REVIEW


Readers are a bit like cheese-boards. Even the best of them can provide neither a selection sufficiently comprehensive to cater for every taste, nor a meal that is on its own entirely satisfying. Pierson and Castles claim that their *Welfare State Reader* brings together a ‘selection from the very best and most influential writing on welfare of the past fifty years’ (p. 1). They do indeed present some thirty-one diverse readings of high quality and pertinence. Inevitably, however, the materials they have chosen do not wholly encapsulate the main debates concerning the welfare state, nor do they by themselves provide an entire or coherent narrative. Having said that, it is a volume that probably deserves to find a place on the average Social Policy student’s bookshelf alongside such ‘resource’ texts as George and Page’s (1995) *Modern Thinkers* and Alcock et al.’s (1998) *Student’s Companion*.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first, on approaches to welfare, includes the only contribution not written in the twentieth century, namely an extract from Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*, followed by sections focusing on ‘classical’ approaches (Asa Briggs, T. H. Marshall and Titmuss), ‘Left’ perspectives (The Commission on Social Justice, O’Connor, Offe and Korpi), ‘Right’ responses (Hayek, Murray and Mead) and feminism (McIntosh and Pateman). The second part, on ‘debates and issues’ is in five sections on welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen and Goodin & others), European welfare (Leibried, and Grahl & Teague), economic globalisation (Gough, Scharpf, Rhodes and Hirst & Thompson), demographic and social change (Estelle James, Beattie & McGillivray and Phillipson); and political challenges (Paul Pierson and Clayton & Pontusson). The final part is on the future of welfare (Hutton, Fitzpatrick, van Parjis, Kirk Mann and Giddens). Some two-thirds of the extracts were first published in the last decade. Whether they will all prove to have been seminal remains, of course, to be seen.

It is by any account an impressive selection, but one cannot help wondering why there is nothing included from the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries? Why, although two feminist writers have been included, feminist critiques of regime theory have not? (It is interesting to note that a contribution from this genre – Lewis (1992) – appears in the list of acknowledgements to publishers, but does not feature in the volume itself: one might surmise that the editors for some reason had a last minute change of mind about including an extract from this article, but the copy-editor failed to spot the erroneous entry remaining in the acknowledgements!) The editors explicitly acknowledge that ‘important issues, such as disability, ethnicity and the problems of service delivery, lie beyond our scope’ (p. 1) but do not satisfactorily justify this. While Kirk Mann’s engaging critique of postmodern interpretations is included, there is no substantive example of post-structuralist thinking on welfare.

The strength of the book is that it does illustrate a number of key controversies,
presenting original readings from competing points of view. There are times, however, when the reader (especially the undergraduate reader) is going to require some guidance if they are going to contextualise effectively the debates in question. The themes under which the readings are grouped are entirely sensible, but the order in which they appear is not always chronological and this in itself might be the cause of confusion for some students. Additionally, the short editorial introduction (just eight pages) provides in my view insufficient commentary for such a substantial and complex tome. While the book does represent a valuable teaching resource, it will have to be used with care.

The book reflects the editors’ judgements (as political scientists rather than social policy academics) about which writers have been at the cutting edge of the analysis of the welfare state. In this context, it is interesting to note that while four of the thirty-one readings have been taken from JSP’s ‘rival’ journal, Critical Social Policy, none have come from JSP itself. Is there a message here? Certainly, reservations apart, this is a book which challenges the reader to engage with both classic and contemporary debates not through bland commentaries, but by recourse to original texts. If you like to sample diverse flavours from an extensive cheese-board, it makes for a grand day’s read (q.v. Park 1993).


CHRIS JONES AND TONY NOVAK

Jones and Novak have written a strongly worded and powerful critique of the punitive social policies consigning so many of our fellow citizens to lives of poverty and hopelessness. The book deserves a wide readership, not least for its critique of a government which, while professing newness and change, continues the policy agenda of its predecessor while blaming the poorest for their plight. The strength of Jones and Novak’s book lies in its relentless critique of the impact of recent policies upon the poorest and its exposure of the disciplinary intent at the heart of much recent social policy provision for them.

Central to the argument is the authors’ account of the ways in which the poor became redefined as part of a new ‘underclass’, living a morally culpable and demonised form of dependency. This redefinition has been facilitated, in both Britain and America, by economic and social policy changes themselves designed to foster labour market ‘flexibility’, employee compliance and low wages, in other words, a restructuring of labour market relations. A series of new initiatives, prefaced upon the need to combat ‘social exclusion’ rather than
poverty, have been installed as a policy response. Defined thus, relationships, attitudes (to work) and behaviour become the focal points of policy intervention rather than the underlying social and economic causes of poverty. This is a neo-Marxist text for a post-Marxist age and the analysis delivers much which has been missing in recent social policy.

The authors’ strongest chapters are those describing the abuse and abandonment endured by the poorest, from the dehumanising rhetoric of politicians and the tabloid media to the oppressive conditions imposed upon, for instance, ‘job seekers’ and single parents. The state has been ‘retooled’ to permit new relations of exploitation in a low wage, service economy. The role of ‘social security’ has become more explicit. It now serves, not the poor themselves, but the broader economic aims of capitalist production. The authors even have a chapter entitled, ‘The vile maxim of the masters’, in which they trace the confluence of economic and political power represented in capitalist relations of production. Relations which have always sought to compel the poorest of workers to work the longest hours, in the worst conditions, for the least payment and the least opportunity for self-realisation. Yet now it is different. Today’s underclass know that it is not just a question of endurance, now they are told they are superfluous to requirements and, contrary to the government’s own election night theme tune, things are only going to get worse.

So what is the value of a neo-Marxist class analysis of social policy in a ‘post-Marxist’ age? Admittedly, this is a project upon which the authors have been embarked for some time, since the early days of their Bulletin on Social Policy. Times may have changed and academic orientations might waver but the book’s undoubted strengths demand taking seriously. But then a number of questions begin to surface. The authors’ account of the ‘retooling’ of the welfare state describes the brief flowering of post-war, social democratic, welfare capitalism as but a ‘brief departure from a more ruthless form of social policy’. Then the welfare state, rolled back, apparently, to reveal the ‘disciplinary state’. Yet the welfare state was a series of highly disciplinary institutions anyway. It is surprising that, given the centrality of this notion of the ‘disciplinary state’ to their overall analysis, the authors provide little real theoretical development of the concept. The state is simply disciplinary to the extent that it contrives to make the lives of the poor harder. It is not the place to labour the point, the book’s orientation is not primarily ‘theoretical’ in this sense. Nevertheless it is disappointing that the authors’ use of such concepts overlooks entirely any reference to the ‘post-structuralist’, or ‘Foucauldian’, traditions in which these ideas have been usefully developed.

A more fundamental problem concerns the book’s politics of welfare. In several places, the authors suggest the potential of state intervention to mitigate and even to supersede the inherent inequalities of a market economy. Elsewhere, however, the authors’ historical materialism gets in the way of their apparent hope that things might ever be any different. The very last paragraph of the book epitomises the dilemma. Here the entirety of their account is seemingly dismissed in a single phrase. What they call their ‘circumstantial pessimism’, a pessimism relentlessly established throughout the preceding 200 pages, is now tempered ‘by an historical optimism informed by the resistance over many centuries of ordinary people to oppression and injustice’. It is not an unfamiliar
Marxist formula but hardly much of a foundation for a politics of welfare. Perhaps that does make it a fair assessment of the current situation. Maybe we should be satisfied with a book that does so much to expose the punitive core of much that passes for ‘social’ policy. All the same it is a disappointing note upon which to close.

PETER SQUIRES
University of Brighton

Risk theory has been one of the academic success stories of the last twenty years, influencing the social commentaries of many journalists and politicians. This is perhaps due to the debate’s wide-ranging application: its potential relevance to Third Way social democracy (Giddens, 1999), to fears concerning economic globalisation and to the ongoing debate about modernity. Consequently, the literature dealing with risk, and with associated terms such as (in)security, (un)certainty and anxiety, is now vast. However, relatively little has been written about the extent to which risk originates in the discourse and practices of neo-liberal (or New Right) politics.

It is this gap in the literature that Ian Culpitt sets out to fill (cf. Vail et al., 1999). His contention is that neo-liberalism has exploited and, in large part, generated a social culture of risks in order to consolidate its own ideological hegemony by defeating the concepts and values of the classic welfare era. The vocabulary of individualism (choice, preference, consumption) has replaced that of collectivism (altruism, needs, the public sphere) and the emphasis in policymaking is now upon minimising risks and fears rather than upon maximising social justice. Neo-liberalism has proceeded by demonising those who are most victimised and excluded by right-wing economics. In particular, the obsession with welfare dependency and benefit fraud that now stretches across the political spectrum is a sign of the extent to which neo-liberal precepts have infiltrated debates about social policy reform.

Culpitt’s arguments are highly abstract and theoretical, engaging with the work of Foucault, Habermas, Garland, Donzelot, Hacking, Beck, Douglas, Giddens, Honneth and Turner, amongst many others. Therefore, the book can be recommended neither to the uninitiated nor to those who prefer an empirical focus upon risks. That said, it offers two interesting contributions to the debate. First, it is a useful antidote to the likes of Beck and Giddens, neither of whom deals adequately with neo-liberalism: ‘It is a mistake not to see that risk is fundamental to neo-liberal discourse and cannot simply be aligned with risk society and reflexive modernisation’ (p. 102). Second, it reiterates a point that we forget at our peril: neo-liberalism is much more than a resurrection of nineteenth-century thought.

Nevertheless, I have several reservations about the form and content of Culpitt’s approach. First, even for those who enjoy theoretical abstraction this book can be a frustrating read: it is somewhat repetitive and wanders down lots of winding diversions, often doubling back on itself. Second, its pronouncements are too generalised and fail to explain, or even take account of, the different
emphases and effects that neo-liberalism has had in, say, continental Europe as opposed to the USA, the UK and New Zealand. Third, there is a potential inconsistency between Culpitt’s obvious dislike of neo-liberalism and his insistence that it can now only be resisted if we fight it on its terms: ‘Neo-liberalism must be attacked from within its presumptions . . . All forms of ‘external’ attack have been easily dismissed’ (p. 105). Whilst few would disagree with the tactic of exposing the self-contradictions of neo-liberalism, and Culpitt performs this task reasonably well, surely we should be undermining this distinction between the internal and external from the very start rather than allowing neo-liberalism to set the very terms of the debate. A simple appeal to altruism is certainly not going to overturn two decades worth of emphasis upon self-interest, yet we risk confirming neo-liberalism as the ‘dominant rhetoric’ (p. 159) if we neglect to confront it with alternative discursive logics, even those drawn from the ‘defeated’ past. Finally, then, Culpitt’s practical appeals are weak: we must recognise otherness and encourage challenges to those who undermine the ethic of public service. This is laudable but is not, in itself, enough to build or sustain a progressive coalition for the twenty-first century.


TONY FITZPATRICK
University of Nottingham

To agree to review a book edited by the journal’s review editor may appear foolhardy. To do so when one has already (albeit politely) declined to contribute and when the book is a potential rival to one’s own would seem to confirm a definite lack of judgement. To persist, when the foremost purpose of the book (to enrich the analysis of social policy by placing it more explicitly in an historical perspective) is one from which the journal has noticeably moved over the past years, clearly heralds the arrival of men in white coats.

It is a relief, therefore, to report that in its conception and structure the book fills one of those genuine gaps in the student market for which commissioning editors have sold, amongst other things, their souls. Sandwiched between the editors’ plea for a greater synthesis of history and policy analysis and their predictions for the future, there are four separate sections. The first provides an overview of the past century, the economic context being provided in a typically trenchant fashion by Jim Tomlinson. There follow three chapters by Barry, Pinker and Sullivan on the principal ideologies which have in practice influenced policy: the ‘new right’, new liberalism and the ‘middle way’, and democratic socialism. The five core policy areas of education, health, employment, social security and housing are then reviewed by Sanderson, Helen Jones, Glynn, Alcock and Ginsburg. Finally, to place the exceptional centralisation of post-war welfare in its proper historical perspective, there is a much welcome discussion of voluntary and informal, and of commercial and occupational, welfare by Lewis and by May and Brunsdon.
An effective module on the evolution of British welfare policy could readily be built on such a structure, although the absence of any extensive treatment of the personal social services – imaginatively given fuller treatment, for example, in Gladstone’s survey, *British Social Policy* (1995) – is a surprising omission. Each chapter provides students with the basic knowledge and a taste of alternative interpretations essential for informed discussion. These interpretations, moreover, can be followed up with ease because the range of the bibliography, built on references from authors with conflicting views, is exceptional.

The multi-authored nature of the book, however, is also one of its weaknesses because conflicting evidence is provided in different chapters. Historical assertions, not least in the chapter of the ‘New Right’, are particularly unfortunate given the fundamental purpose of the book. Stronger editorial control might have been exercised here, as in the eradication of overlaps which particularly affect the editors’ own contributions. The review of historical writing on policy and the consideration of future trends, in the light of past experience, would have been better concentrated in their introduction and conclusion, as this is where the ultimate justification for the integration of historical and policy analysis lies. A future edition (as surely there must be) should also, as Lewis argues, include a more explicit comparative perspective. What the book is essentially doing, after all, is returning to the fundamental debate at the turn of the last century about the relationship between the state and the individual and asking why one of the most decentralised countries in Europe thereafter developed one of the most centralised welfare systems. The simultaneous development by more centralised neighbours of less centralised systems is of considerable relevance.

One of the sadder facts about the book is that all but four of the authors are based outside specialist history departments. Welfare policy, and especially (as argued by Baldwin) its nuts and bolts, provides a unique insight into the nature and development of past governments and societies. It should be, as it clearly is not, a central feature of any history syllabus. Similarly a knowledge of the past is essential to current policy analysis. This is not just because it can expose polemical, ahistorical allusions and correct arrogant assumptions about the uniqueness of the present (and thus the continuous reinvention of the wheel) but for the reason provided here by Alcock: it provides an understanding of the institutional and policy legacies of the past which unavoidably shape the present and the future. To the mutual advantage of both disciplines, therefore, the merger of historical and policy analysis attempted here should be considered to be best practice not just in textbooks but also in leading research journals.

RODNEY LOWE
University of Bristol


And

Far, far away from the noise of Social Policy debates at the end of the twentieth century, in an unremarkable side-street of Leicester’s city centre, sat a man with a mission. Bernard Davies, deeply experienced in youth policy and practice issues, wrestled with hundreds of neatly labelled box files. His first task was one of translation. So many files seemed to contain strange carvings or inscriptions, like ‘NYB, BYC, NAYCEO, NCVYS, CYSA’ – so many, in fact, that both his volumes contain a two-page glossary helping the Social Policy traveller make a degree of sense.

As these two volumes unfold, we gradually realise that over forty national youth-related associations and agencies have been struggling for two generations to construct something called a ‘Youth Service’ in England. The view from the aptly named ‘Albion Street’, headquarters of what is now called the National (= English with sprinkles of Welsh and Northern Irish from time to time) Youth Agency, is based on in-house committee papers, reviews, reports and the professional youth media. These are what Bernard Davies calls ‘hardly ... respectable academic sources’ (vol. I, p. xi). He does his work a disservice; they are entirely respectable and tell an important, largely descriptive and chronological story, which others can now use or develop.

The bewildering patchwork of youth-related policy and practice, at both national and local levels, is a marvellous illustration of how the state manipulates not very powerful, non-statutory agencies to suit its changing concerns. Intermittently, some of the tiny minority of youth professionals (for we are talking about 5,000 full-time workers, 30,000 part-timers and over half a million volunteers) successfully resist and gain concessions. Those new enthusiasts of the ‘Third Way’, ‘Third Sector’ or ‘Civil Society’, who are busily setting up ‘Centres’ and ‘Units’ will find the Youth Service story illuminating reading. It is a tale of broken promises; by ‘half-time’ (i.e., the end of the 1960s) Davies concludes ‘a national youth service had ... come into being’ (vol. I, p.86). Yet, by close of play in Autumn 1998, with New Labour firmly in charge, he has to conclude ‘the service was clearly being shunted into a siding ...’ (vol. II, p. 168).

As someone who spent fifteen years in the pages of these volumes, and then migrated to Social Policy, I can confirm so much of what is written. That said, the ‘old problem’ remains. Youth-related matters are another country as far as Social Policy in general and Third Sector studies in particular are concerned. Bernard’s clearly written, accessible account will be of immense value to all levels of youth policy and practice. But, it runs the risk of staying in the shadows of current debate, partly because of how it has been written.

So much energy has (largely successfully) gone into the construction of the recurrent stories, that there is an underdevelopment of the main analytic themes. What is the Youth Service? After more than 400 pages it is still difficult to make this out. There are ‘missing’ sections, even chapters, to be identified concerning national and, more urgently, municipal variants. Bernard chose not to link his elites too closely into the other institutional ecologies of social work, health, law and order or the numerous local projects with which he is so familiar. Fair enough. But, his determination to offer a reader-friendly text compounds the dilemma for ‘outsiders’ to the political and ideological gymnastics of the youth service(s). None of his references and quotations are connected to his end of chapter bibliographies; this is more than a minor irritation. Two examples
can suffice. We learn of a ‘radical, Black report’ (vol. I, p. 168), but then the trail goes cold; similarly, in vol. II, p. 64, there is a reference to seventeen apprenticeship schemes pioneering new approaches to training non-professional recruits. Where do we go for more information?

The Youth Service is fragmented and marginal, and yet has allowed and encouraged hundreds if not thousands of episodes of struggle on behalf of and alongside different groups of young people. Much of this struggle is celebrated, if not analysed, in these pages. For those who are uncritically promoting ‘partnership’ between the state and voluntary or third-sector agencies, these volumes can provide a salutary read. For those who are interested in the ‘mysteries’ of policy discourses which still fail to fully grapple with professional hegemony (too painful, too close to home?), there is valuable raw material here. Bernard Davies’ work in the Albion Street box-files will have been truly worthwhile if wider audiences get to work on his groundbreaking materials.

DUNCAN SCOTT
University of Manchester


In her preface, the author describes this as a ‘short, argumentative book’. The same could be said of her earlier work, Engendering Democracy (Phillips, 1991). In both books, Phillips has a fondness of setting up apparently clashing dichotomies and then picking her way among them carefully, perceptively and often ‘commonsensically’. ‘Argumentative’ is therefore the right word, for Phillips is unpolemical, even though she is a most eloquent advocate of quotas in the areas of gender and race. In the course of the journey she distils a vast amount of literature, much of it in political theory, with commendable succinctness and an eye for a telling phrase. Travelling with Phillips is always interesting, even though one isn’t always sure about the destination, including whether one has reached it. Perhaps that is the trouble with small books on big themes.

In Phillips’ latest work, the proposition is that political and economic equality have become more and more uncoupled from each other. Economic inequalities have slid right down the agenda, while there has been a ‘turn towards politics’, in part sparked off by a recognition that the areas of civil and political citizenship present much unfinished business. In particular, sameness and assimilationism have lost favour, including among professed egalitarians, and the ‘emphasis on equality through difference is probably the most distinctive feature of contemporary thinking on democracy’ (p. 25). (As the history is only lightly sketched in, the timing and ordering of these various strands is debatable, but significant events would clearly be the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the rise and renewal of feminism from then on, and the collapse of the Eastern European ‘socialist alternative’.)

Thus democracy takes pride of place here, almost as much as in Phillips’ earlier work. The middle chapter is a meaty one entitled ‘Does Economic Equality Matter?’, but this leads on form, and feeds into, chapters where political concerns are paramount. Phillips heads this central chapter with a quote from Nagel: ‘If, per impossible, large inequalities did not threaten political, legal and
social equality, they would be much less objectionable. But there still might be something wrong with them’ (p. 44; Nagel, 1979). She endorses this, but it is a notably weak formulation, and anyhow her principal aim is to chart the ways in which income and wealth inequalities detract from political citizenship. (Not as might have been the case in a left-inclined book written thirty years ago, the other way around, to consider how a then relatively unproblematical assumption of equal political rights might be pressed into service to deliver more equal economic rewards.) The extent of the economic disparities which are compatible with Phillips’ stated objective of strengthened democratic citizenship is not made clear. Academics sometimes write as if the differentials prevailing in academe should furnish the model for the wider society: Phillips would go further than this, since she recognises (for instance) the risks attendant on starting up a business. But how much further is anyone’s guess.

In the widest sense there is a good deal of social policy in these pages – like a skilful dissection of the argument that public authorities have an obligation to provide for basic needs, but beyond, that market disparities should be respected, give or take a modest amount of progressive taxation – but of social policy on a narrower view there is very little. There is no attempt, for example, to reproduce or consider the numerous forms of inequality in public expenditure identified by Le Grand in his _Strategy of Equality_ (1982) – indeed, the only reference to this work has to be hunted for in a footnote, and when found suggests Phillips is unaware of the considerable criticisms made of Le Grand’s conclusions, not least by Powell in this journal (Powell, 1995). She defends herself in her final paragraph against the accusation that she does not attend to the nuts and bolts of equalisation, chiefly on the grounds that it is someone else’s job. Certainly it would have required a different (and longer) book.

One last observation. Phillips is dismissive of the notion of merit, holding that talents acquired through genetic inheritance or a stable and aspiring family background are undeserved bonuses. In her downplaying of desert she is in the good and varied company of Rawls, Hayek and many socialists: though surely not Marx himself, for what is the labour theory of value but an ascription of merit? It remains a puzzle that so many writers centrally concerned with the moral foundations of public and social institutions allow so little scope to this most moral of concepts.


TONY A. REES  
University of Southampton


Britain has no poverty standard and this book is both a comparative analysis of Minimum Income Standards (MIS), which exist in (ten) other countries, and an argument that such standards should and could be adopted in Britain. John Veit
Wilson would already be irritated with this review because, in this first sentence, poverty measures have been elided with MIS. Throughout the book he forcefully emphasises the difference between scientific measures of poverty, the political nature of MIS and social assistance scales – ‘Scientific poverty lines are not MIS, and even political standards of assumed adequacy are not by that token the same as the social assistance benefit scales. They are each and all distinct in concept and practice and there is no excuse (my italics) for not distinguishing them’ (p. 111).

Oh dear! I tried, but found it difficult to sustain these distinctions, particularly after reading about the origins and development of the MIS in the ten countries studied. Countries had developed their MIS in the, often, ancient past from a combination of budget standards research, minimum earnings levels, social assistance scales or a combination of the above. The rationale for a MIS had often been lost in the passage of time or as a result of adjustments made to it. For example, the French MIS (SMIC) was the statutory minimum hourly pay rate based in 1950, on a compromise between six minimum budget standards; the food share may have been influenced by Rowntree’s 1937 Human Needs of Labour standard. Until 1970 it was uprated in line with prices, then with earnings and prices and the ‘base appears to have become irrelevant’. Nevertheless, we learn that SMIC is the cornerstone of economic and social policy in France and is used in both wage setting and poverty measurement! Why?

Whatever method a country had used to determine their MIS, some science had played a part. Indeed science (budget standards) played a part in our social assistance scales through Rowntree, Beveridge, subsequent upratings, and including their uprating in the light of a previously unknown government review of their adequacy (revealed by John Veit Wilson). Supplementary Benefit level, plus a margin, used to be our poverty standard in research and practical politics until 1985. It is difficult to understand what is different to this standard from, for example, the MIS used in Sweden which is based (loosely) on budget standards research and is used to set the social assistance rates paid by communes. The answer is government acceptance. If the Government were to acknowledge the Family Budget Unit ‘Low Cost but Adequate Budget’ that would become an acceptable MIS in John Veit Wilson’s eyes. The key is official recognition – however bizarre the scientific origins. So what does it take to achieve official recognition – in Belgium a Christian Democrat senator, Professor Herman Deleecke, chaired a committee for a like-minded government and persuaded them to adopt a MIS based on an attitudinal poverty line produced by his research unit.

So we do not have a formal MIS. John Veit Wilson thinks that we should – to act as guidelines for setting income maintenance measures as a proportion of MIS, as criteria for the adequacy of income maintenance, as measures for identifying population groups in poverty, for counting the poor and for calculating how far below MIS they fall. He argues that a MIS has to be publicly acceptable, statistically defensible and operationally feasible. Despite the ‘complex and disparate’ methods employed elsewhere, he wants us to develop a standard based on nutritional standards, food shares, health, housing and assets. Now some of these are the kinds of indicators that the government has developed to monitor their poverty programme in Opportunities for All – though the income standards
proposed there are based on proportions of the average. John Veit Wilson is convinced that we can do better and we ought to try to see whether a standard of income based on good social science and accepted by the government can be accepted in the UK. We will try – but in the end I fear science will not be the criterion, but political acceptability – nevertheless we can start with science, and now is a very good time. For the first time for decades the door is open.

So this book is timely. It is also an unusual contribution to comparative research in that it explores neither inputs nor outcomes but processes. It also contains very nicely written sub-essays, particularly on adequacy and on the notion of discourse. There is much to learn from here.

JONATHAN BRADSHAW
University of York


Why are British lone mothers less likely to be in paid work than their counterparts in other countries? This is the central question posed in this book. The authors engage in two main debates while seeking to answer this question. The first main debate is about the very category of lone parenthood. They criticise the essentialist view, put forward by both the Fabian left and the conservative new right, that lone parents are a homogeneous group of people. They argue that lone parents are a diverse group and that their social behaviour may derive more from their class position, ethnic origin or location in a particular area.

The second main debate with which the authors engage concerns the nature of decision-making. The authors once again criticise a view held by both the Fabian left and the conservative new right that lone parents make decisions based on individual economic rationality. They argue that lone parents (presumably like other people in society) make decisions based on ‘gendered moral rationalities’. These are defined as ‘collective and social understandings about what is the proper relationship between motherhood and paid work’ (p. 3). Economic cost-benefit calculations, it is argued, are secondary to moral and social norms.

The authors are right to point out the importance of norms and expectations in influencing behaviour. However, economic theory is more sophisticated than they generally give it credit for. Gary Becker’s theories, for example, do not simply suggest that people weigh up the economic costs and benefits of particular courses of action. His theoretical perspective would encompass the idea that people give weight to moral considerations. For instance, in deciding whether or not to take a paid job, one person might calculate that there would be an overall financial benefit but that this would be outweighed by the high cost of moral disapproval from family members. Such an example would not be totally at odds with the conceptual framework put forward by the authors.

Another issue is the choice of the term ‘gendered moral rationalities’ rather than just ‘moral rationalities’. If lone parents are equally motivated by class, ethnicity and locality as by gender then the adjective gendered is not particularly appropriate.

The book draws on both quantitative and qualitative data. The 1991 census is analysed, giving a sample size of about 6,500 lone mothers. This is complemented
by open-ended interviews with 95 lone mothers carried out in 1994. The qualitative sample included a mix of the following groups: social class; ethnicity; alternative/conventional culture; different types of neighbourhood/ labour market areas; and in different countries. This gives an interesting range of variables for analysis and fits in with the conceptual framework stressing the diversity of lone parenthood. It is surprising, however, that the authors did not include age of the lone parent’s children or the type of lone parenthood (particularly single versus separated/divorced) as these variables are quite commonly seen as important. Of course there is a limit as to how many factors can be investigated but the inclusion of culture (alternative versus conventional) seems difficult to justify at the expense of other key factors.

The book makes an important contribution to our understanding of how people make decisions in their lives. Financial costs and benefits must be considered alongside social norms and expectations, or ‘moral rationalities’. The authors illustrate their point through the example of black lone mothers. These women are among the least resourced and most constrained in terms of their access to the labour market and yet they have a higher rate of employment than white lone mothers. The authors argue that this can be explained by the moral rationality of the black community. But this begs the question of why this culture subscribes to this particular moral rationality. Where do moral rationalities come from, how do they develop and how do they change over time? Also, why do some people conform to these rationalities and some reject or rebel against them? These are some of the broader questions which the book raises but leaves largely unanswered.

The book is a very thorough guide to the issues around lone parenthood and employment. Chapters cover discourses around lone parenthood; geographical variations in employment of lone parents; orientations to paid work (‘primarily mother’, ‘mother/worker integral’ and ‘primarily worker’); availability of jobs; categorisations of different welfare regimes; a critique of conventional economics; and the implications for social policy. It is therefore an excellent introductory book on the issues and one which discusses these issues intelligently and engagingly.


Comparative studies have reached the stage at which it is necessary to supplement large multicountry quantitative comparisons with smaller largely qualitative ones, and Ivar Lødemel’s book is such a study. It stresses the need to take into account the extent to which early policy decisions set pathways for later ones. The paradox to which its title refers is the suggestion that, by comparison with Britain, ‘Norway had greater success in achieving institutional welfare while maintaining a small assistance scheme more in line with the doctrines of the residual model’ (pp. 261–2). The latter point is suggested as a partial challenge to the generalisations of ‘regime theory’.
Lødemel’s book consists of linked accounts of the histories of insurance and assistance in the two countries, in the period up to 1966. His account of insurance (concentrating on pensions) contrasts the slow and cautious extension of insurance in Norway, using a model in which tax funding came to dominate and means testing was used to help phase the system in, with the adoption by Britain of most of Beveridge’s scheme for flat rate based social insurance. He attributes the Labour Party’s acceptance of that scheme to the dominance of trade unions representing the more secure workers (he could have said ‘working men’ but in fact has little to say about the gender dimension). That is, of course, not a particularly original observation. However, he goes on to suggest that ‘the Labour Party had realised much earlier that the contributory way for some leads to the means-tested way for others’ (p. 107). Consequentially, while Norway steadily made its pension scheme more inclusive in the post-war period, Britain experienced the growth of the numbers of pensioners on National Assistance.

Lødemel then argues that it is the very different nature of the social assistance clientele in the period 1946–66 which explains the growth of a ‘rights’ focus and the separation of cash and care in Britain, while the same did not occur in Norway. By the 1960s the British assistance caseload was proportionately very much larger, and dominated by pensioners. He produces evidence to show how this better explains what happened than either the fact that the British system was nationalised but the Norwegian one was not, or that there was a more ‘controlling’ ideology in the latter country.

Broadly speaking Lødemel’s comparative account makes sense. On insurance, it is good to see a sharp light shone upon the Beveridge model to show how unhelpful is the Bismarck/Beveridge distinction. The problem about the Beveridge model was not only that it did not bring the ‘middle classes’ into the pension scheme effectively but also that it was not effectively redistributive. In that sense, the Scandinavians have much more effectively combined insurance with tax funding and redistribution. Esping-Andersen (1990, 1999) is right to see those countries as forming a third regime type. Lødemel’s account of events in Norway seems to suggest a path that Britain could follow, to transform the minimum income guarantee for pensioners into a universal tax funded pension. But we could be there already if only basic pensions had been up-rated in line with earnings and the archaic insurance rules had been phased out.

This book would have been so much more illuminating if Lødemel had not chosen to stop in 1966, but had gone on to contrast the ensuing stability of Norwegian social insurance with the destructive events since then in Britain. As it stands his book merely adds to the evidence on the way the seeds of that destruction were sown in 1946–66.

Similarly the story of social assistance in Britain is seriously deficient if one stops at 1966. After that date people over pension age slowly began to disappear from the social assistance scheme, through a combination of insurance pension enhancement and the development of private pensions. The coming of housing benefit was also crucial, at least taking many elderly people off income support if not off means tests. Then, in social assistance the tide of the growth of rights was turned back, as Lødemel would predict, as the clientele came to be dominated by those often deemed to be the ‘undeserving poor’.

Finally, emphasis upon the ‘residual’ nature of Norwegian social assistance
seems to imply, in Lødemel’s emphasis on the ‘paradox’, that it is somehow worse than Britain’s scheme. Yet its benefit rates seem to be about twice as good as the British ones (see Eardley et al., 1996). Of course strong discretion may be used to deny benefits, but that is another story on which rather different evidence is needed. If this is not the case then Lødemel’s study does not really dent Esping-Andersen’s generalisations.


MICHAEL HILL
Goldsmiths College, University of London


Both these books can be seen as a product of New Labour’s emphasis on the concept of ‘social exclusion’. Liz Sayce’s text is also heavily indebted to the disabled people’s and psychiatric system survivors’ movements and highlights the role of mental health service users/survivors in its construction. In their different ways both books are interesting. Both highlight the changing nature of social policy discourse, with moves to more inclusive discussions as well as spotlighting and challenging the exclusion of marginalised groups. Both raise important issues for future social policy discussion. More fundamentally, they suggest that we may be witnessing a key stage in a transformation of social policy discourse.

Welfare, Exclusion and Political Agency is an edited collection of essays undertaken in the context of the Social Divisions Research Group based at Manchester Metropolitan University. It seeks to ‘explore connections between professional practice and wider patterns of division, exclusion and resistance’. An interesting feature of this book is the diversity of settings which it associates with ‘social exclusion’, ranging over time, welfare administrative category and service. There are chapters on working-class children, competence and citizenship, 1850–1914; the colonisation of ‘the poor’; the role of welfare in the internal control of immigration; social work and social exclusion; the experience of women practitioners in health, welfare and education; self-harm; school exclusion; and culturally appropriate clinical psychology. Authors include current practitioners as well as academics. A unifying aim is to ‘contribute to a redefinition of professional roles in welfare practice and to ways in which they may contribute to “voice” and agency of those increasingly excluded from the full benefits of citizenship’.

The focus on social exclusion highlights questions about the role of ‘the excluded’ in the process of discussion and analysis. Where should they be in the debate? Is social exclusion an organising concept which is likely to do more good or
harm to people included in it? (Sayce raises some question marks about it.) Does a concern with inclusion demand an approach to research and discussion which is itself inclusive? Is it unproblematic for one group to interpret the experience and knowledge of another, especially when that group may be professionally involved with the other? For example, in the Janet Batsleer and Beth Humphries collection, Steve Morgan, in his discussion of prisoners’ autobiography, stresses his interest in the recognition of the ‘credible voices of prisoners’, but it is he rather than prisoners who critique these accounts. By way of contrast and particularly interesting is Helen Williamson’s exploration of how lesbians negotiate and experience coming out. In this she raises the issue of her own identity as a lesbian, reports her research study and enables readers to consider how each is related to as well as distinct from the other.

In her book, From Psychiatric Patient to Citizen, Liz Sayce offers a sensitive and helpful discussion of identity and while she does not identify herself as a mental health service ‘user/survivor’, she reports her own experience of anxiety and distress to explain her ‘personal starting points’. Her book draws on research in the US and UK, including both survivors’ and traditional sources. She sets out a range of models for interpreting and addressing madness and distress and argues for a ‘disability inclusion’ model as the most promising approach for ending ‘segregation in the community’. Her book can be seen as part of a broader project initiated by MIND, the charity for mental health service users, to highlight and challenge social exclusion.

As the book’s back page blurb states, Liz Sayce offers ‘a new synthesis of mental health service users’ writings and activism’. This is a helpful resource. It also points to a next step, when service users/survivors put together their own such syntheses and analyses. This has already happened in the disabled people’s movement, where disabled commentators like Barnes, Morris, Oliver, Gillespie-Sells, Corker, Begum and many more, have been developing their own histories, analyses and proposals, linked with grassroots activism. So far, the mental health service users/survivors movement has taken a different, more collaborative route and Liz Sayce’s book is one expression of such a partnership. But we are steadily seeing survivors, and indeed other groups of people included in health and welfare’s administrative categories, develop their own theories and critiques and for these to enter dominant discussions.

The desire to address the perspectives of ‘the excluded’ which these two books signify, is important in its own right, but it is also a half-way house to people doing it themselves. Such self-constructed research, analysis and writings, the intellectual arm of the self-organisation and activism of the new users’ movements, represents a new departure for welfare. It clearly has implications for our understanding of ideas like ‘social exclusion’ specifically and social policy generally. While this development is still at a relatively early stage and currently being heavily contested, both politically and intellectually, it is likely to be an increasingly important feature in both the discipline and practice of social policy this century.

**PETER BERESFORD**

Brunel University

(Worker with Open Services Project and long term user of mental health services and active member of the psychiatric system survivors’ movement.)

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on caring, for those engaged in teaching undergraduate courses (particularly first years) on health and social care policies and practice or, indeed, on introductory courses on gender and welfare. It is simply written, using a story-telling style, with plenty of case examples from American family life. However, it adds very little to existing theory for those already familiar with the work of Finch and Groves (1983) and Ungerson (1990). Rather, it applies feminist theory in relation to caring in a way that makes it more accessible to students.

The opening chapter offers a challenge to those who take care-giving for granted or assume that modes of caring come naturally to people. It also points to a strong link between care-giving and gender inequalities in society. A historical chapter on American society traces the roots of our current approaches to caring from their colonial past to today’s democratic and industrialised world. According to the authors, family systems based on ‘breadwinner husband and homemaker wife’ may now be disappearing but the traditional attitudes remain remarkably robust. Women are easily assigned to the ‘private sphere’ of family and caring while men remain predominantly in the ‘public sphere’ of work.

Three different types of care-giving are examined in this book – care in families, paid care and care by the community. In the chapter on family care a number of important issues are discussed and illustrated in case examples. They include the emergence of different social roles for boys and girls, roles which lay the groundwork for later divisions of labour; the negative impact of caring on economic opportunities open to women; and the lack of fit between the idea of family care-giving and the idea of a self-sufficient nuclear family. The discussions on paid care and community care are less useful. The focus in the chapter on paid care is on care in group settings (such as nursing homes), while the focus of the chapter on community care is on voluntary organisations and informal care – neither of which covers the issues adequately in either sphere on activity. The final chapters in the book explore the role of government in supporting care-giving and the inter-relationship between care-giving and gender inequality.

In summary, this is a book that will be useful for students who are not familiar with the arguments on gender and caring. However, because of its simplistic approach and its focus on the United States, it will not have a great impact on the social policy debate in this very important area.


Pauline M. Prior
Queen’s University, Belfast

Gender and Mental Health is designed as ‘a contribution to the debate on changes both in the perceptions of mental disorder itself and in society’s response to it’ (p. 1). These two themes underpin the division of the volume into two parts. Part I considers legal and clinical, patient and cultural definitions of mental disorders; their differential prevalence among women and men; the ‘medical’, ‘socio-economic’ and ‘public safety’ approaches to treatment (p. 51), and their implementation in hospital and community settings; and the relationship between gender and constructions of normality. Part II then offers a conceptual framework for the analysis of mental health policy, examines services in Europe and the USA, and explores mental disorder with reference to the law and crime.

The comparative perspective is one of the distinctive features of this study and Pauline Prior pursues this objective systematically at each stage of her argument. But doing so in under 200 pages inevitably leads to compression. Thus, the theoretical ideas from the chapter on decision-making – drawn largely from British social policy and American public policy during the 1960s and 1970s – are neither applied in sufficient detail to the ‘Latin’ (or mixed economy), ‘residual’ and ‘social democratic’ models of welfare (pp. 110–13), nor informed by the more recent discourse about modernity, postmodernity and health (Fox, 1993; Petersen and Lupton, 1996; Scrambler and Higgs eds., 1998). Some of the historical material is similarly truncated. To suggest, for example, that institutional treatments were little questioned in the past overlooks a growing body of research into the pre-war precursors of community care, which has now culminated in the publication of Mathew Thomson’s monograph on inter-war ‘mental deficiency’ (1998) and a collection of essays edited by Peter Bartlett and David Wright (1999). The stimulus for this revisionist interpretation was critical psychiatry and its manifestation in the historical projects of Michel Foucault (1965) and Andrew Scull (1979, 1993). Prior mentions Scull briefly, reducing his view of nineteenth-century incarceration to a support mechanism for capitalism without acknowledging the significance attached to ‘mad-doctors’ and their professionalisation. Modern psychiatry likewise escapes radical scrutiny, for though the shortcomings of self-help organisations are recognised, the ‘organic’, ‘psychotherapeutic’ and ‘behavioural’ strategies within mainstream practice are, in the main, seen as the outcomes of ‘advances in medical science’ (pp. 61–3).

Counteracting these reservations are the two strengths of the book: its sustained focus on gender and the law. Gender is prominent in every chapter, and its relevance to experiences of mental disorder and to the development of mental health policies is powerfully demonstrated. Perhaps the problems of measuring psychiatric morbidity are soft-peddled, but the central thesis – that women are over-represented in psychiatric statistics only because personality disorder and substance dependence (primarily, alcohol and drug addiction) are excluded – is convincingly put. It follows that men, whose masculine roles may generate mental disorder no less than the feminine roles associated with women, suffer poor access to mental health services. The inclusion of substance dependence raised ethical dilemmas at the interface of mental disorder and social deviance which are not resolved in the subsequent discussion of criminal responsibility and
therapeutic jurisprudence. However, the absorption of these issues, the appraisal of links between mental disorder and crime, and the assessment of services for offenders and special hospitals all break new ground for a health care text. Given the movement towards greater judicial involvement in decisions about involuntary treatment and the introduction of legal procedures for the review of clinical decisions, this cross-fertilisation will prove increasingly productive in the future.

Pauline Prior identifies in her preface three potential audiences: students from a variety of disciplines concerned with either gender or mental health; professionals looking for reference and training material; and the general public. The accounts of mental disorder based on the autobiographical novels of Sylvia Plath (*The Bell Jar*) and Kate Millett (*The Loony Bin Trip*) make compelling reading. However, the popular appeal of *Gender and Mental Health* will be limited by the compact way in which an ambitious agenda is addressed, the occasional use of technical terms (such as tardive dyskinesia and electro-encephalography) without explanation, and the more extensive adoption of abbreviations (notably for classifications and epidemiological surveys of mental disorder) without a glossary for easy reference. None the less, this book is an important addition to the specialist literature which will be of particular value to those with an interest in gender or the legal aspects of mental health.


ANNE BORSAY
University of Wales, Lampeter


This book, Peter Leonard tells us in his Foreword, ‘reaches out from the critical tradition in social work to interrogate postmodernism’s own critique and incorporate it where possible into radical emancipatory social work theory and practice’ (p. v). The ‘critical tradition’, presumably, refers to the social work writings of the seventies in which social work teachers, like Leonard himself, attempted to place social work in the vanguard of radical socialist theory and practice by producing what was referred to by same critic at the time as, ‘revolution on the rates’. This ‘tradition’, if that is indeed what it ever was, though one generation hardly seems sufficient time to establish one, was confidently ‘Marxist’ or ‘neo-Marxist’. In
those far-off days the works of Marx seemed to offer sturdy conceptual tools and methods of analysis. But as Marx himself noted, under bourgeois rule, ‘all that is solid melts into air’. And so it was with Marxism itself. Here, in this book then, is social work, standing amongst the remains of its Marxist past, reaching out to postmodernism to bring its radical and emancipatory theory and practice more up-to-date.

The book is a collection of fifteen chapters of varying length which grew out of discussions between social work academics in Melbourne about the implications of ‘postmodern critical theory’ for ‘emancipatory’ social work practice. In their introduction, the editors provide a brief description of the development of current trends in ‘emancipatory social work’ and ‘postmodernism’. ‘Emancipatory’ social work is said to have begun with Bailey and Brake in Britain in the 1970s and developed by Mullaly in Canada in the 1990s. This work consists of the now familiar critique of social work as blaming the victim and defending the status quo. It incorporates the more recent feminist social work models of the 1980s, which are said to be better at developing the links between analysis and practice than the older ‘structural’ approaches. For some reason, anti-racism is absent from this brief statement of emancipatory social work. However, neither radical nor feminist social work models, either separately or together, proved to be sufficient and were particularly deficient in their approach to power since they relied on a binary opposition between the powerful and the powerless in either class or gender terms. This weakness prompted the investigation of postmodern formulations.

‘Postmodernism’ is described as providing a critique of totalising theories (such as Marxism) on the grounds that they are one-sided and reductive. It rejects the notion that there is an objective truth discoverable by value-free research. It refuses to privilege any one position over another and rejects a scientific approach to individual and social problems. Given this comprehensive dismissal of most of the major intellectual grounds of social work – and much else besides – what possible use could postmodernism be to social work and its teachers? The answer is to move away from ‘strong’ postmodernism which breaks with modernist notions such as objective truth, and to indulge instead a ‘weak’ postmodernism which ‘is concerned with political struggles against racism, sexism and colonialism’. ‘Weak’ postmodernism is an ‘approach that values diversity and legitimates difference’ (p. 12). Presumably, though, it is the ‘social work’ in this ‘weak’ postmodern social work practice which decides what forms of diversity are to be valued and by how much and what kinds of difference are to be legitimated.

Following the introduction, the book is in five parts each dealing with different aspects of diversity and difference in social work. As is not unusual in such collections, there is considerable repetition of themes as each chapter introduces itself to readers and the quality of contributions varies. The chapter by Crinall on multiply disadvantaged young women and that by Parker, Fook and Pease on the contradictions of empowerment make their point more clearly than some of the others.

ROBERT HARRIS
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I have never been sure how effectively a complex problem-exploration and decision-making structure like the family group conference (FGC) can be transferred from one culture to another. Its key underpinning in Maori terms is that the family, extended family and tribal groups – the concentric circles of whanau (pronounced ‘far-now’), hapu and iwi – traditionally accept complete responsibility for kin so that it makes every sense to involve them in deciding about a child or young person’s welfare, protection or future behaviour. It also means that fostering a child anywhere within the entire tribal group should have the same meaning as placement with relatives here. This is a philosophy of life, and it is largely not one that is truly understood, let alone accepted, in the West.

I recall trying to get to grips with what is really means to be part of such a kinship network during an extended visit to New Zealand, in 1989. I remember talking to a Pakeha man (i.e., a man of white European origin) who had married a Maori woman. He loved the warmth and inclusiveness of the family he had joined and, to a large extent, had become accustomed to the merging of his individual identity into that of the group. But, he told me, the one thing he could not get used to was getting up in the morning to go to work and never knowing whether or not the car would be outside the house. With individual identity had gone individual property; amongst his wife’s numerous relatives, the understanding was that whoever needed the car would make use of it. And they did.

This may be a trivial example but it did shake me into thinking about which of us in Britain would accept shared decisions, beyond the nuclear family, in this case about who in Britain would accept shared decisions, beyond the nuclear family, in this case about who in Britain would accept shared decisions, beyond the nuclear family, in this case about who

Partnership with parents’ has been the UK version of shared decision-making but it is nothing like as thorough-going as FGCs. Where ‘partnership’ refers to some vague level of involvement for parents, or perhaps little more than keeping them informed, FGCs hand actual decision-making over to the family, with the social workers out of the room for part of the time and then committed by the model to resourcing and carrying through, jointly with the family, whatever the latter has decided is best for the child in question. Despite arguments that families here would be too damaged or dysfunctional to participate (much the same argument as was used to limit the introduction of truly open adoption here, also from New Zealand, see Mullender, 1991), the FGC approach has been enthusiastically introduced, notably in Hampshire where the present authors have been involved in operating and evaluating it (see references on pp. 199–200 and 202 respectively).

It would have made a more readable book if they had chosen to write more fully
about their close knowledge of practice. As it is, we have a detailed exploration, in uncomfortably small print, of the theoretical, historical and international context and research base of FGCs. While this is scholarly, and will be immensely useful, it does not fully convey how the change that happened in New Zealand was part of something profound, stirring, spiritual, holistic, challenging, daunting; a key element of a people finding its roots and of a nation becoming rooted again in its people – the *tangata whenua* or ‘people of the land’ (who were not, incidentally, indigenous, as Lupton and Nixon wrongly state (on p. 57), but who came originally from the Pacific).

Turning to the detailed content of the book, the overview of empowerment in chapters 1 and 2 (which rather strangely precedes the outline of what FGCs actually are in chapter 3 and of their detailed processes in chapter 6) is grounded in wide reading but, again, fails to convey the heart, soul and guts of what user movements were and are all about. It is a rational and somewhat sceptical account written from a professional and retrospective viewpoint. There is no sense of the excitement of what it was like for previously silenced groups to find a collective voice, or of the profound changes in language, legislation, policy and services to which this has already led, for example through the user movements of disabled people and people with learning difficulties. Nor are the dilemmas posed here particularly real: the question (p. 20), for instance, as to whether the empowerment of one group might contribute to the disempowerment of another, was answered in my own book with Dave Ward (Mullender and Ward, 1991), almost a decade ago, when we argued that the worker has the right to veto his or her involvement with user-determined goals if these are, for example, racist. There is also an answer in every text on anti-oppressive practice since then, in the expressed need to work within the overlapping and interacting nature of numerous forms of social injustice. Chapter 1 is also seriously dated by its failure to grapple with Foucauldian concepts of power (Chambon *et al.*, 1999), let alone with the more recent movement beyond poststructuralist fragmentation into a reassertion of the possibility of collective power and political action (Pease and Fook, 1999; Batsleer and Humphries, 2000). At a more mundane level, chapter 2 should ideally have reviewed the literature and research on parental participation in case conferences, instead of only referring to it in passing, and the overview of family support is also somewhat patchy, with no mention of Jane Tunstill’s work for example.

Chapter 3, where we finally arrive at the central topic of FGCs, offers a thorough social and historical account of their advent within New Zealand legislative change, though, as has already been mentioned, with little sense of fundamental Maori beliefs or of the radicalism that was involved in shifting an entire nation’s welfare policies towards biculturalism. (There is no mention, either, of the tension between bicultural legislation and a multicultural nation – Auckland having the biggest Pacific Island community in the world, for example.) The critique of the model, together with positive evidence of its adoption and impact, comes largely in the context of an account of its advent to the UK in chapter 4 and in a useful fifth chapter on international perspectives. The evidence base for the approach is outlined in detail in chapters 7 (by Martin Stevens) and chapter 8 showing this to be still at an early stage – especially as far as clear, longer-term outcomes are concerned.

Although it is perhaps not a proper use of a book review, I cannot resist
answering through this channel one criticism of my own work. Some consider-
able time ago now, my article with Dave Ward (Ward and Mullender, 1991) was
critiqued by Robert Page (Page, 1992) and both papers are cited here (p. 25) in
relation to our original comment about social workers failing to understand the
empowerment ethos of women’s refuges. Like Page, Lupton and Nixon miss the
point. Of course a refuge may well be the best place for a woman, if it is what she
decides she wants – no-one who has read the hundreds of thousands of words I
have written on the topic of domestic violence could doubt my view on that –
and I would add that social workers are typically positively evaluated by abused
women only in so far as they know the system and help them locate appropriate
services (see summary in Mullender, 1996). But the point at issue in our 1991
paper was the way in which social services departments tend to regard volun-
tary agencies merely as facilities to be tapped into. This point has turned out to
be quite prophetic. The purchaser–provider split has meant that statutory com-
missioners of services frequently contract with voluntary bodies with no under-
standing of their underpinning philosophy and with consequent damaging
realignment forced upon some. The point we were making in 1991 was not that
the individual, ill-informed social worker was making a bad choice, but that
social services were colonising refuges if they treated them like hostels where
women can be ‘referred’, rather that understanding that women enter a refuge
by their own choice (and can certainly refer themselves), that women maintain
their own households (mother and children) while living in the refuge, and that
workers are there to promote confidence and self-esteem and to help women
rebuild their lives, not to staff a kind of residential establishment. The point
remains worth making. Its macro version is clearly visible in inter-agency set-
tings where women’s organisations still struggle to be taken seriously and where
statutory bodies, which act as if they have just ‘invented’ the subject of domestic
violence and its impact on children, often ignore Women’s Aid’s quarter of a
century expertise in responding to women and children fleeing violence.

Ironically, Lupton and Nixon do not deal with domestic violence adequately
themselves, even though family group conferences are currently being used in
situations of domestic violence, reputedly where the woman has asked for help
and agreed to this way of proceeding. Without knowing how real the options are
for women, or how free the agreement is in this kind of circumstance, it is some-
what worrying (see Mullender, 1996, chapter 7) not to find a full exposition of
the issues here.

Overall, there is a strange absence in this book of a sense of ‘hearts and minds’
change, even though both authors have, in fact, pioneered the cause of FGCs in
this country. They have chosen a strangely dull way – no diagrams, no case
studies – of presenting a radical idea in practice. They deserve a wide readership
for their scholarship but one that will hopefully seek to round out the picture,
particularly of user empowerment, through consulting other texts.

Chambon, A. S., A. Irving and L. Epstein (eds.) (1999), Reading Foucault for Social Work, New York,
Columbia University Press.
Mullender, A. (1991), Open Adoption; The Philosophy and the Practice, London, British Agencies for
Adoption and Fostering.

The origin of this book, Michael Moran tells us in his preface, lies in ‘a small puzzle’. This why Britain, by international standards an outstandingly successful example of cost containment in health care, in 1989 chose to introduce seemingly radical reforms of the National Health Service. Reinforcing his sense of perplexity was the fact that Britain appeared to be borrowing ideas from the United States: an anorexic looking for advice to a specialist in obesity. I find Moran’s sense of puzzlement puzzling in turn. The explanation seems to me to be simple. Cost-containment is only one – if a very important – policy goal in health care. The paradox of the NHS is precisely that the price of its success in keeping down the economic costs of health care is to increase the political costs imposed on governments. Waiting lists may be a misleading indicator of performance, although symbolic of rationing in a wider sense. But their political impact is disproportionate to their significance. Hence the desperate search by governments of all parties – at least since the 1970s – for ways of squeezing more output from any given input of resources: the quest for more efficiency, better value for money and so on. Mrs Thatcher’s 1989 reforms of the NHS follow the pattern in this respect. And where better to look for ideas than the United States, the mirror image as it were of Britain: a bloated health economy which, precisely because it is bloated, has devoted enormous ingenuity and intellectual horse-power to searching for techniques to improve the micro-efficiency of its macro-inefficient system.

Moran’s own conclusion from his (non) puzzle is that health policy ‘must be shaped by something more subterranean than the acknowledged search for cost containment’. Substitute complexity for subterranean, and no one could quarrel with that. And Moran’s rather naive discovery leads him on an interesting voyage of exploration: a welcome reminder that it is often the innocent question – the non-specialist perspective – that leads to the most innovative scholarship.

This study does not quite qualify for that accolade. Moran’s main theme is that it is impossible to make sense of health policy without taking account of the wider political, social and economic environment, in which it is ‘embedded or with which it is ‘intertwined’ (to use his favourite words). This is far from being an entirely new illumination. Moran’s strength, however, is that he pursues his theme explicitly, systematically and comparatively over time. In each of the
three countries – Britain, the United States and Germany – he traces the evolution of policy in three arenas: the governance of consumption (cost control, rationing), the governance of doctors (the relations between the state and the profession) and the governance of technology (the regulation and promotion of the pharmaceutical and other industries).

The result is an analytically shrewd and useful survey of the evolution of policies in the three countries. Although Moran relies on the second literature – and it is possible to quibble about some of the omissions from the sources used and the fine print of some of the conclusions drawn – it is a solid enough account (I marvelled at his mastery of the German literature: a linguistic fluency not always found in comparative studies). In all this, Moran’s most interesting and innovative theme is that many of the changes in health policy, in Britain and Germany at any rate, can be traced to the death of Schumpeterian democracy, i.e., democracy seen as competition between rival elites. Oligarchic institutions (like medical self-regulation) are thus coming under challenge from a more pluralistic democracy, while demands are no longer checked by deference to expertise.

Which brings me to my main grumble. This is that, in developing themes like this, Moran does not play to his strengths as a political scientist. He tends to make ex cathedra assertions about political and social changes rather than drawing on the wider social science literature. For once, my complaint is that the book under review is too short, a compliment to Moran’s clear and unfussy prose. His book provides a useful survey and some stimulating but rather underdeveloped insights, and as such can be recommended to students. But it does not advance the state of the art of comparative studies as much as it might have done. For those whose interest lies primarily in the conceptual development of comparative studies, the classic remains the work of another political scientist: Carolyn Tuohy’s recent study of Britain, the United States and Canada: an outstanding example of intellectual rigour and a reminder of the importance of deriving insights from hands-on knowledge of the systems in question.


RUDOLPH KLEIN


Any introductory text has a particularly difficult job in balancing brevity with sufficient depth of discussion. This book succeeds in offering readers new to health care policy and planning a concise introduction to the major concepts employed without patronising them.

The book covers five chapters on policy, four on planning and one concluding section. In the first half of the book the reader is introduced to first principles in considering the meaning of health policy, then through policy-making processes and models, policy implementation, policy-making and planning. In the second half, the principles of health care planning is outlined, first in considering the conceptual problems, then taking the reader through a range of approaches in
relation to health need, highlighting the relevance of information required and the problems involved in assessing need. The concluding chapter discusses current and future issues in policy and planning.

In analysing aspects of health policy, the author emphasises the importance of understanding different theories of power, adding to our appreciation of the policy as a dynamic process. In particular, the book explores the ways in which power can be used to positively institute action, and negatively, to foreclose action or keep it off the agenda entirely. The traditional structures of power are described in relation to politicians, civil servants and wider pressure groups, but, crucially for current programmes of action, ideas of consumerism and citizenship are explored in developing the possibilities for empowerment in democratising policy-making processes. This part of the book ends with the evaluation of performance, broadening this concept beyond a narrow discussion of effectiveness and efficiency. Such issues, as equity, accountability and the ethics of who should be involved in the evaluation of policy are all considered.

In the second half of the book the issue of planning is addressed. Particularly useful in this regard is the discussion of critical perspectives from socialists, feminists and the disability movement, who have become increasingly important in challenging the bias of the medical model. These perspectives influenced by social discourses of citizenship and social justice, have demanded a greater recognition for the social in respect of class, gender and disability in the planning process. The following chapters cover the importance of information in addressing health need, placing this within a social and political context. Information is analysed first in terms of quantitative approaches that seek to construct, for example, social, health and performance indicators, and secondly by qualitative approaches through quality control and audit, to consultation with the public and the use of satisfaction surveys. The material emphasises how different interests within the planning process may give greater or lesser significance, for example, to measures of effectiveness and quality. The hospital manager may well view differently the effective use of resources, for instance, in increasing the throughput of patients, to that of the nurse who can have different priorities in ensuring the direct provision of adequate care, which does not compromise a patient’s health if they are discharged too early.

The conclusion is rather brief in relation to the rest of the book. It is unfortunate that the author did not have the space to discuss some of the future issues in the policy and planning process in greater detail. Some comment could have been made upon the future of the commissioning process and the NHS, for example, and how this might affect future decision-making. Does commissioning reflect a cosmetic change from the internal market? Likewise, some discussion of broader social changes would have also been welcome, for instance, changing demographical factors in influencing health care planning decisions, particularly in relation to older people.

Finally an additional criticism is the lack of sign-posting to further reading. Given the introductory nature of the book, any student wishing to take the subject further would benefit from more guidance as to further reading.

Overall, given the current high profile of the NHS and the problems that the Labour government faces in developing levels of funding, which match its election promises, this book is timely and represents a useful introduction to the
issues involved in planning and developing policy. It will be of particular use to students studying health care for the first time, especially degree nursing students, some of whom find policy and planning a difficult subject to grapple with. Lecturers involved in the delivery of such courses will also find the discussion points at the end of each chapter helpful in stimulating debate.

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The starting point for this book is the belief that recent decades have witnessed the emergence of a ‘new homelessness’, a housing manifestation of the ‘new poverty’ discussed by Graham Room (1989) and others. Kennett and Marsh argue that homelessness is both more pervasive and qualitatively different as a result of changing social, economic and political developments associated with the processes of globalisation, ‘reflexive modernisation’ and welfare state restructuring. The book seeks to examine the processes that have produced this new homelessness and its impact on particular social groups.

Following an overview by the editors, Ray Forrest examines the contours of what he calls the ‘new landscape of precariousness’, of which the new homelessness is a part. Not only are more households economically vulnerable, but housing markets are also more unstable than was previously the case. As a result, home ownership is no longer a secure domain and even the middle classes are now at risk of unemployment and repossession. Patricia Kennett’s sparkling chapter considers the relationship between homelessness and the concepts of citizenship and social exclusion. These contested concepts are examined within the context of welfare state restructuring, the global trends outlined by Forrest, and the shift towards what David Harvey (1989) has called ‘entrepreneurial urban governance’.

All but two of the remaining chapters examine particular aspects of homelessness in Britain. Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield argue that homelessness in rural areas conflicts with prevailing images of the rural idyll and partly for this reason is rendered invisible. They also claim that homeless people travelling in or through rural areas employ ‘tactics of invisibility’, which further adds to the impression that homelessness is an urban phenomenon.

Watson examines women’s experiences of homelessness. She draws on recent feminist and post-structuralist writings to discuss the social construction of women’s homelessness and the forces that have shaped it. Malcolm Harrison provides a typically thoughtful and incisive analysis of homelessness and ‘race’, which concentrates particularly on the causes, rather than the experience or consequences, of such homelessness.

Cowan and Gilroy re-examine the homelessness legislation in Britain and its implementation in practice by local authorities. Using the example of paedophile ex-offenders, they show that risk management has been incorporated into decision-making by housing officers about housing need. As a result, officers have become implicated in the new, punitive criminal justice.

Fooks and Pantazis examine the way in which begging and rough sleeping are
policies, using the example of the Charing Cross Homeless Unit, which is one of only two such police units in the country. The Unit aims to reduce homelessness as part of a strategy of crime reduction. Paradoxically, while the Unit seeks to protect rough sleepers, the existence of a dedicated team of officers means that rough sleepers in Charing Cross come face to face with the police as much as, if not more than, rough sleepers do elsewhere. They argue that this tension between the care and control of rough sleepers remains unresolved and even unrecognised by the Unit.

Hawes argues that homelessness has grown among older people and considers whether the development of hard-to-let sheltered housing could provide a solution to the problem. Pannell and Parry assess the effectiveness of the HUB advice centre in Bristol as a means of providing co-ordinated, multiagency services for homeless people. Although this experiment has been very successful, they point out that ‘joined-up’ practice cannot overcome problems caused by lack of resources, a conclusion that has wide applicability to the modernisation of the welfare state under New Labour.

While most of the chapters are about homelessness in Britain, the book also contains a chapter on homelessness in Russia and another on the resettlement of homeless people in the European Union. Beigulenko examines the growth of homelessness in the transition to a market economy in Russia, and gives particular attention to its consequences for women and children. Harvey detects three approaches that are being used in the EU to resettle homeless people, and considers their respective strengths and limitations. These two chapters are interesting in their own right, but their inclusion means that the book is in danger of falling between two stools, being neither exclusively about Britain nor genuinely comparative in scope.

Overall, the quality of contributions to this volume is very high and the book as a whole makes an important contribution to academic knowledge and understanding of homelessness. It provides a very useful complement to two other recent edited collections on the subject (Burrows et al., 1997; Clapham and Hudson, 1998), and is likely to join them on course reading lists for some time to come.


PETER A. KEMP
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This book represents the output from the second symposium on cities held jointly by the Universities of Bristol and Hanover. These locations are portrayed as medium-sized, regional cities looking to develop as competitive locations, which
also offer a high quality of life in social, political and ecological terms. A more generic context is also set out in terms of cities as sites of growth and polarisation against a background of processes of globalisation; and second, in terms of the potential role of the city-region as a coherent development arena and container of institutional and other resources.

The chapters by Stewart and by Furst examine the rationale behind, the possibilities for, and the constraints upon inter-authority collaboration within city regions in England and Germany, respectively. Risk, uncertainty and competition have produced insecure, ephemeral, project-based collaboration. Weak forms of inter-regional collaboration reflect the fact that traditions of conflict exist between authorities within regions, and there are no political means by which the regional benefits of collaboration can be attributed and acknowledged. Two big questions left unresolved by this discussion are why the city-region might be the preferred arena for strategic development, and whether a stronger regional identity would overcome the pragmatism of current arrangements.

Several of the other chapters in the first half of the book also deal with issues of identity, though better links between them would strengthen what they have to say. Burton sets out an interesting question pertaining to the role played by different ‘spatial containers’ (city, nation, local community) in identity formation, but this issue is not pursued in his subsequent discussion. His chapter also contains interesting but insufficient discussions of, first, the tension between identity within homogenous communities on the one hand, and the tolerance of difference on the other; and, second, the simultaneous processes of individual identity in places and the individual’s construction of the identity of places.

Watson argues that community means different things to different people at various stages in the life cycle, though she could have added also to people in different social and cultural circumstances. In contrast to Burton, who deals with the role of dialogue, both Watson and von Saldern emphasise the role of interaction and social involvements as means of overcoming the fear of others and developing a sense of community or neighbourhood identity. Von Saldern sees neighbourhood projects and policies as a route to citizen belonging, but then he does not explain how to overcome the inward-looking nature of local communities to develop the urban identity that he seeks. Both von Saldern and Siebel, in contrast to the British authors, pay attention to the role of history in developing urbanity and identity. Discovering and confronting the past through historic spaces can, they argue, contribute to the formation of values and belonging for the future of cities and regions.

The second half of the book, ‘Global concerns and local strategies’ contains chapters dealing with a range of governance issues. Smith considers the role of sub-national agencies within the European Union and argues that only in member states with strong federal structures would one find true multilevel governance with sub-national agencies involved in policy-making, rather than merely bilevel governance. Fudge is also concerned with the combination of European and urban policies, as well as decentralised management, for achieving environmental sustainability objectives. Two other chapters consider local innovative capacity. Brandt highlights the importance of promoting innovative networks within regions and investing in creating environments of innovative potential, though he concludes in the German case that not enough is being done. Oately
and Lambert ask ‘What is local capacity?’ and contend that institutional proliferation may not need to be well structured and coherent to have adaptive capacity. Unfortunately, a large part of their chapter is descriptive of the Bristol situation rather than pursuing the important analytical issues they raise.

In concluding the book, the editors attempt to bring together the themes of regional governance and identity. Regionalism for resource mobilisation purposes is said to be required as a response to globalisation. As part of this, urban governance should utilise the knowledge, problem-solving capacity and creativity of its citizens; but citizen participation depends upon there being a strong sense of identity with a locality (how to achieve this at the regional level remains a mystery). Two other themes, not acknowledged to the same extent, are also present in the book, namely the merits and role of the city-region and the operation of multi-level governance. Although interesting in parts, the book would have been more useful to the field of urban studies if these four themes had been thoroughly promoted and interconnected by the editors and more systematically pursued by the contributors.

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This book is a direct intervention in the core public and social policy debates about the future of the Australian welfare state. It brings together contributions critical of the radical reforms that have been implemented in the name of ‘economic rationalism’ – from privatisation through to the creation of quasi-markets – and collectively argues for the return of a commitment to managed markets and full employment with the reinvention of a modernised system of social protection.

In a sign that Australia’s ‘lingering cultural cringe’ is of little contemporary relevance the essays illustrate that there is much to value in the approach to public policy which Australians have developed in the twentieth century, especially the commitment to equality. However, the authors reject analysing these achievements through the traditional idea of a static and failed ‘Australian Settlement’. Instead they use the more dynamic historical concept of an ‘Australian Way’, which more accurately captures the political pragmatism and empiricism of policy development, alongside the nature of the compromises and social struggles which have underpinned the creation of a distinctive welfare state.

Throughout the essays, which also tackle detailed themes from economic theory through to public administration and industry policy, the characteristics of the ‘Australian Way’ are seen to develop through three key phases of social and political development. The first, around the period of Federation, reflected the advanced nature of Australian democracy and the early political organisation of the labour movement. It produced key policies and institutions which were to endure for over sixty years, from tariff barriers and protectionism (including ‘white only’ immigration) through to an elaborate wage arbitration and tribunal system which is only now being displaced by ‘enterprise bargaining’.

The second phase involved the Keynesian era of full employment, which delivered
what one contributor describes as ‘extraordinary governmental innovation and bureaucratic achievement’. Economic policy and the management of markets became the foundation of social policy and helped underpin what was to be characterised as the Australian ‘wage earners welfare state’. In comparative terms, this Australian welfare state delivered ‘a relatively very equal distribution of income’, but it was weakened by changes in the family and in employment and by ideological challenges from left to right.

By the 1980s and 1990s a new market liberal orthodoxy was constructed, albeit with significant variations in the direction and policies pursued under Labour and the subsequent coalition governments. A failing Australian economy was opened up to competition and, in combination with financial deregulation, produced increased income inequality without significantly reducing structural unemployment. Public sector institutions were subject to ‘relentless examination and challenge’ and competition policy led to the creation of quasi-markets across broad areas of social policy.

It is the policies and prescriptions of this ‘economic rationalist’ phase that the book directly engages with, especially with the policies being pursued under the current coalition government. Some chapters are stronger than others but taken collectively they make a strong and detailed reassertion of the case for a ‘mixed’ rather than a purely ‘market’ economy. They also start to identify some of the ideological and institutional innovations which could begin to ‘meet the challenge of reinventing an Australian Way’. One which, unlike the earlier phases, would also be more inclusive and would more adequately respond to the rights of Australia’s indigenous people who surprisingly get little direct mention in the essays.

This book is valuable both because of what it tells us about the distinctive ‘Australian Way’ and because it engages with many of the public and social policy debates common throughout the ‘Anglo’ countries. Individual chapters also provide concise descriptions and critiques of ideologies, policy approaches and innovations, which have relevance for a broad social policy audience.

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Suzanne Quinn, Patricia Kennedy, Anne O’Donnell and Gabriel Kiely (eds.), *Contemporary Irish Social Policy*, University College Dublin Press, Dublin, viii + 344 pp., £15.95 pbk.

In contemporary Ireland, at the turn of the new millennium, the paradoxes of modernisation have acquired increasingly extreme forms. Greater wealth stands in marked contrast to endemic poverty. Substantially increased diversity and choice in terms of ‘lifestyle politics’ have been accompanied by more fragmentation and polarisation. As rural life has declined in response to the forces of industrialisation and urbanisation, inner city ghettos characterised by poverty, drugs and crime, have come to dominate the social landscape. Cultural and political life are no longer organised in terms of traditional identities and shared values.
partly because contemporary inequalities of income, wealth and power do not produce the homogenous classes – such as business, smaller farmers and workers – that shaped the social and political geography of traditional Ireland. Instead, new social movements have organised around issues as diverse as gender, environment, urban inequalities, traveller issues, social amenities, service charges and so on. In this transformed political environment social conflicts have become more pluralistic, representing a much wider variety of interests, and involve a different set of targets, including the welfare state.

Ireland’s road to modernity has been a long and troubled one. A persistent traditionalism of thought has weakened the effects of formal social citizenship rights, which have been gradually granted in law, politics and society. Opportunities objectively granted have not been fully realised subjectively. Powerful social, cultural and political interests are deeply rooted in a traditionalist vision of Ireland, which has sought to hold the country in a state of semi-modernity.

In the Irish State, which was established in 1922, the principle of subsidiarity has become a dominant characteristic of social policy. It gave ownership and control of many of the schools, hospitals and social services to the Roman Catholic Church – power it continues to exercise to the present day. The Green Paper on the Community and Voluntary Sector (Department of Social Welfare, 1997) recognised this powerful religious influence. For example, the role of the Roman Catholic lay-religious organisation, the St. Vincent de Paul, which has 1,000 branches in Ireland and approximately 11,000 members, in providing welfare and various financial services, had been acknowledged by the Green Paper (Department of Social Welfare, 1997, p. 31) as operating a ‘shadow Welfare State’.

In this climate of Roman Catholic hegemony, social policy scholarship did not flourish. There were two sources of information. First, there were social reports, published by state funded research bodies, in either the tradition of Durkeimian sociology or the Penelope Hall school of social administration. These reports were primarily concerned with labour market integration or descriptive accounts of the structure and range of the social services. Second, there has been a small but vocal critical tradition exemplified by the Bell (a cultural journal published in the 1940s and 1950s) and a small number of books: Blanshard (1954), Browne (1986) and Powell (1992). Social policy academics (in so far as they existed) largely concerned themselves with the soft end of social policy, notably child care or juvenile justice issues and historical accounts of the social services. While the latter provided a useful mapping exercise of the field, attempts to influence the politics and politicians of the times, in the manner of Titmuss, Donnison and Townsend, were non-existent. With Ireland’s modernisation over the past four decades, that has transformed Irish society from a rural agricultural economy to an urban industrial one, there has been a sharp growth in interest in the ‘social’. Women have played a key part in opening up this area, which was previously regarded as the domain of the clergy. A new group of scholars has emerged, energising the field of social policy. Their impact is beginning to be felt in the area of publications. The two books published by the staff of the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at University College, Dublin, are a landmark publication. The level of scholarship is generally very high and the
range of topics covered very wide. They will be core texts for many years to
come.

Irish Social Policy in Context sets itself the task of tracing the historical development of Irish social policy and key influences, notably, Europeanisation and the emergence of a social market economy. Social partnership rightly receives particular treatment as a key element in shaping contemporary Irish social policy and Ireland’s economic miracle – the Celtic Tiger. Chapters on poverty, citizenship and women give the book a valuable contemporary relevance. The companion volume, Contemporary Irish Social Policy, provides a sectorial analysis of the Irish social services: health, housing, education and social security. There are also a series of chapters on children, the elderly, youth, offenders, travellers and refugees. The latter two chapters raise fundamental questions about the nature and extent of racism in Ireland, which has become a particularly disturbing problem. The cruel paradox of a society that has suffered a diaspora, turning on its own immigrant population makes for grim reflection.

Inevitably, the editors had to choose where to place the emphasis. They generally got it right. However, I think the overweening power of the church, particularly in the early decades of the state’s formation could have received more critical treatment. Moreover, the role of the Labour movement merited more attention. I would also have welcomed a deconstruction of social exclusion. But despite these reservations, these two books are a major scholarly achievement that merit international recognition.


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