in the sector has been achieved without any real change to its
structure and it remains a ‘cottage industry’ with most landlords renting out a small number
of properties as a ‘sideline’.

Three central chapters by Diane Lister, Jill Morgan, and Martin Davis and David Hughes
demonstrate the rich potential of housing as a subject for socio-legal studies. Lister’s chapter
examines the relationship between the typically young tenant and small-time landlord. She
concludes that social relationships are more significant than legal or economic ones, and that
power differentials and inequalities ensure that the landlord’s desire to retain control overrides
any rights of the tenant. This is entirely consistent with Morgan’s examination of harassment
and unlawful eviction. Deregulation has reduced the extent to which tenants believe they have any rights, so that most offences go unreported and remain hidden. Local authorities have come to be seen as the main enforcement agents, and their emphasis is on prevention, education, compliance and partnership rather than prosecution.

The growth in the PRS has coincided with a growth in student numbers and an agenda to regenerate urban areas. Davis and Hughes show how the exemption from security of tenure and rent control which was granted firstly to universities and then to social landlords when letting accommodation to students has been extended by stealth to some commercial companies. This provides a fascinating example of the way that changes to the law (by means of regulations) can precede any agreed change in policy.

Three chapters by Hector Currie, A.D.H. Crook and Mike Ellison consider house conditions. Poorer tenants are likely to live in the properties in the worst condition and their landlords are more likely to have an ‘investment motive’. This is because these properties provide the best rates of return, since the market does not produce significantly higher rents for better properties. Repairs are unlikely since they will not add to the rental income or capital value; this is, Crook argues, an example of ‘market failure’. What should be the policy response? Ellison looks at discretionary improvement grants and shows how authorities are reluctant to reward poor landlords. Indeed some have devised a ‘correction factor’ to reward good landlords. An alternative response to disrepair might be to withhold housing benefit payments. These potential policy responses could well have been analysed by reference to Le Grand’s ‘Knights, Knaves and Pawns’ (Le Grand, 1997).

Reading this collection confirms why housing policy often seems to be ploughing its own furrow; it features less often than might be expected within the *Journal of Social Policy*, or as the subject of a paper at the Social Policy Association Conference. The chapters in this book are detailed and applied, with few references to key concepts within the wider social policy literature. No mention here of ‘equality’, ‘social exclusion’ ‘post-modernism’ or ‘structural fault-lines’. This is a pity because housing provides excellent examples for wider policy analysis, which had they been developed could have made this volume interesting to a wider audience than those with a specialist interest in housing.


Simon Rahilly
Liverpool John Moores University


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This book is a highly erudite, thought-provoking and an exhilarating read, precisely because it remains untrammelled by discrete academic disciplines and puts to shame the current RAE orthodoxy which only protects intense specialisation. It philosophises, debates, explicates, connects the individual with the collective, displays social work case studies, and graphically relates welfare settlements to their dominant mental position; it invokes the wisdom of Arendt, Habermas and the hermeneuticist Paul Ricoeur. It cites Pope’s poetic principles of human nature (‘self-love to urge and Reason to restrain’), and recommends music for the depressive, including Schubert’s Quintet in C Minor and John Coltrane Live at Birdland. And somehow
the author rarely loses her thread as it weaves between the psychological, the sociological and the political.

Lynn Froggett’s thesis amounts to both a critique of consumerism and managerialism, and a plea for caring values. Informed by the psychosocial theory of post-Freudian Melanie Klein, it states that welfare depends on our becoming responsible self-actualising subjects in the context of irrevocable attachments to others. She calls for an open-ended dialogue only completely realisable if we treat each other ‘as of equal moral worth and reciprocal significance’, which certainly runs against the grain of current positivism.

The first chapter explores a set of post-World War II paradigms in terms of the mindsets emerging from those institutions responsible for managing vulnerability and dependency ‘on behalf of society’. It considers the intra-psychic, interpersonal, institutional and political relationships intrinsic to the provision of welfare. Chapter 2 demonstrates the intra-psychic and interpersonal processes of attachment and separation. Klein’s work on love and conflict shows that knowledge cannot be abstracted from values, ‘for it establishes our connection with the world.’ (p. 41). Managerialism and positivism, however, shy away from this evident value-fact relationship.

Chapter 3 locates the post-war paradigm welfare state in the collective good and a sense of responsibility for the disadvantaged, notwithstanding the limitations of the institutional paraphernalia. It was, in Kleinian terminology—a massive act of reparation and was then transformed into paternalism and a web of dependent relationships. But the hope engendered by the attack on Beveridge’s ‘five evils’ was finally crushed by middle-class ire at rising public spending.

Chapter 4 guides us through the period of ‘no welfare: privatisation of concern’—the Thatcherite years of the atomised individual, the sundering of society and the split psyche. It ushered in a ‘risk society’ to promote ‘the splitting, fragmentation and paranoia that derive from paranoid-schizoid states of mind’ (p. 75). Professionals have shifted their gaze to managing risk for those less equipped. But such changes relegate the human emotions, not least those of the practitioners. ‘Managerialism allows people to distance themselves from the emotional impact of their work, watch their backs and mind their careers’ (p. 81). Hear, hear!

In Chapter 5, ‘Mixe dwel fare: from consumption to compassion?’ Froggett is sceptical of New Labour’s Third Way: ‘Despite a rhetoric of cultivating human potential, it is a shallow emphasis on a system geared entirely to the production of competencies and an ethical outlook required for survival rather than critical judgement’ (p. 104).

Chapters 6–9 aim towards an emergent paradigm based on attachment and equality. Chapter 6 argues that caring as a form of emotional labour receives short shrift in the public policy-making arena, whereas there can be no substitute for face-to-face communicative relationships.

In Chapter 7, Lynn Froggett argues for the ethical basis of welfare and the exercise of the artistic imagination in welfare practice, as antidote to technical-rational models of service delivery, consumer rights and ‘standardised competence-led training curricula’ (p. 141).

Chapter 8 challenges the ‘pervasive instrumentalism of welfare policies and policy processes . . .’ (p. 160). The ‘interpersonal narrative voice’ (storytelling as the archetypal mode of communication) is seminal for a psychosocial approach to welfare organisations and practice; organisations must find the communicative space.

Chapter 9 advances voice and language as the primary route to recognition—a call for the narrative art in social work in moving ‘towards resolution without domination’ (p. 178) and ‘a welfare politics of recognition based on a concern to address inequalities and sustain social attachments.’ (179–80).
I have only two reservations. Perhaps ironically, the author’s commentary and explanation, in psychosocial terms, of her casework examples, could have been more extensive. Second, she (knowingly) fails to ‘loop the loop’ in articulating more fully what the narrative approach may mean for social policy. Nevertheless, Lynn Froggett’s is a distinctive voice on social policy structures, in spirit akin to the insightful writings of Paul Hoggett.

HARRY COWEN
University of Gloucestershire