Both of these books address a central issue in social policy: the relationship between ‘globalisation’ and the development of national social policies and the effects on welfare outcomes. They do so, however, using quite different approaches, emphases and styles. Macarov is primarily concerned with the outcomes of public (welfare) policies – poverty; Farnsworth’s emphasis is on corporate power and its effects on the processes by which social policies are formulated and the content of those policies. Both authors’ primary focus lies with specific national contexts (the US in the case of Macarov; Britain in the case of Farnsworth), but attempt to contextualise these countries’ experiences. Macarov does so by ‘snapshot reporting’ on various aspects of social policy and poverty in a wide range of countries (though no country or policy field is ever discussed at any length – or indeed for more than a few sentences). Farnsworth makes no pretence to undertake cross-national comparative analysis, but the international material he includes (e.g. comparison of corporate tax rate trends) elucidates his argument. Macarov relies exclusively on reporting of research and policy studies. Farnsworth presents useful secondary analyses of official data as well as interview material.

As this comparison suggests, the differences between the books are more than those of approach, emphasis and style. Kevin Farnsworth’s book is the far more scholarly and intellectually robust of the two. It is embedded in a clear theoretical and conceptual framework and effectively mobilises primary and secondary data analysis to bring the neglected topic of business interests into the study of social policy, demonstrating the various ways in which businesses are involved in social policy in the British context and the consequences of this involvement for the content and outcomes of social policy. The focus of the discussion is 1979–2002, but he places this period in historical context with a useful review of business interests and social policy development in the twentieth century, centring on the Beveridge report, and discusses the implications of the trends and issues he identifies for the future development of social policy. The strengths of this book are many. They lie in the examination of business interests in a range of policy fields (education, training, social security, pensions, housing, health and social care) and their expression in a range of ways (through influencing the British government’s social policy agenda, becoming involved in local government service provision and in the direct provision of welfare services). More than this, Farnsworth demonstrates the connections between business influence at multiple levels (local/municipal, national and supra-national (regional, global)) of government, and through this he makes a timely and useful contribution to the ‘globalisation’ debate. Crucially, although Farnsworth is clear about the problems arising from the growing power of the business lobby at national and international levels he carefully avoids slipping into a deterministic reading of business influence on social
policy, rightfully asserting that ‘globalisation impacts on the balance of power within capitalist states in favour of capital, and . . . this can have a negative impact on social policy’, but also recognises that ‘this is neither inevitable nor uniform in its occurrence between states and over time’ (pp. 33–34). Since the book focuses on the British context, questions as to whether Britain is exceptional in the degree of business influence over social policy and how different political and institutional contexts influence the receptiveness of governments to business influence are not addressed. This, however, does not detract from the book which is a remarkable study. It only highlights the need to extend this type of analysis.

Macarov’s treatment of the relationship between globalisation, social policies and poverty is much less satisfactory. Compared with Farnsworth’s detailed, scholarly and accessible treatment of the subject, Macarov’s treatment of it is cavalier. The problem is that his use of the globalisation concept is introduced as an incidental feature of his overall analysis over half way into the book in what is a short chapter that fails to critically interrogate the concept and its various uses, collapses neo-liberalism, liberalisation and globalisation and omits discussion of the wide-ranging implications that now appear in the literature for social policies and welfare states. This is further compounded by a lazy style and a range of incomplete statements, generalisations and incorrect statements, such as ‘MNCs exist in a legal and regulatory vacuum’ (p. 106). His treatment of supra-national state institutions is appalling. At one stage he states ‘Then there is the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and even the International Labour Organization (ILO)’ (p. 108); this is not followed up with any analysis, let alone basic description, of their policy orientations. This kind of treatment of the globalisation concept is unhelpful to say the least and does nothing to advance our understanding of the structural conditions, institutional arrangements and political forces that impact on poverty, and attempts to address it through public policies and programmes. Macarov’s treatment of privatisation is only marginally better. Chapter IV reviews the arguments in favour of privatisation and briefly charts the implementation of privatisation policies in medical care, education and social welfare (housing, social security and social work) in various countries. Again, though, there is little more than a re-assertion of his argument that neo-liberalism worsens the position of poor people and that in many cases is designed to do so (p. 130).

All of this is unfortunate for a book that aims to highlight the factors underpinning increasing inequality and increasing poverty (p. 12), and all the more so for one asserting that ‘efforts to combat globalisation should probably be centred on discovering which aspects of globalisation . . . seek to exploit and entrench unequal relations, and attempt to address [those] negative or preventable aspects’ (p. 155). Unfortunately, he does not identify those aspects other than a rejection of neo-liberalism per se, nor does he outline any strategic alternative to reverse the effects of neo-liberalism and create an equitable social order that eradicates poverty. The final chapter, entitled ‘What Future for Poverty?’ retreets from such considerations to outline various scenarios that could force governments to eradicate poverty; the scenarios considered are the emergence of a charismatic political leader; catastrophic events resulting from environmental degradation, terrorist attacks or asteroid impacts; the invention of new technologies; political forces of social protest and civil society movements, and the strengthening of supra-national governmental institutions. With the mention of these last two Macarov momentarily opens up the possibility of engaging with a broader policy debate only to immediately foreclose it in favour of discussing the application of futurology in poverty studies.

In sum, it is clear to me that Farnsworth’s Corporate Power and Social Policy makes an accessible, scholarly and original contribution to the existing literature and policy debates while Macarov’s What the Market Does to People does not. I would have no hesitation about using the former of these for teaching purposes on introductory and more specialised social policy
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Following the accession of the ten new member states on 1 May 2004, and in the context of continuing arguments about the future of the EU, the ‘European social model’ has become a critical issue not only for the Western but the Central and Eastern European states. Vaughan-Whitehead’s central argument is that this social model is under significant threat of collapse or at least fundamental change (for the worse) as a result of the most recent EU enlargement process.

As he points out, though the term ‘European Social Model’ (ESM) is often used by the various agencies within the EU and by others, it is less often clarified or defined. He begins the book with a careful explication of this model in the context of the development and character of EU social policy. The key features of the ESM are a set of both European Community and member-state legal regulations, but also ‘a range of practices aimed at promoting a voluntaristic and comprehensive social policy’ (p. 4) in the EU. However, as other analysts of EU social policy have already shown (see Geyer 2000 and Hantrais 2000 for example), the character of these policies is fundamentally linked to the EU’s economic policies. Thus the ESM is primarily concerned with labour market and work-related issues rather than the full range of social policies dealing with, for example, personal social care or housing policy. Furthermore, he argues, these very principles and processes have always been the subject of some dispute within the EU and its member states, and he focuses on the attacks coming from various neo-liberal quarters both outside and within the EU’s ranks. Having provided a mixture of description and polemic about the ESM, Vaughan-Whitehead then provides (in Chapters 2–6) a detailed review of the accession countries in terms of their wages and working conditions, their social protection systems, the nature of their employment systems and labour markets, and their systems’ industrial relations. He worked for the ILO from 1993 to 1999 and with the European Commission from 2000 to 2002 and his extensive knowledge is evident in these chapters. Anyone wanting information on these topics in the accession states could do worse than to consult these pages. The arguments that are developed and supported by extensive evidence in these chapters are: (a) that economic and social conditions in terms of wages and incomes, poverty, etc. are consistently below those of the so-called EU 15, and (b) that there are major gaps in welfare provision that exist in varying forms within the EU 15 for dealing with such social problems. As a simple indicator of the scope of the overall ‘welfare problem’ posed by the most recent enlargement, whilst together these countries added 74 million people to form a new EU total population of 455 million, the combined GDP of the ten new states represents only 5% of the total GDP of the EU.

Yet so much was known and indeed recognised by the EU itself in the run-up to accession, and certain EU programmes, such as the Structural Funds, are to be targeted on these states after accession. So why the concern? Vaughan-Whitehead argues that in the rush to achieve the political prize of enlargement, insufficient importance was attached to the major economic

Nicola Yeates
Queen’s University, Belfast
and social gaps that exist between the EU 15 and the accession states. Consequently, not only will there continue to be welfare problems in the new member states, the impact upon the existing member states in terms of ‘social dumping’ and other socio-economic effects is likely to create serious difficulties both for the ESM and individual member states. Chapters 7-10 provide a careful examination of the threat of social dumping as the new member states offer companies cheaper labour and less expensive welfare requirements, the likely patterns of capital and labour mobility, and the effects of trade in the wider EU market. In sum, these chapters indicate a worsening set of problems for the enlarged EU with regard to internal economic competition, company relocation, labour mobility and migration, and the relative lack of trade benefits accruing to the poorer states. Here Vaughan-Whitehead may appear to be making similar arguments about the deleterious effects of enlargement to those made by EU sceptics in the UK and elsewhere. The crucial difference is that he argues from a position of broad support for the ESM and for EU social policy in general, rather than one who seeks a minimalist EU ‘common market’ without significant political and social dimensions. What concerns him and what, arguably, should concern readers of this journal is that unless significant changes are made to EU social policy to counter these trends, the European Social Model and its benefits may well implode with negative consequences for all citizens in the EU. Drawing upon the extensive detail provided elsewhere in the book, Vaughan-Whitehead identifies three trends that could prove fatal. The first is that social policies already do not appear to be a major political priority in the accession states; and, especially in the ex-communist countries, the rush to the more extreme forms of neo-liberal economic management pushes welfare provision even further to the margins. The second trend is the progressive removal of certain social provisions in the existing member states coupled with what he sees as similar ‘rationalisation’ processes at the EU level. The third trend is that recurrent bugbear of social policy analysts in recent years: the spread of globalization and the attendant power of multi-national companies, removal of a range of services from the public to the market sector, and a perceived need to shift towards more flexible labour markets to meet the threat of international competition. Vaughan-Whitehead sums up in a rather alarming sentence: ‘The conjugation of these three trends may well lead to a progressive collapse of social policy in an enlarged EU’ (p. 530).

In conclusion, this book represents an important contribution to the debates about EU social policy and its effects upon the member states. Unfortunately, many will be put off by the length and price of the book, and it has to be said that its arguments and evidence would have benefited from a more concise presentation. Nevertheless, the arguments contained here are important and deserve to be read by all with an interest in the future of social policy in Europe.

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This book is one of the main English-language products of ongoing research on disability policies coordinated by the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna. The research centres on income maintenance policies, and makes a major contribution to our
understanding of how social insurance for disability has interacted with unemployment and early retirement to accommodate the steep fall in employment among older men (in particular) which occurred in many countries in the 1980s and early 1990s.

After two overview chapters, the book is made up of country studies, each chapter providing a detailed account of recent developments in the provision of disability income maintenance benefits. The countries included are Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland. The chapters do not follow a standard format exactly, but the coverage of the chapters is much more consistent than in most collections of country studies. The authors have worked to a well-defined brief which asked them to outline the main provisions, give a history of recent reforms, review the definition of disability and aspects of the process of assessment, and provide data on receipt of benefits alongside a discussion of disability benefits in the context of other provisions for income maintenance. In addition to this basic material, each chapter gives a flavour of the preoccupations of current debates in each country.

In a number of the chapters, the discussion is motivated by two perspectives on income maintenance. One perspective centres on the incentives facing individuals to leave the labour force by obtaining a disability pension. The key data are replacement rates and comparisons of benefit levels for unemployment, early retirement and disability. This is the familiar perspective of rational individualism developed by economists. The other, ‘institutionalist’, perspective draws attention to the incentives facing institutions to accept or deny claims for pensions. From this perspective the key data are the financing structures of institutions, the connections between awarding or refusing a pension and bearing the resulting costs, and the roles of employers and unions in governing institutions and their incentives, which reflect employment law (especially redundancy provisions) and labour market conditions. For example, in the Netherlands, the high rate of disability pension receipt is only partly due to the benefit levels and durations which individuals face. A large part of the story lies instead in the costs of redundancy faced by employers, their role in governing the disability insurance institutions, and the collusion of trade unions in obtaining disability awards. This institutional structure generated high pension recipiency as part of the process of shifting the cost of redundancy from the individual and the employer to the state.

This perspective implies that, to understand disability income maintenance benefits, we should look to the institutions governing the labour market. The rules for claiming disability benefits and the trends in disability benefit receipt tell us as much about the labour market as they do about the incidence of impairment and chronic illness. Following Hannah (1986) on the invention of retirement and Salais et al. (1986) on the invention of unemployment, we can think of work-related disability as the invention of particular configurations of industrial development and labour relations.

The various chapters shed light upon this theme in different ways. Groups of countries emerge as defending different conceptions of employee rights, which are reflected in different practices for assessing disability. At one end of the spectrum lie the transition economies, dealing with the Soviet legacy of disguised unemployment, low pension ages and underemployment through the protection of unproductive jobs. In this context, there was little economic pressure for people with low work capacity to be removed from employment, and the pension system could be used instead as a system of rewards for groups seen as deserving. The criterion for disability was impairment, not work capacity, and pensions could be given to people who would be seen as capable of work in many Western countries.

At the other end of the spectrum lie the Scandinavian countries, with relatively flexible labour markets in which displaced workers were retrained and helped to relocate. In the face of adverse economic changes, pension recipiency rates rose, sometimes supported by explicit
decisions to facilitate early retirement. However, the unions continue to press for policies to enable people to continue in employment, rather than seeking compensatory pensions. Furthermore, it was not necessarily seen as important or meaningful to distinguish between labour market and medical factors in deciding on disability pension awards. This is not to say that the impact of impairment or chronic illness on a person’s working life is not recognised, but that provision may (depending on labour market conditions) focus on promoting employment rather than facilitating exit.

Other countries covered in the book lie between these two extremes. Of particular value is the chapter on Switzerland, which incorporates research previously available only in German. The discussion of ‘occupational protection’ (where a person’s capacity is checked against the requirements of their previous occupation) shows how this concept is connected with the defence of employment rights established through negotiation between unions and employers. This is connected with a relatively strong valorisation of medical criteria and a desire to maintain clear boundaries between medical incapacity and social barriers to employment, by contrast with the Scandinavian case. Many of the countries in the study have multiple tiers of benefit provision with employment-based arrangements occupying a central place. For British readers, this book is a rich source of information about these often-mystifying arrangements.

References

DEBORAH MABBETT
Brunel University

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From being the Cinderella in social policy analysis, overlooked and dwarfed by the amount of state spending on other social areas, social care has become increasingly central. The present emphasis on what Lewis (2002) has called the adult worker model, where women and men are assumed equally employable, has given impetus to a re-negotiation of formal and informal care responsibilities. This book is therefore a timely and relevant contribution for a better understanding of different approaches to caring for children and older people. In its accessibility, it is well suited for the curious social care novice as well as the more hard-core analyst.

The main purpose of the book is firstly to describe national social care patterns in countries representing different regime types (Japan, Finland, United Kingdom, US and Germany). Secondly, the authors aim to present explanations as to why these countries have developed different care systems in terms of rights and obligations, and, thirdly, they seek to understand why countries are now rearranging social care in a variety of ways. The study draws on the welfare mix/pluralism tradition, which underlines the role of the agent: it is believed to be of importance whether care is provided by a private enterprise, a local authority or a family member. It also focuses on process of delivery and financing, and meaning in terms of cultural connotation and norms.
Chapters 2–6 present the national system for social care for children and older people in each respective country, using a historical perspective. The accounts in an interesting way enlighten unknown (for this reader) aspects of the development of the social care system. Amongst others, they reveal that in Finland the public approach to the social care system was shaped by what the authors call almost accidental effects of brief and opportunist political coalitions, rather than being the product of a welfarist consensus. Despite this, the Finnish care system of today provides quite generously for especially its children, but the authors interestingly note that the genuine universality of day care for children is in fact undermined by the parents who choose to look after their children themselves, supported by parental leave benefits. The UK chapter underlines what is a recurrent observation in all the country chapters, that there is a great variety in provision of care within the countries. In the UK this was supplemented by a division of care provisions according to class, which has persisted today. This leads the author to conclude that the idea of the universalist Beveridge welfare state was more coherent as ideology than in practise and that the tradition of bureaucracy-dominated policy making has not changed this. The US chapter reveals that the US preference for the voluntary and for-profit care provision has roots in a lack of faith in government solutions, in the lack of homogeneity in society and in much more diverse care demands than found in any of the other countries. All in all, the country chapters illustrate very well the diversity in the care systems. Unfortunately, this diversity persists in the approach to the statistics, which should guide the reader in what is otherwise a very qualitative account. Statistics on care take-up is not readily available in most cases. However, the statistics used in the book do not allow the reader to compare the consumption of care, as they give, for example, different age groupings for the use of day care. It would also have benefited the relevance of the book to have more updated statistics, where some are from 1994. A more considerable weakness is perhaps the omission of considerations on the actual content and quality of the offered care. As Baldock (p. 119) so rightly notes in the UK chapter, it is difficult to attach much meaning to international comparisons of social care provision because patterns and allocations of provisions vary so much. Without considering the institutional differences in the care architecture, for example the interaction between parental leave rights and day care provision, or the quality in terms of staff educational qualifications, only part of the story is told, for instance of why the Finnish parents choose parental leave over day care.

The strongest contribution is found in the concluding chapter. Here, the editing authors re-evaluate their ambitions for the book and realise that the diversity in care consumption and production complicates any categorisation of social care; that is individual preferences – for example what Hakim (1999) calls ‘female heterogeneity’ – in work–life preferences function as mediating factors between what is available and what is taken up, even when people have the same care needs. Also, there are no consistent patterns of care production; a country may simultaneously provide universal and selective care services, and deliver social care through contracting out as well as through providing public services. However, the authors see the development of social care as falling into three dimensions of change: (1) using the phrase coined by Hernes (1989: 39) they acknowledge the process of social care ‘going public’, that is that care becomes more formalised; (2) the process of individualisation of care, where social rights become dependable on citizenship rather than on family status; (3) and, lastly, they identify a process of universalisation, as social rights are no longer necessarily tied to labour market position or income. The authors also note the tendency towards monetisation of social care, that is that care rights are materialised in terms of a cash benefit to purchase care from the market or for remunerating an informal carer. Social care also displays a very high degree of ‘plasticity’, as the authors phrase it, in both its production and consumption. Constraints in, for instance, the voluntary sector are balanced by greater output in other
sectors: family, market or the public sectors. This argument suggests that social care displays a high degree of substitutability, which is somewhat contradictory to other findings, which suggest more a more complementary nature (for example, Motel-Klingebiel, 2003). However, as mentioned above, without thorough consideration of what is actually offered also in terms of quality and content of care, the plasticity is perhaps less evident for the user. Elderly people and children may fare very differently depending on whether they must rely on care from the family, the market, the voluntary sector or the state. In sum, this is an important and thought-provoking book, which illustrates in a well-written manner the challenges and attractiveness of entering into comparisons of social care systems; it gives a good account of the development of the care systems and provides the reader with a good starting point for further investigations.

References

TINE ROSTGAARD
The Danish National Institute of Social Research

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Soon after China started economic and social reform in the late 1970s, a new trade was born – an international traffic of policy and practices. It is a two-way traffic. In one direction, scholars and government officials travel from developed countries to China bringing foreign practices based on their latest experience and promoting them, quite often not fully unpacked. In the other direction, people bring ‘raw’ research materials out of China, expensive statistics or fieldwork materials, which are later processed, analysed and shelved by overseas researchers armed with ‘Western’ theories and analytical tools. However, the two sides do not necessarily communicate. Catherine Jones Finer tries in this volume to provide a ‘two way exchange of views’ on social policy reform in China (p. 3).

The book has two parts. The four papers in Part I discuss overall reform issues. Rose’s paper offers a general context from which to draw lessons. The other three by S. Chen, Peng and H. N. Chen discuss general public policy, the policy process, and the unavoidable choices in social welfare transformation respectively. These papers examine several issues: from where a country should acquire lessons, political control and government functionality, and priorities for reform. They explore the relationship between developing and developed countries, history and present, and the role of government in social policy reform.

Part II covers a wide range of policy areas: social inequality and poverty (Guan, Piachaud), labour market policy (Wang and Zhao, Clasen) pensions (Chow and Xu, Walker), health care (Bloom, Lu and Chen, Klein), housing (Wang, Doling), gender (He, Lewis), and social care
and voluntary action (Chen, Deakin and Davis). In each area, there is a pair of papers: one on China and the other, a response from the UK.

The object was to ensure a balance between ‘Chinese expertise on China (such as had typically not been exposed to mainstream CSP audiences hitherto) and . . . authoritative . . . expertise on the part of distinguished academics not hitherto professionally familiar with the Chinese case’ (p. 3).

This is not the first time that Finer has ‘paired’ papers for the purposes of comparative studies. She edited a book on Taiwan and UK social policy using a similar approach (2001). However, the new book on social policy reform in China is by no means repetitive of the earlier work. The new book offers an enormous amount of information on the on-going reform in China. This is the first attempt to compile a comprehensive collection on China’s social policy reform. At the same time, the book provides a UK perspective in the related policy areas. Finer’s ‘pairing’ exercise, in particular the attempt to include UK scholars who are not established as China experts, certainly provides refreshing angles of observation, for example, the discussion of rural and urban divisions. In China the choice by researchers of urban topics has often been made out of research convenience rather than paying attention to the most serious issues. The stress on the potential problems of rural–urban inequality by some UK experts (Piachaud, Walker, Klein) highlights issues long neglected in China (at least up to 2001 when the book was compiled).

However, the pairing approach has its weakness. Some (but not all) papers by the UK contributors examine other countries’ experience in contrast to China. Most authors do not bother to make real comparisons. As a result, there is little successful communication between the Chinese’ and overseas’ authors in this book. Rather, what is provided is a cross-sectional view of the two-way traffic discussed above.

As noted by Finer and several contributors to this book, studying all the components of Chinese social reforms in one volume is an incredibly difficult task. Social policy reform in China is characterised by the fast speed and large scale of changes, the number and diversity of regions involved, and the daunting financial and often political constraints in realising the reform process. Therefore, each area of reform could be the subject of a whole book, if only to provide a fuller coverage and reflect the local diversity. Naturally, to cover one area of reform in one paper, contributors have to face a challenge: they need to be highly selective. In this book, the struggle of the authors to face the challenge is clearly visible: the authors have to make choices on whether to discuss the overall policy framework or specific aspects, whether to include policy assessment, or whether to pay attention to local diversity at all.

Nevertheless, the book is a useful text to people who are interested in gaining an overview of reform in China. It guides the reader through some of the main issues. At the same time, the papers on the other countries provide some context and possibly make it easier for the reader who is a total stranger to Chinese social policy. However, demanding readers may quickly start to ask, as Finer puts it: ‘What should come next?’ For the people who are interested in China’s social policy, the book is no more than a starting point.

Reference
This book examines social policy in Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, in terms of the four areas of policy defined in its subtitle. Successive chapters provide a lucid examination of, first, the general characteristics of policy and then of policies in each of the four policy areas, with descriptive sections on each society interleaved with comparative sections that compare them with each other and with indices of policy performance across high-income OECD countries. Ramesh (that seems to be how he likes to be addressed, rather than by whatever the ‘M’ may stand for) thus tackles in a very careful way the arguments about whether the social policy regimes of East Asia can and cannot be included in regime typologies. His conclusion is that, within the overall limitations of regime theory, a usage of its key parameters is applicable to these societies.

In reaching that conclusion Ramesh first makes some crucial ‘ground-clearing’ observations in his introductory chapter. He notes that ‘Studies on social policy in East Asia typically start with the observation of low public spending on social security and health and high spending on education’ (p. 4). But he argues that this is in many respects a reflection of demographic structure, reinforced by high levels of economic growth and low levels of unemployment. Crucial questions are then not about where these societies were when these observations were made but about where they are going. He also points out that efforts to respond to the now rapidly changing demography are occurring in a context of global competition in which policy makers are bombarded with advice from economic commentators and international organisations against welfare policy growth. On these issues Korea is the interesting case, as explored in Shin’s recent study (2003), where strong and redistributive pension policies have been adopted but are under attack. It might be added that in the other three societies there are good reasons why wider political and economic insecurities mean that policy-making perspectives may be expected to be relatively short-term at the moment. At the same time if Korea is to progress it needs to get to grips (as does Taiwan) with the fact that social insurance is not very good at bringing health costs under control. Inasmuch then as the preferred way to deal with this problem is co-payment, the more direct provision model used in Hong Kong and Singapore offers, Ramesh suggests, a better deal on health policy.

The substantive chapters establish good reasons for regarding these four societies as belonging to two groups:

- Hong Kong and Singapore are alike in resisting insurance-based income maintenance and health care, but prepared to make relatively strong but targeted initiatives in education, housing and direct health service provision.
- Korea and Taiwan have developed social insurance and have quite strongly privatised housing and education provision systems.

The concluding chapter then develops an interesting argument about regime theory, which is applied to these cases. Essentially Ramesh argues regime theory embodies two dimensions. One of these he calls the Conservative/Liberal, where ‘Liberal regimes emphasise the market, whereas their Conservative counterparts emphasise the family’ (p. 192). The other is the more or less progressive dimension. Hence he argues that social democratic regimes represent a more progressive version of the Liberal regime. Similarly the southern European model that Ferrara (1996) added to Esping-Andersen’s (1990) three regimes is at the less progressive end of the Conservative dimension. This argument bears some resemblance to Bonoli’s model,
which has Beveridge/Bismarck as one dimension and levels of expenditure as the other (1997).

Using this model Ramesh sees Hong Kong and Singapore as (while clearly not ‘liberal’ states in the political sense) influenced by the Anglo-Saxon liberal model of the role of the state, while Korea and Taiwan have inherited the German model via Japanese influence. I am not sure about the case for calling Taiwan Japanese influenced, while it was a Japanese colony there was very little social policy development at that time. Surely the social insurance model was to some extent part of the cultural baggage (along with many art treasures) that the retreating KMT brought from mainland China. However, that does not invalidate Ramesh’s general point. It is counter to the argument that these four countries all emphasise the role of the family because of a shared Confucian culture. It has always seemed to me problematical to see Hong Kong policy as Confucian, as if it was a Chinese ideal that inspired it, when in fact it suited the British colonial authorities to emphasise welfare as a family problem. Inasmuch as the new regime and the regime in Singapore endorses the same point it is appropriate to bear in mind the extent to which traditional Confucian ideology was imposed by a ruling elite.

An interesting point about reinforcing family values in a more democratic society which Ramesh does not make, but which is very pertinent to the debate about social policy development in East Asia, is that paradoxically, when families are under strain, policies operating with means tests are often likely to generate disincentives to extended family care. On the other hand, individually determined insurance-based benefits do not carry such effects. Some important issues relating to this are coming on the agenda on provision for social care. In this respect it would be good if Ramesh went on to extend his analysis to Japan, where a form of care insurance has already been set up. Arguably this is the logical route if a state wants to support family care as best it can, and has a health insurance system under strain.

This must now become the best source for an account of social policy within Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Beyond them are other East Asian countries whose social policy development needs careful analysis. Above all, of course, there are questions about where China is going. It is to be hoped that having developed so challenging an analysis of social policy in these four relatively small countries Ramesh will extend his work elsewhere.

References


Michael Hill
University of Brighton

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It has taken some time for Americans to discover non-standard work hours, despite the fact that they are more common in the USA than in Europe. For European readers, this is a strange book, published some 15 years after atypical employment was a contentious new development in European labour markets. In other respects, it is ahead of European research on this topic,
as it looks at the impact of non-standard working hours on family life, instead of getting stuck on the trade union perspective, as happened in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, with atypical jobs (even part-time jobs) being seen as a threat to standard jobs. It is thus of more interest to Journal of Social Policy readers than those European debates which were set within an industrial relations and sociology of the labour market perspective. My review of these European debates (which tended to focus on part-time jobs) pointed out that they completely disregarded the preferences of those involved (Hakim, 1997). In contrast, Presser’s analysis adopts a work–life balance perspective, and considers how atypical working hours affect family relationships, and the normal routines of family life. In essence, her conclusion is that non-standard work hours are problematic, maybe even a ‘social problem’. This Luddite response is too simple, does not do justice to the detail of her analysis, and is not justified by her results, since she has no information at all on why people choose such jobs, and how they feel about them. No-one positively likes working at nights, or shiftwork. But many men appreciate the extra income from working unsocial hours. And women working standard hours appreciate shops that are open late, or at weekends. Some services (such as the police) depend absolutely on shiftwork and unsocial hours.

Presser relies on two datasets. The May 1997 Current Population Survey (CPS) provides nationally representative data on patterns of working time, across the day and across the week. Two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households, 1986–1987 and 1992–1994, provide information on how atypical working hours (defined more loosely than in the CPS) are associated with the quality and stability of marriage, the household division of labour, parent–child interaction, and child-care arrangements. The CPS is also used for a case study of low-educated employed mothers, the group that comes closest to lone mothers on welfare, who are of particular interest to USA policy makers. Presser exploits her sources to the fullest, but is open about their limitations, and provides numerous sufficiently detailed tables of results for readers to draw their own conclusions. In this respect, the study is a model of its kind, and is a fruitful source of findings on all these topics. Presser includes a full review of the literature on all her themes, albeit limited to USA sources almost entirely.

In the USA, 20 per cent of employees work ‘nonday’ hours – that is, evenings, nights, or rotating shifts. Equivalent figures for Europe range from 10 per cent in France to 20 per cent in Greece and Finland. In all countries except Greece and the USA, nonday hours are more common among employees who are parents, especially men. In the USA, 29 per cent of employees work at weekends (Saturdays mainly and/or Sundays). Figures for Europe range from 11 per cent in Belgium to 33 per cent in Italy and 29 per cent in Spain. Almost universally, parents are less likely to do weekend work. Not surprisingly, weekend work emerges as least popular, especially for parents, while nonday work is positively welcomed in some families.

The findings are too detailed, and complex, for any review to do justice to this treasure-trove of research results. Some examples give the flavour. Among single-earner couples, a husband working nonday hours is linked to higher-quality marriage. For dual-earner couples (with or without children), weekend work has no effect on marital quality. Non-standard work hours may have an impact, only small, on marital instability – the results here are weak. Overall, it seems that non-standard work hours only become a problem when there are children, and not always then. Both husbands and wives do more housework when they are at home and their spouse is not. It appears that the presence of the wife (or her potential criticism?) deters men from doing housework. Non-standard work hours generally have little or no impact on parent–child interaction. It appears that the noxious effects on family life have been grossly exaggerated – possibly from unrepresentative case studies. Non-standard hours can have positive, as well as negative, effects. My conclusion is that the well-known noxious effects of non-standard work hours on workers themselves (in particular the disruption of sleep patterns) lead many people
to assume they must be noxious in all other respects as well. Presser has done us all a service by showing that this assumption is unfounded.

Reference

Catherine Hakim
London School of Economics


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Anybody interested in the development of local government and public services in Britain will be familiar with the work of John Stewart and Gerry Stoker. Sometimes they have written together; often with others; sometimes alone. The sheer scale of their total work and the pace of its production invites admiration – and perhaps occasional envy. I recently had occasion to work on a bibliography related to local government and for convenience of manipulation split it into sections – A–D etc. The outcome of this was that the P–S section was by far the largest part of the bibliography with numerous works by both of them cited.

Coincidentally, their two most recent works (at least at the time of writing this review) essentially cover similar territory, which I suggest we could summarise as ‘What did New Labour ever do for local government?’ Readers of this journal will be interested in the comparison between the two works and whether one [or both] merit purchase. Since – as something of an obsessive – I had acquired both before asked to review them, I’ll try below to give a disinterested answer to that latter question for other readers. However, we will start with the comparison.

In some senses both books, though principally concerned with changes effected since the Labour election victory of June 1997, discuss a work both inherited and still in progress; the change and transformation of institutions and processes of ‘local’ service delivery. The range, scale and impact of these changes, and the extent to which the post-1997 changes built on earlier developments under the Thatcher and Major governments can sometimes be underestimated. As Stoker observes early in his book:

A form of local government that appeared to be a permanent part of the landscape in the 1970s has, on the whole relatively easily, been sent to oblivion . . . . .
The study of local government has in some ways become wrapped up in the reform process as academics try to make sense of the case for change and the virtues of the emergent system. (p. 2)

Although Stewart does not overtly subscribe to such a dramatic assessment of the changes wrought over recent years, both works chronicle and assess the impact of the cumulative changes which have created such a massive impact on local government. The full catalogue is there: best value; partnership; devolution and regional government; alternative approaches to improving public participation and the enduring dilemma of reforming (or rather to date not reforming) local finance.
It is hardly surprising that these books reflect and echo the long-standing and established style and orientation of the respective authors, with that by Stoker the more assertively theoretical book. In one section of his book he attempts to utilise the grid group theory, explored by Durkheim, developed by Wildavsky and then extended by Hood, in the context of understanding public service reform. His argument is an interesting one, presenting the case for government policy having some of the characteristics of a lottery, with a balance of competition and change influencing the successful outcomes of organisational bids for resources and the success or otherwise of different policy initiatives. The analysis might be more interesting yet if it explored the extent to which recent governments have sought assistance from the domain of private sector management and, at least in some policy domains, have pursued an ‘ecological’ approach to strategy – that is, try it and see if it works.

Stewart, again in characteristic fashion, manipulates and weaves together his enormous – perhaps unrivalled – experience of visiting or communicating with what sometime seems like every council in England – though rather fewer in Scotland and Wales. This style, though less pronounced than in some of his other work can be both illuminating and simultaneously frustrating. Illuminating in that it prompts one to go to and explore experience in a council that one might never otherwise have thought of; frustrating in that there are times when one yearns for a little more detail and more analysis rather than a tantalising and all too brief glimpse of experience in different councils. Writing from Edinburgh, it is worth mentioning that for once a book with the word ‘British’ in the title meets the test of doing more than justice to experience and developments in Scotland and Wales, with a clear distinction drawn between differences in the three countries. Perhaps it goes without saying but both writers follow standard practice in work on local government and barely spare a glance for Northern Ireland, on the common assumption that its institutions of local government are so vestigial and fragile that they merit little attention. Perhaps there is a missed opportunity here, since I have always thought Northern Ireland had rather more lessons in governance for Great Britain than we often credit, and in terms of multi-institutional partnerships much to learn from.

Perhaps the main questions for many readers of this review and this journal, as suggested above, will be either, both or neither? Despite the similarity of the territory covered, these are both different books; working from different premises, with one more self-consciously theoretical than the other. I for one rather regret that these two do not appear to write together anymore, but in the absence of that happening these two works complement each other in a very pleasing manner. Buy both, whether personally or for your library and you will have a thorough, rounded and acute critique of just what New Labour has done for local government in Britain.

Richard Kerley
Queen Margaret University College

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This tightly focused study highlights the complicated, resolutely non-causal, intersections between information policy and welfare redistribution, assessing how expenditures and entitlements are actively publicised, or otherwise, and how more or less explicit visions of citizenship underlie specific strands of social policy. As Leonard affirms, ‘the tension between rising expenditure on social security and promoting benefits had been recognised from the start of the welfare state’ (p. 56). The book hinges upon the idea that whilst information policy is
frequently well intentioned, hindsight establishes that it is seldom satisfactorily attuned to the material complexities of redistribution, in terms of both the application and over-extension of fixed criteria, as well the manner by which particular social groupings are targeted. As objectives become increasingly ideological, seemingly pragmatic aims – for instance cost-cutting measures – develop into social commentaries, value judgements apropos the application and bestowal of citizen’s rights. In parallel, information policy begins to develop into an integral component of larger political configurations, associated with the management of complexity within an increasingly differentiated and individualised polity.

Both information and distribution policies arise in relation to wider socio-economic changes, as drivers as well as responses. Although the information policies of New Labour are depicted as more proactive than much of what went before, and have resulted in ‘many (though not enough) low-paid workers and poorer older people becoming “information rich”’ (p. 123), Leonard remarks that this has occurred in tandem with longer-term trends ‘from universal to selective benefits’ (p. 98), with particular emphases placed upon moves, by subsequent governments since the early seventies, ‘to promote in-work benefits at the expense of welfare benefits for other claimant groups’ (p. 99). These factors consolidate the discursive move away from the rights of citizenship towards the responsibility to work, or rather to become a productive citizen. The New Right conjures up entities such as the ‘responsible individual’, for New Labour the chimera of choice is the ‘active citizen’, but the genealogies of the two figures are similar.

The culmination of these moves is a condition where ‘the clearest shifts in policy are demonstrated in attitudes to citizens as workers and to those citizens no longer expected to work’, and indeed information policy for groups within this latter designation, particularly children and senior citizens, ‘has been active and high profile’ (p. 81). Leonard also stresses that older citizens, although more difficult to reach, profit from ‘a shift in the definition of the concept of citizenship’ which emphasises ‘security for those who cannot, and are not expected to work’ (p. 115), although the manner by which policies can be more effectively publicised, or advertised, to this group (or groups) remains a live issue. Furthermore, Leonard argues that policies for the unemployed and low wage earners ‘despite their sometimes ambiguous citizenship status, were generally and perhaps surprisingly research based and clear in their objectives’ (p. 101). Nevertheless, the move from Family Credit, ‘a benefit with a strategic or political importance’ (p. 91), to the Working Families Tax Credit, again represents a carry-over from, as well as a further shift towards the idea that fiscal rationale must underpin redistribution policies. This economic drift conceals a normative buttressing of active citizenship, although as Leonard points out, any duty on the part of the government to actively inform potential claimants is once again elided within primary legislation, further obfuscating the need to accompany active citizenship with an active mechanism of information distribution.

A recurring theme throughout is the attempt, by consecutive administrations, to render issues of take-up increasingly simple, albeit utilising notions of simplicity constructed politically. Again the situation is not quite as straightforward as might be expected, in that ‘social policies are used both to promote and to undermine citizenship’, as models are developed with archetypes of deserving and undeserving citizens, information policy being used chiefly as ‘a powerful tool in an unequal relationship’ (p. 123). Correspondingly, Leonard contends that post-1979 numerous simplification schemes have failed to realise their principal aims, in part because the tensions between promoting benefits and cost reduction were not understood in the same way by all actors implicated within the policy process. Likewise, with benefits such as the Disability Living Allowance of the early 1990s, the idea of what constitutes a successful scheme was itself problematised, raising ‘questions about what can be defined as effective publicity and about how to anticipate and respond to the demands that such campaigns stimulate’ (p. 61). In this
instance success, in terms of subsequent take up, brought about a sharper focus upon potential abuse, a move which was always likely to demonise genuine claimants.

As information policy is contingent upon other social policy formations, the right to information is similarly reliant upon other social rights. On the subject of e-government, Leonard states that 'New Labour’s targets for e-government may be new, but recognition of its potential is not' (p. 123), but although ICT (Information and Communications Technology) might be able to promote take-up, ‘new technology is not value neutral and operates in a wider context of unequal power relationships. As with traditional methods of informing the public, the political context, culture and purpose of e-government will determine its success or failure’ (p. 80). Although it is noted that citizens must be active in their use of ICT, this line is left undeveloped, thus whether the right to access information digitally represents a continuation of Leonard’s central argument, or a new departure, is pretty well elided. In all likelihood Policy Press will, in due course, publish a companion volume to Leonard’s thoroughgoing and comprehensive work, as assessments into the association of new technologies, with citizenship ideals, will become increasingly imperative. The question we must ask is will ICT revitalise and consolidate forms of community belonging, or will new technological configurations serve to increase the forms of individuation Leonard depicts, minimising and further hollowing-out the rights of social citizenship?

CHRI S H E W S O N
University of Lancaster

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There is a plethora of literature about New Public Management reforms (NPM) but few empirical studies, which test many of the underlying assumptions made about the implementation of them. This book moves this literature into significantly new directions. It is the first comprehensive study of NPM-inspired administrative reforms in the British civil service from 1988 to 2001. The main outcome of NPM reform was the development of a semi-detached organisational entity referred to as the executive agency model. The author argues that this model was adapted from Anglo-American private sector organisations, with little attention paid to alternatives from other countries, such as Germany or Japan.

The book is divided into three sections. The first section contains a discussion of the two major explanatory approaches to NPM reform: the public interest perspective and the bureau-shaping perspective. The second section contains the empirical study, which is the corner stone of the book. The third section examines future directions for these organisations and potential for cross-national comparisons.

The author sets the stage for the empirical study with a brief romp through NPM literature, but does not go over old ground. The focus of this book is on the outcomes of NPM on public organisations, how they were shaped, by whom and what have been the outcomes. For example, has there been increased efficiency and reduction in costs as asserted by NPM reform campaigners.

The author is rigorous in his approach and succeeds in answering these questions throughout the course of the book. He uses a wide variety of empirical data gleaned from
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Without a doubt, the major contribution of this book to the NPM literature lies in the empirical study (Chapters 3–6). These chapters document different aspects of the reform process. Chapter 3 charts the role played by various policy actors in the development of executive agencies. Chapter 4 provides considerable detail about the major characteristics of this new organisational form. Chapter 5 examines the effectiveness and efficiency of individual organisations (using the Benefits Agency as an in-depth case study). The choice of the Benefits Agency (and its parent Department of Social Security) is problematic. Apart from pre-existing problems within the income maintenance system prior to the reform process, the complex regulatory regime of these agencies in post-welfare state societies makes them an ‘atypical case’. Chapter 6 examines the effectiveness and efficiency within the wider centralised system of government.

The author uses two contrasting and different theoretical frameworks to test hypotheses about the formation, operation and outcomes of the executive agency model. They are the public interest and the bureau-shaping models. The latter models draw heavily on Dunleavy’s (1991) work on the role of public servants in the reform process and Niskanen’s (1971) budget-maximising propositions. Public management and policy scholars will be familiar with the fine details of these contrasting explanations of NPM reforms.

The major findings warrant some specific comment. The material is dense and fine in detail. What does stand out is the use of the public interest and bureau-shaping models in the analysis of the empirical evidence. For example, public servants rather than politicians played a more significant role in shaping the executive agencies, bearing out the bureau-shaping model. Reform was slow to begin with, but gathered pace when taken up by Treasury and senior public servants in other departments. In effect, the majority of senior public servants wanted to stay in parent departments, hive off administrative and management work, but retain control over policy work. None of the above fits the explanation for administrative change offered by the public interest model.

This study spells out the two major characteristics of the executive agency model. They comprised of a semi-detached organisational entity with management freedom and autonomy in day-to-day affairs. The second major feature of executive agencies was the development of ‘accountability processes which included performance targets and a chief executive with personal accountability for performance’ (p. 76). Performance targets were set for both trading and non-trading bodies. The targets were highly problematic and strategies had to be invented when an agency was not capable of meeting them.

In keeping with the bureau-shaping models assertions, senior public servants tended to stay in parent departments, retained policy and strategic roles. Junior public servants were moved across to the new agencies. Chief executives were drawn from private and public enterprise. Disputes arose over policy and strategic work, but in the main senior public servants were happy to hand over administrative and management roles to executive agencies. Disputes were less frequent in trading than non-trading or mainstream departments, such as the Benefits Agency. The establishment of executive agencies has substantially altered Ministerial accountability mechanisms established under the Westminster system. Ministers were not held accountable for performance failure of executive agencies. This is a disturbing trend in liberal democratic societies, as it weakens parliamentary and public sector accountability.

One of the central mantras of NPM is increased savings and increased productivity. The public interest perspective suggests that there is a 5 per cent increase in productivity and efficiency, whereas the bureau-shaping model is much less optimistic about cost savings. The findings in terms of individual agency performance on a matrix of indicators are mixed. In

interviews, documentary secondary data to present a convincing set of arguments about the reform process.
general terms, the data support the public interest thesis. Data available for 1995–1998 (a period when most agencies were well established) indicate a fall of 4.4 per cent in real terms for administrative costs. However, there were marked differences between trading and non-trading agencies. The fall for non-trading agencies was higher (5.3 median score) but higher for trading agencies (8.2 per cent). This is consistent with the bureau-shaping model. The changes in the Benefits Agency did not fit the public interest model as costs rose over this period, but this was due to various extraneous factors.

Following on from the above, NPM would assert that there would be improvements in the overall systemic economic of central government. In a comparison of real administrative costs and real term expenditure, the data support the bureau-shaping thesis that public servants work to maximise their budgets. However, these results must be viewed against a backdrop of employment and economic downturns, as well as other external factors impinging on the agency. (These findings are similar to those in Chapter 5). Lack of central co-ordination, policy failure and communication problems, and experiments with e-governance all intervened to limit the overall effectiveness and efficiency of government departments and executive agencies. Many of these problems (especially in the field of income maintenance) predate these reforms. Public policy scholars will be interested in these findings so that they can extend them into post-welfare state debates.

In summary, this is a timely and highly innovative piece of intellectual and empirical work. The main strengths of the book lie in the discussion of the formation, practices and outcomes of the executive agency model. Disappointingly, there is limited analysis of the wider ramifications of this study to other jurisdictions or public sector systems. This will become more obvious when this study is replicated elsewhere. It is a book which has shifted the focus of NPM literature from rhetoric to critical analysis of new organisational forms and administrative practices based on solid and sound empirical investigation.

References

ROSE MELVILLE
University of Queensland

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This book is self-consciously partisan. This is its strength and its weakness. The essays it contains represent the views of academics, trade union officials and policy analysts who assess the impacts of US welfare reform on the ‘fate of poor women’ and the low wage workforce. The editor suggests that in a new welfare regime of time limits and work requirements, problems of welfare cannot be separated from the issues of work, politics, and collective organisation. The political context of the book is the reauthorisation of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act and its aim is to highlight the perspective of ‘labor’ and foster a dialogue between ‘scholars and activists’.

The book is organised into three parts. The first part consists of three chapters that chart the politics and economics of welfare reform. The first chapter, by Frances Fox Piven, sets the tone. She rehearses an argument, familiar to those who have read her other work that
analyses the success of a neoliberal political agenda developed through ‘an extended campaign by right wing think tanks, politicians and business organisations’. The political result has seen much of the US welfare state dismantled. The economic outcome has been an intensification of labour market discipline with up to 3 million women pushed into the low wage labour market.

The next two chapters question the apparent success of welfare reform. Sawicky argues that the public debate on impacts has paid scant attention to the harm done to the many women effectively excluded from the system. He also argues, on the basis of trends in welfare populations, that the dramatic reductions in welfare caseloads, from 5 million to 2.2 million at the end of the 1990s, owe more to the effects of economic growth, tax credits and an increased minimum wage. Boushey and Cherry analyse the nature of the employment growth that underpinned welfare reform and identify the consequences of the US slowdown and the jobless growth that has followed. They suggest that safety net programmes should be improved and a more flexible relationship between lifetime limits and economic conditions established.

Part II examines the impacts on workers and workforce issues. Here the book is at its weakest. Bernstein and Perry, officials from the main public sector union, provide an informative chapter that assesses the position of the 100,000 case managers who deliver welfare reform. They chart the implications of the transformation in work roles for those at the front line of change, and identify some of the problems that have arisen from the large-scale privatisation of welfare administration in several states. By contrast the other three chapters barely address the central issues raised by the book. Ness and Zullo report on a small ethnographic case study into the effects of privatisation on low wage workers in health care facilities in New York. Worthern’s consideration of the impact of the Workforce Investment Act is strong on rhetoric but has little evidence on impacts. Mehta and Theodore analyse the growth of temporary employment agencies with a focus on the impact on US unemployment insurance provisions. These changes have in effect shifted costs from employers to workers. The connection with those leaving the welfare rolls is asserted but never analysed.

The content improves somewhat in Part III. Olson and Steinmatz provide a fascinating insight into the development and coverage of local ‘living wage’ campaigns, seen as one of the ‘brightest stars’ of ‘progressive’ politics. They report that in over 100 cities and counties local coalitions of community groups and organised labour have secured regulations requiring employers who benefit from public funds to pay above minimum wage rates.

Simmons’ own chapter provides more analysis of the impacts of welfare reform drawing particular attention to issues she suggests should be of concern to organised labour. In the process she castigates the prevailing evaluation culture in the USA that has reinforced the aura of success and paid little attention to the impacts on poverty, waste, and ‘private sector profiteering’. She rightly emphasises that it is far easier to push the poor into low paid jobs than to improve the material circumstances of poor communities, and she reflects on the ‘terrible dilemmas’ facing poor women caught between the imperatives of raising families and keeping a low wage job. The direct relevance of this polemic contrasts to the broader themes in the concluding chapter. Here Jennings loosely links welfare reform with a call for a reinvigorated debate on social justice that may help challenge a dominant political framework based on the ‘concentration of corporate wealth’ and ‘the militarisation of US society’.

This is not a book of reflective evidence and analysis. It is a self-conscious political intervention, where chapters of variable quality and relevance, often punctuated by calls to action, give a particular insight into the impacts of welfare reform. It would be a refreshing read for those who should be reminded that US society has an organised labour movement and that ‘progressive’ or left-wing activists and academics continue to try to forge links with the ranks of the working poor. It is weak, however, in acknowledging or exploring the failures of the US
welfare system that led to reform, and it offers little guidance to the positive as well as negative lessons that can be extracted from the US experience.

DAN FINN
University of Portsmouth

Sue Heath and Elizabeth Cleaver, Young, Free and Single? Twenty-Somethings and Household Change, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2003, 225 pp., £45.00 hbk, ISBN 1 403901 244.
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This is a very useful and valuable book, analysing the de-standardisation of household transitions of young adults in relation to contemporary thought on intimate relations and demographic change. It does this by asserting young adulthood or ‘post-adolescence’ as a distinct phase in the adult life course. The authors argue that the living arrangements of contemporary young people are more diverse than the experiences of their parents, especially amongst graduates. The numbers of ‘post-adolescents’ choosing to live in multiple-occupancy households, to live alone or simply ‘boomerang’ back to the parental home out of necessity are rising. The days of living away from the parental home to attend university before progressing swiftly to a newly formed family household through marriage is no longer the realistic route for young adults today.

The issues raised in this book are important for two reasons. Firstly, the housing provision for young adults is an increasingly significant sector in the housing market, with the rise in proportion of young adults entering higher education. Moreover, non-graduates who have never had access to the shared transient nature of student households may still emulate the lifestyle experiences of their graduate peers. Secondly, this book raises the issues of when will young adults decide to buy instead of rent? Will they live alone, with friends, unknown housemates or a sexual partner? When they own or occupy, will it be alone, with a partner or with friends?

Many young adults now choose to live alone or with a group of other young single people (although in conditions superior to student accommodation) and are in no hurry to cohabit with a partner or get married. This book considers these households and the evolving definition of the ‘home’, attempting to understand these choices in relation to the intimate networks of sexual partners, friends and family. This of course has implications on the design of new housing, such as the provision of good quality multiple-occupancy housing suitable for young professionals.

The authors draw on data from household formation trends of young adults across Northern Europe, Australia and the United States, but particularly focus on the UK, drawing many insightful conclusions from the ESRC funded Young Adults and Shared Household Living project (1998–2000). In this project the authors conducted semi-structured household interviews in 25 non-student shared households in Southampton where the residents were unconnected through marriage, cohabitation or by family. Sixty-three of the household members were also involved in one-to-one biographical interviews.

This book deals with the accepted trend that young adults are taking longer to marry, have children and form a family household. They are taking longer to ‘settle down’ in the traditional sense, yet are determined not to stay in the parental home if possible. Hence the term ‘post-adolescent’, where young adults are no longer as dependent on their parents, yet may not take on the full responsibilities of adulthood relative to their parents’ generation by not settling down with a partner.
Heath and Cleaver explore the alternatives for young adults and argue household transitions through the life course are no longer automatic or linear. They can be explained not only in relation to economic factors, but also by the demands of the labour market and the transformation of intimate relations in an era underpinned by risk, individualisation and rise of choice biographies. With consideration of the transformation of intimate relations, the book critically reflects on Giddens (1991) ‘pure relationship’ to understand the housing choices of young adults and a potential shift from living with a partner to living with friends. The balance between friends and sexual partners, closeness and dependence, are ideas used to explain the choice biographies of young adults, especially their relationships and therefore housing choices.

Heath and Cleaver argue the single life is a deliberate choice of many young adults, who are happy to prioritise their career and are in no hurry to settle down. This is in contrast to some youth researchers they claim, who suggest this generation of young adults would be happy to settle down and emulate the family home of their parents if the opportunity arose. However, they emphasise that just because young adults choose not to marry or cohabit, or at least delay it, this does not mean they do not have fulfilling intimate relations with non-resident partners, drawing on the concept of living apart together.

The authors also reflect upon the growing priority friendship arguably has in the lives of young people, suggesting friends and housemates may now be viewed similarly to family, leading them to raise a very important point about home ownership by young adults (Chapter 10). Many are keen to move on from the private rental market into owner occupancy, but cannot do so on a single salary. In order to avoid the premature cohabitation with a partner, Heath and Cleaver suggest a joint mortgage with friends may be the only alternative for those keen to get a foot on the property ladder. This would of course formalise the friendship relationship, potentially compromising the ideal of the ‘pure relationship’. Whether this is a realistic prediction is debatable, as the growing importance of friendship may be based on keeping that person at some intimate distance and not being overly dependent. The thought of entering into a mortgage is a huge commitment, potentially more so for young people than cohabiting or becoming engaged.

This is a well-written book that will be easily understood by undergraduate students of social policy and sociology, while including good summaries of debates on intimate relationships. The conclusions with regards the experiences and choice biographies will ring true to many young adults, while its contribution to the understanding of young adulthood as a distinct phase in the adult life course is a valuable reflection on youth research.

Reference

ADAM SMITH
University of Edinburgh

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The regulation of the time people spend at paid and unpaid work is a key policy lever for managing the work–life balance, and, over the life course, has the potential to promote social inclusion through easing transitions between different social activities. This edited collection is the latest in a series of books arising from European Union funded research on ‘transitional
labour markets’. The research explores whether new institutional arrangements, notably the sharing of work, could alleviate the recent rise in levels of unemployment in many European countries. Central to the research is the concept of ‘transitional labour markets’, which emphasises the increase in, and dynamics of, people’s moves between different employment statuses, such as unemployment and employment, unpaid family work and paid work and work and retirement. Some of these transitions lead to social integration, but others can be exclusionary. The institutional arrangements for regulating working time transitions in seven European countries are the focus of this book.

In the introduction O’Reilly provides an overview of the research, a description of labour market developments in the selected countries, an outline of an employment regime typology, which provides a rationale for the countries covered in the book, and a discussion of the key issues in both employment regulation, and social policy and transitions in working time. As subsequent chapters describe the regulation of working time in Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, France, Spain, Ireland and UK, and there is no concluding chapter, O’Reilly’s discussion of key issues is the book’s principal piece of comparative analysis. O’Reilly covers reductions in the standard working time, and whether part-time and temporary work promote social integration or exclusion (it depends upon the employment and social security rights conferred by contracts and the relative ease of any subsequent move into full-time, permanent employment). In addition, measures that could promote integration, through making unemployed people more attractive to employers, as well as leave arrangements relating to child rearing, are charted. According to O’Reilly (p. 45) the research indicates that policy across Europe is facilitating people’s movements between employment statuses, and is encouraging moves into work by the unemployed and the economically inactive. However, further evaluations of policies are required because of differences in policy outcomes across countries.

The format of each country chapter is similar. Each tends to outline trends in the labour market and working time, discuss the institutional framework for industrial relations and the debates over working time, highlight aspects of flexibility in working time and attempt to make the link with broader aspects of social policy, especially tax, social security and family policy. Typically the chapters discuss part-time work, fixed time contracts/temporary work and temporary work agencies, annualised hours, shift work and overtime, shorter working hours, maternity and parental leave, career breaks, sabbaticals for training/study leave, and early retirement. The chapters are largely descriptive.

For a UK reader, the country chapters and O’Reilly’s introduction do highlight the importance of social partners in the regulation of working time and how different UK industrial relations are from the other six countries. The chapters show how social partners at national, industry and/or plant level can negotiate arrangements that go beyond minimum standards outlined in national legislation. Furthermore, that bargaining and trade-offs between the vested interests have to be made in order to secure collective agreements. For example in Germany employers were permitted to extend the use of temporary work in return for an employees’ right to demand a part-time job. However, the politics surrounding the debates and the reasoning behind the different positions adopted is not always elaborated.

As might be expected with a book of this nature some of the chapters are more readable than others. Furthermore, it is inevitable that in covering contemporary issues where policy is evolving the book has already become a bit dated. It is also a shame that the research team did not take the opportunity to include contributors from the EU accession countries.

The book provides a useful overview of trends and institutional arrangements for regulating working time in the selected countries. Although it does appear to be aimed at an academic audience with some in-depth understanding of labour market issues and evaluation methodology a concluding chapter that articulated the policy implications of regulating working
time and the promotion of social integration would have been a valuable addition. Indeed, the country-by-country descriptions only take the reader so far, and either an expanded introduction or chapters with a thematic approach that compared and contrasted such issues as institutional arrangements, part-time working and temporary work across countries could have been revealing and possibly broadened the appeal of the book.

BRUCE STAFFORD
Loughborough University


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There is a growing trend among social science researchers across Europe to disseminate their funded research projects (money usually coming from the European Union) through an edited book, which consists of chapters from all the participants within the research. As the title of this edited collection suggests, this monograph is based upon a research project that investigated the experiences of rural youth through collecting qualitative data across seven European countries. The book consists of 11 chapters written by members of the research team. The majority of the chapters are descriptive in nature and discuss a wide range of policy issues, which appear to be in the book because of the specific writers’ interest in that particular area. The policy issues range from the integration of young people into the labour market through rural development programmes, to rural youth in local community development and the role of social networks. Chapter 3 sets out the changes that have occurred in Europe by considering the changing rural context using statistics gleaned from various European data sources. This chapter is very thorough and contains useful information on the different European countries.

The rest of this review will consider in depth the two chapters which I found most interesting. These are Chapter 2, the ‘Conceptual framework and literature review’ written by Mark Shucksmith and Chapter 10 the ‘Experience of rural youth in the risk society: transitions from education to the labour market’ by Birgit Jentsch. I have argued in other work that in my opinion European research projects have done little to enhance youth researchers’ knowledge regarding the experiences of young people (Cartmel, 2003). One of the reasons that I have posited this hypothesis is that in many European research projects the subjects under investigation (i.e. young people) have little in common apart from being within certain age categories. Labour markets, education systems and welfare regimes differ across Europe, which makes valid comparisons extremely difficult. The added difficulty for the researchers in this research project is the problematic definitions of rural that exist within the academic literature.

Shucksmith and colleagues get around the problem of defining rural through focusing upon ‘understanding rural diversity through incorporating social and political analysis within a multi-disciplinary approach’ (p. 9). The authors also tackle the difficult concept of social exclusion, which is a mandatory concept used within all European funded projects. In Chapter 2, Shucksmith outlines the project’s conceptualisation of social exclusion contending that ‘it is helpful to view processes of social exclusion and inclusion in terms of a series of overlapping spheres of integration as suggested above, according to means through which resources and status are allocated in modern society and that this may also be related to various social theories’ (p. 12). Within Chapter 2 there is also a discussion relating to the lengthening of the youth transition across Europe, which has implications for what Shucksmith deems the ‘individualised life biography’ (p. 12). Compared with the majority of monographs being
published as part of European research projects, the authors have attempted to conceptualise their work in a theoretical framework.

Birgit Jentsch returns to the theoretical debates surrounding the youth transition, when considering the experiences of rural youth in the ‘risk society’ in the penultimate chapter of the book. The chapter makes a reasonable attempt at addressing the difficult theoretical issues surrounding youth and the risk society, although, at times it is difficult to differentiate why rural is important when it comes to several of the quotes from the young people, as these could easily have been stated by young people residing in urban settings. The conclusions that Jentsch draws regarding how young people can become the ‘centre of their biography’, including youth-centred development and increased flexibility in rigid institutional structures, could also apply to young people not living in rural areas. Therefore, these recommendations are not exclusively rural.

The conclusion draws together all the previous chapters and discusses the relevant policy recommendations that were highlighted in earlier chapters. Overall, I think the book will contribute to the debates about young people living in rural areas across Europe and will act as a good source for policy makers interested in European policy. The one disappointing aspect of this and many other books that are written after the completion of a European project is that there is no consistent theme throughout the chapters. I think in the majority of cases, researchers are asked to contribute a chapter on their specific interest area and then these are placed together and sold under the auspices of a book. I would like to see European researchers producing books that have a coherent theme throughout, rather than monographs produced because the proposers promised a book as part of the dissemination in the research proposal to the European Union.

Reference

Fred Cartmel
University of Glasgow

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The awkward title of this book is misleading in implying a focus on concepts: it would have been a better title without the first word and the inverted commas. Primarily the book is an update on research on carers. Following the publication in 1999 of The Carers’ Strategy by the Department of Health (Department of Health, 1999) and the passing of various legislative measures in 2000, the time was right for a review of current research; as Stalker acknowledges, the literature on carers is vast. This volume does not constitute a comprehensive update however. Rather, following the editor’s overview of ‘concepts, developments and debates’, there are eight chapters that tackle research on eight specific topics. These are inclined towards policy and practice issues and, although the editor claims that the book focuses on ‘different aspects of carers’ experiences’, there are few references to any account of such experiences.

In Chapter 2, Liz Lloyd argues that: ‘we need to look beyond the institutionally constructed categories of “carer” and “service user” to take account of the scope and diversity of caring
relationships’. For example, she argues, this can help to explain the isolation of many service users, cut off from the wider network of care as a result of the responsibilities assumed by (and sometimes placed upon) their carers (p. 45).

In the following chapter, Susan Eley also claims an interest in care relationships, but virtually all the research she reviews reflects the focus of her chapter’s title: ‘Diversity among carers’. Her conclusion, referenced to users of ‘generic carer services’, neatly prepares the ground for the following chapter on carers and assessment by Hazel Qureshi, Hilary Arksey and Elinor Nicholas. This is a sound review of legislative developments, identifying a number of predictable points of conflict that result from the problems of defining a carer and the neglect of the care relationship. In particular their last paragraph attempts to incorporate what they perceive to be a volatile and complex relationship into managerial structures that require an evidence base for the assessment of carer needs.

In Chapter 5, Gordon Grant maintains the focus on service provision in discussing practice with ‘caring families’. The dilemma he poses is whether the state should provide traditional support services or ‘empowerment led’ services. His own view is clearly apparent when he describes the former as pathogenic and the latter as salutogenic.

Chapter 6 by Helen Rogers and Marian Barnes appears to be a shift away from a service orientation. However, their discussion of carers’ participation in policy and practice is heavily geared towards the role of organisational and collective action by carers in the development of national policy, culminating in a listing of the characteristics of a ‘sensitive community care service’. They acknowledge conceptual problems: such as families do not use the term ‘care’ and there’s no simple definition (p. 123). Nevertheless, they undermine the significance of mutuality within the caring relationship (for example, as is now recognised to exist within many older couples), when they claim that: ‘We need to be able to distinguish between carers speaking on their own behalf about their own needs, and circumstances in which they are speaking on behalf of those for whom they provide care and support’ (p. 123).

Paul Ramcharan and Bridget Whittell follow with a discussion of employment issues and in particular they highlight the neglect to date of the employment needs of carers without work. They provide a sound review of policy initiatives during the 1990s, but the model that underpins their chapter as a whole overlooks the possibility that some people only become carers because they are out of work.

Ann Brechin, Rose Barton and June Stein offer the only chapter in the book that has an original empirical base. Moreover they raise important questions about ‘poor care’: a different take on assessment. They recorded the reactions of carers to six vignettes that describe contrasting examples of ‘difficult moments’. The analysis brings out both the rigidity of ideas about rights and justice (‘the hardening of the oughterlies’) and the creative way in which their focus group discussions became an opportunity to ‘perform ethics’.

Finally Margaret Ross provides an overview of the legal framework for caring, and helpfully clarifies the basic issues relating to the interests of carer, user, provider and state.

Overall, the book features two important developments in the strange history of ‘the carer’. The first is the research-based policy debate that has continued to flourish in the UK during the 1990s, and the second is the growing power of carers’ organisations. It is good that research has moved on from the rather fruitless questions of who carers are and what they do, but both developments have combined to promote ‘the carer perspective’, arguably at the expense of the care relationship and, more broadly, the resourcing and support of the care system.

Finally, it is unfortunate that the book was not satisfactorily copy-edited. A number of errors and spelling mistakes catch the eye. Perhaps the most outrageous is reference on page 12 to Bleddyn, Jose and Saunders (1998). This is taking familiarity a little too far! Also, despite spelling her surname correctly, Yasmin Gunaratnam must be disappointed to learn on page 61...
of her sex change. More seriously, if reviews of research such as this are to achieve the aim of assisting students in their bibliographic endeavours, then publishers and editors should ensure that all references are correct.

Reference
Department of Health (1999), Caring for Carers, London: HMSO.

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This is a fascinating book, partly because of its subject matter, partly because the very ambivalence it identifies among inclusive researchers is painfully played out on its pages. The authors aim to record, review and celebrate the achievements of inclusive research, but also to tackle the current 'stifling' of debate about the very real challenges of involving people with learning disabilities in the research process.

The book is divided into three main sections. In the Introduction, the authors set out 12 key questions which they intend to address. These range from 'How far has inclusive research been influenced by particular research perspectives and the broader social context?' to 'What are the barriers to people with learning disabilities in research?' and 'Should the researcher be cast in the role of advocate?'

Part 1, 'Describing the past', traces the origins of inclusive research with people with learning disabilities, and explores the extent to which it arose from their concerns, as opposed to being initiated by academics and/or non-disabled allies.

Part 2, 'Exploring the research process', examines the 'nitty-gritty' of inclusive research, with two chapters discussing inclusive studies conducted by each author. These are engaging accounts of innovative projects, in which the authors are honest about the challenges they faced. Their commitment to working with their research partners on equal terms, moving at their pace and responding to their demands is impressive, not least because, as the authors point out, the more inclusive the research, the greater may be the loss of academic 'brownie points'. Other chapters examine the extent to which people with learning disabilities set the research agenda, the respective roles played by them and their non-disabled allies, the uses of inclusive research, and 'achievements and unresolved issues.

Part 3, 'Beyond rhetoric to new realities', argues that inclusive research has become stalled and is in danger of being discredited. The authors are gently critical of researchers who, disingenuously or even dishonestly, imply that their role within inclusive research is little more than providing practical support. Inclusive researchers are too busy trying to find 'ever more inventive ways of enabling people with learning disabilities to do research'(p. 189). An equally valid and, in some cases, a more realistic approach, the authors argue, would be to explore with people with learning disabilities the kind of research they want, the questions they wish to see explored, how they want to use research and what (if any) involvement they wish in doing it. The authors go on to suggest new models of partnership between people with learning disabilities and their research partners, including 'researcher as teacher/coach, person with
learning disabilities as learner or student’ and ‘researcher as consultant, people with learning disabilities as employers’.

Throughout these chapters, Walmsley and Johnson raise a number of controversial issues. They are to be commended for doing so, since there is – as they say – some pressure not to acknowledge awkward questions about inclusive research. They warn that the term ‘inclusive research’ may be used to mask, and thus perpetuate, real power differentials between disabled and non-disabled researchers. They admit that, when working with people with learning disabilities, they have ‘held back’ on developing their own ideas: in one co-written book, Walmsley and her non-disabled colleagues ‘dampened down’ the editorial because it would have been hard to share a more conceptual analysis with their learning disabled co-authors. They highlight the apparent contradiction that sophisticated methodological accounts of inclusive studies are apparently ‘permissible’, but complex analysis/interpretation of the data collected in such studies is not. They identify the danger of learning disability research remaining ‘the untheorised experience-based poor relation of its intellectually wealthier cousins in disability studies, feminism and black studies’ (p: 186).

So far, so good. The frustrating aspect of this book is the sense that some of its most important questions are left hanging. This could be attributed to the fact that these debates are in their infancy and the authors wish to avoid being prescriptive. More striking, however, is the strong current of guilt and ambivalence running through the volume. The authors apologise – several times – for the fact that this is not an inclusive project. The 12 key questions around which the book is structured are called ‘the questions we dared not ask’. They seem to go backwards and forwards on certain points, as if unable to make up their minds. Is research about changing the world – or not? Is it ‘unworthy’ to want to theorise – or not? Is it the contribution of academic allies which is sidelined in inclusive research – or that of co-researchers with learning disabilities? Is the latter’s relative lack of involvement in analysing data and drawing conclusions a consequence of researchers’ failure to find effective ways to enable people to contribute, or to impairment itself?

Certainly, these are difficult questions which do not have cut and dried answers. The authors’ deep commitment to respect nothing about us without us, and thus to do research ‘the hard way’, is admirable. But has their huge discomfort in departing from this credo led to a strange form of self-censorship, at times preventing them from pushing their questions – and perhaps their thinking – further? Part 3 is helpful and positive, but does not appear to follow on entirely from what has gone before. This makes its key messages less clear and immediate than they should be. This is a pity, because they are good ones.

KIRSTEN STALKER
University of Stirling


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This book makes an important and timely contribution to research on family life after divorce, an area of scholarship in which the interests of parents and, in particular, those of children, have understandably been the primary focus of concern. Based on 115 interviews with parents, children and grandparents from 44 families, the book aims to provide a tri-generational perspective on the impact of divorce on grandparenting. Its objectives were to explore a range of
factors including grandparent–grandchild relationships, grandparents’ reactions to their adult children’s divorce, support and contact, gendered or age-related differences in grandparenting practices, communicating across the family divide and the effects of ‘partisan’ behaviour on the divorced family. In order to reach conclusions about whether to support pressure groups campaigning for grandparents’ rights, a particular objective was to discover to what extent grandparents are important to their grandchildren.

After setting out the study’s aims, objectives and methodology in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 gives a comprehensive review of the research literature, examining how factors such as reciprocity, distance, relationships with adult children, marital status, gender, age, ethnicity, employment, and grandparenting styles may account for variations in the grandparenting role.

Chapter 3 presents some major findings, in particular, that pre- and post-divorce grandparenting is notable more for its continuities than its changes. There was no clear evidence that parental divorce provided a new, more involved role for grandparents or, conversely, that it led grandparents to sever close relationships with grandchildren. The authors conclude that the nature of the relationship before parental divorce was an important predictor of the post-divorce relationship.

Chapter 4 outlines the activities on which grandparent–grandchild relationships were based. An important factor in accounting for diversity in the quality of grandparent–grandchild relationships was the extent to which adult children rather than grandchildren were the grandparents’ priority. Chapter 5 looks at issues around discipline and favouritism. These tended to be areas of agreement rather than conflict.

In Chapter 6, the authors ask why maternal grandmothers emerge as the ‘main’ grandparent. If children’s residence with their mothers after divorce provides more opportunities for contact with maternal grandparents, this does not explain why the finding holds even where children are looked after by their fathers. The authors conclude that after divorce, grandparents’ positions continue to reflect more general differences in the quality of men’s and women’s relationships with their parents and cultural expectations around these. As argued in Chapter 3, divorce intensified an existing hierarchy. It did not create one. They suggest their findings say less about distinctive forms of post-divorce grandparenting than about grandparenting per se.

Chapter 7 outlines the legal and policy issues affecting grandparents in divorced families. Although in the US and other parts of Europe, grandparents have legal rights to contact with grandchildren, no such rights exist in England and Wales. Grandparents’ express rights to seek ‘access’ were repealed under the Children Act 1989. Now, they must first seek the court’s ‘leave’ before applying for a contact order (a requirement strongly opposed by the Grandparents’ Association). Arguing in favour of the status quo, the authors contend that grandparents’ rights can only be discussed alongside the rights of parents and children.

Chapter 8 explores to what extent the three generations communicated with each other about the divorce. They found that the process is so painful for many individuals that direct communication about it was avoided for as long as possible. Chapter 9 analyses ‘partisan’ behaviour. More than half the grandparents admitted to ‘taking sides’ against their ‘ex’ daughter- or son-in-law. Though this was seen as a ‘normal’ response, it was widely held that this should not be done in front of grandchildren who seemed unaware of their grandparents’ animosities. Other grandparents remained friendly with their ‘ex’ sons- or daughters-in-law. The authors suggest that many more of these relationships may have continued on friendly terms had they not seemed unconventional or disloyal.

Chapter 10 details the financial, emotional and childcare support many grandparents provided. Some grandparents were ambivalent about this, aware of the sacrifices and costs entailed. Grandchildren were often unaware of their grandparents’ support, as too were some
parents. As the authors point out, discourses around grandparents’ obligations to ‘be there’ for their families are powerful. Very few mentioned the legal system and how it might help them.

‘Excluded grandparents’ are discussed in Chapter 11. Contrary to the authors’ earlier findings, the nature of the pre-divorce grandparent–grandchild relationship was not always its main determinant post-divorce. Divorce sometimes had a dramatic, negative impact. It is not obvious, they argue, how new family rights legislation would improve the situation of excluded grandparents or how great a part the law can play in these family feuds.

Chapter 12 summarises the findings and draws some policy conclusions. Grandparenting is diverse, viewed differently by grandparents, parents and grandchildren. The evidence of continuities in pre- and post-divorce grandparenting is more compelling than evidence of changes. However, the childcare role of maternal grandparents often intensified while paternal grandparents sometimes found contact more difficult. Though grandparent–grandchild relationships are positive on both sides, the relationship is often more important to grandparents. Finally, the authors discuss five key areas relevant to policy debates: finance; improving the quality of grandparenting; non-communication; grandparents and the law, contact and childcare.

It is widely recognised that in-depth, smaller-scale studies such as this one are crucial to furthering our understanding of family life. This project clearly generated rich, detailed data on the lived experience of grandparenting and the social expectations around it. A greater emphasis on interviewees’ accounts in the form of longer interview extracts and case studies would have been interesting. With its excellent coverage of the literature, this book is highly relevant to those interested in grandparenting or the wider implications of family life after divorce. It is distinctive not only for its explicit focus on grandparents in divorced families, but also for its socio-legal perspective on the subject and the implications it draws for family law and public policy.

JENNIFER FLOWERDEW
University of Leeds