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Book Reviews

A. Cebulla, K. Ashworth, D. Greenberg and R. Walker (2005), *Welfare-to-Work: New Labour and the US Experience*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 165 pp., £45.00 hbk.
Peter Saunders (ed.) (2005), *Welfare to Work in Practice: Social Security and Participation in Economic and Social Life*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 261 pp., £49.95 hbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406210274

Governments concerned about their countries' international competitiveness have been reforming their social security systems and there is an emphasis on active (as opposed to passive) welfare policies. Both the Cebulla *et al.* and Saunders books are concerned with welfare to work policies and practices, although they approach the subject in different ways. The Saunders edited collection considers benefit recipients' participation in social life as well as the economy. Whilst Cebulla *et al.*, are more narrowly focused on what New Labour learnt from US experience when developing the New Deal and on 'what works'. Some of the authors in Saunders also discuss country-specific reforms (notably Martin Werding's contribution on workfare aimed at the low skilled in Germany).

The Saunders' collection is based on papers presented at the Foundation for International Social Security Conference in Sigtuna, Sweden in 2003. For those interested in social security this is a superb annual event and the book reflects a catholic mix of disciplines and methodologies. This means that a few of the authors' contributions are econometric and use advanced statistical techniques. The slight downside is that the collection as a whole is less cohesive than say a comparative reader that focussed on a EU funded project. Nevertheless, it is a useful source providing a stock take (up to 2003) of welfare policies in a wide range of countries. The collection mainly focuses on northern European countries, although there is a chapter on social assistance in Australia by Saunders. However, southern Europe and the US are under-represented.

Saunders provides a brief introduction, and the remainder of the book then falls into two parts. Chapters 2 to 8 cover activation policies and Chapters 9 to 13 are more focused on disability/incapacity and welfare to work. Some of the authors in the Saunders book, such as Jane Millar and Saunders himself in Chapter 4, highlight the difficulties of moving some people, such as those with low skills, from social security benefits to paid work. Moreover, they query whether the emphasis on paid work is practical for all welfare recipients and what should be the policy response for those unable to participate in work. Neil Gilbert, for instance, argues that who wants to work, how work is defined and the quality of the jobs entered should be given more attention. The chapter by Einar Overbye is particularly interesting and useful in this respect, as it highlights the trade-offs in the objectives of disability policies and warns of the risk to disabled people's self-image if they are unable to participate in paid work.

The Cebulla *et al.*, book is also a collection in the sense that the author(s) for each chapter are named and it describes its four writers as contributors. The book is largely based on an ESRC project, 'Welfare to work: a case for evidence based policy-making?', although this does not appear to be acknowledged in the book. The book draws upon qualitative research with UK policy makers and analysts, politicians and others; a systematic review of welfare to work

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evaluations; a content analysis of official documents; and a meta-analysis of 24 mandatory US welfare to work evaluations that randomly assigned participants to action and control groups. The client group for these programmes was typically female lone parents in receipt of Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The programmes were implemented between 1983 and 1996.

Chapter 1 by Cebulla and Walker sets the context, and Cebulla takes up the story of the development of the New Deal in the next two chapters. He shows how there were a number of influences on the early development of New Deal. The key lesson from the States was 'the benefit of intensive job search and job search training' (p. 47). Moreover, US experience confirmed UK thinking, in particular the case for a rights and responsibility reform agenda. The other influences on policy included Scandinavian and Australian experiences, developments internal to the Labour Party, and lessons from pre-1997 UK programmes. The initial haphazard nature of the evidence-gathering process that preceded the introduction of New Deal is also highlighted.

Central to the Cebulla *et al.*, book is a fascinating and highly instructive meta-analysis of US welfare to work programmes. Ashworth and Greenberg provide an excellent lay person's introduction to meta-analysis in Chapter 4. The results of the meta-analysis are then discussed in the next two chapters. Briefly, the meta-analysis shows that overall the impacts on earnings and flows of benefits are positive, but modest, although there is considerable variability in the programmes impacts. Over time the impacts increase for about three years, but then decline and disappear at around five years. Some of this impact is due to the actual programmes, but some is due to the characteristics of the caseload and of the local labour markets. Essentially, programmes that increased wages tended to promote early entry into jobs (work first) rather than vocational training (human capital development), impose time limits on benefit receipt and sanctions for non-compliance, target older people, comprise fewer non-white participants and operate in areas of either comparative prosperity or great deprivation. The authors also consider why two programmes – Riverside and Portland – that have attracted particular attention from policy makers performed better than the typical programme. They find that these two programmes benefit from favourable site and client characteristics as much from the design of the programmes.

In Chapter 7 Cebulla summarises UK labour market evaluations and briefly considers the evidence on what contribution the wider economy had on falling welfare (lone parent) caseloads in the US. In the final chapter, Cebulla and Greenberg, highlight the lessons for welfare policy and doing meta-analyses.

Readers of Cebulla *et al.,* do need to be fairly knowledgeable about the UK benefit and employment system. Moreover, the book often refers to New Deal, and whilst it points out that this covers a family of programmes, it tends to be discussing one programme, the New Deal for Young People, and so, for example, New Deal for Disabled People and New Deal 50 Plus receive scant attention.

Despite their different approaches, there are substantive overlaps between the two books. For instance Jane Millar gives a good overview of the New Deal for Lone Parents (and other related policy measures); and the role of financial incentives in encouraging people to move into employment is discussed in both books. The meta-analysis shows that programmes using financial incentives had smaller impacts on earnings than those with incentives. Work incentives are considered in a number of the chapters in Saunders. For example, Bradshaw and colleagues consider whether work incentives affect mother's employment rates. Their comparative analysis shows that in general financial incentives are not strongly related to the supply of mother's labour, and where there is a link, it is 'very weak with outlying countries that buck the trend' (p. 127).

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In both books there are a few typos, some technical terms that are not explained, and some missing references. Cebulla *et al.*, also has some poor cross-referencing and includes a Model 2 in an annex that does not appear to be explained. Despite these niggles both books will be of value to social policy researchers, post-graduates and policy makers.

BRUCE STAFFORD
Loughborough University

R. Walker (2005), *Social Security and Welfare: Concepts and Comparisons*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill, 354 pp., £20.99 pbk.
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Even for the initiated, the universe of social security can be, at times, a bewildering one. Anyone who has attempted to undertake cross-national comparative analyses of social protection programs will undoubtedly be familiar with the frustrating dilemma of deciding whether specific programs in different countries should indeed be included in the analysis. The ever-changing names, conditions and target populations of social security programs can undermine the efforts of the most diligent researcher. The same is true for efforts to distinguish between aims, objectives and functions within this universe. There are surely few lecturers who have managed to successfully explain to inquisitive students how he or she reached definitive conclusions regarding the goals of a specific benefit program.

Social Security and Welfare is a valiant attempt to provide the uninitiated with a guide to the universe of social security. Robert Walker's approach in this matter is clear from the very first pages of this book – the goal is not to describe facts and policies but rather to elucidate concepts. By providing the building blocks themselves, the assumption is that the reader will acquire the tools needed to make sense of social security programs regardless of the specific title of a program. As the author notes at the onset, the book seeks 'to offer readers a set of conceptual tools that will enable them to define and assemble facts better to understand the design, implementation and effectiveness of a subset of social policies: those that have to do with social security and welfare' (pp. 3–4).

This well-written book is divided into five sections, all of which seek to explain the concepts that comprise the world of social security and the notions, the theories and the empirical foundations upon which these are (or, sometimes, unfortunately are not) based. The author employs case studies and comparative analyses from six welfare states, representing various welfare regimes (though unfortunately not the Southern European regime), in order to illustrate the sometimes technical discussion. In addition, a large number of figures are employed as a means of clarification of the more abstract explanations.

The first section of *Social Security and Welfare* focuses upon objectives and discusses the various aims, functions and constraints of social security programs. The book then moves on to 'mechanisms'. This part of the book deals with issues of financing, allocation and administration. Of all the sections in this book, I found this first section to be the most useful. A surprisingly wide range of key social security concepts are discussed and often examples or comparisons based on the six welfare state cases are successfully employed. The discussion of the role of insurance in social security programs is a good example of the author's ability to draw upon existing literature and concrete examples from welfare states in order to clarify the differences between private and social insurance and to explain the rationale and practice of social insurance in a way lacking in most introductions to social security. Given the large number of concepts touched upon in these sections, it is perhaps churlish to complain that

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some of them are dealt with too much brevity. Nevertheless, concepts such as compensation and occupational welfare could have been discussed at greater length than the limited attention they receive here. However, overall this part of Walker's book should be a very illuminating introduction to social security.

Effectiveness is the subject of the third part of the book. Crucial issues such as income replacement, poverty and redistribution are dealt with. The following part is devoted to issues of efficiency, with separate chapters discussing target efficiency, economic efficiency and administrative efficiency. Here again, the author employs examples from the welfare state cases, in addition to a large number of figures and tables in order to clarify key concepts linked to the economic aspects of social security. While much effort is clearly devoted to explaining complicated issues such as adequacy, poverty and redistribution and their measurement, some of the figures and formal definitions employ terminology that may deter some readers. I wonder if the potential audience of this textbook – students of social policy and welfare – would be likely to be enriched by this discussion? Often the sense is that for those lacking a substantial background in economics the going may be difficult at times.

A final part of the book seeks to summarise developments that are likely to have an impact on the way in which social security is likely to develop in the future. These include individualisation, globalisation and internationalism. The usefulness of this part of the book is that it does indeed manage to underline, and briefly discuss, some of the issues and dilemmas that are at the forefront of discussion on social security and the welfare state in the literature and in decision-making forums.

Social Security and Welfare offers students of social policy, and particularly those with a background in economics, a generally accessible and wide-ranging introduction to the key concepts in social security. Despite its limitations, which are perhaps inevitable in a volume that seeks to cover so much ground, this book will provide a very useful companion to those seeking to make some sense of this complicated universe and in particular those who seek to better understand the workings of social security systems beyond the borders of Great Britain.

JOHN GAL
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

J. Russell (2005), *Economics, Bureaucracy and Race: How Keynesians Misguided the War on Poverty*, New York: Columbia University Press, 244 pp., £16.00 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406230277

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the 'what ifs' of history. Such 'counterfactual' studies discuss what the implications would have been had key events taken a different turn. Few, however, have confronted such an intriguing set of possibilities as those that are raised by Judith Russell's account of the debates and machinations within Washington's policy-making elites in the early 1960s.

What if the War on Poverty had had at its core a massive job creation programme? Would it have eliminated the long-term 'structural' unemployment that was beginning to emerge, especially amongst black Americans? If so, would such a programme have prevented the rise in welfare rolls and the alleged collapse of the black family that occurred in the 1970s and early 1980s? Would that in turn have meant that subsequent welfare debates would not have been dominated by the spectre of welfare dependency, and that President Clinton would not have felt compelled to end welfare as Americans knew it?

Russell's central argument is that job creation and training programmes could have been the centrepiece of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. They were championed by Secretary

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of Labor Willard Wirz, they were a central demand of the civil rights movement and they would have been adopted by the newly elected President Johnson. Indeed, Russell argues convincingly that Johnson was far more committed to civil rights than Kennedy had been, and far more willing to find the federal monies to fund a jobs programme. But the Kennedy administration never worked up such a programme and one was never put to Johnson.

One reason for this was the nervousness of the Kennedy administration lest the War on Poverty be viewed as a 'black' programme. Another was the widespread scepticism about the capacity of the Department of Labor to administer such schemes. By far the most important reason for the omission of work programmes, however, was the intellectual dominance of the Keynesians who comprised Kennedy's Council of Economic Advisors. They were convinced that a general fiscal stimulus would suffice to reduce unemployment, and they dismissed Wirz's argument that there was a growing number of hard core jobless who lacked the skills and motivation to take advantage of an improving labour market. It was the influence of these 'fiscal Keynesians' that was decisive in switching the emphasis of the War on Poverty from job creation to community action programmes. They were soon proved to be wrong, but not before the political and economic conditions that made a major jobs programme feasible had passed. According to Russell, 'the die was cast in the fall and winter of 1963', and the USA has subsequently been plagued by the manifestations of an 'entrenched poverty' and 'near-permanent joblessness' that 'might never have evolved as they have' (p. 161).

The first thing to say is that this is a work of real scholarship, not speculation. Russell has delved deeply into the archives and oral histories of the Kennedy and Johnson Presidential Libraries and paints a vivid and striking picture. Indeed, students of New Labour may recognise her description of 'the brash shirt sleeved style' of the Kennedy 'warriors' and their desire for a 'showy innovative domestic program'. That said, the book is also very frustrating in two respects. First it simply takes it as read that a work creation strategy would have been successful in the 1960s. In fact, of course, the Public Sector Employment programmes introduced under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973 were largely ineffective, and Russell should have said more about why the earlier period was such a 'window of opportunity'. Secondly, she does not discuss the implications of her argument for the conservative critiques of welfare put forward by Charles Murray, Lawrence Mead and others. These critiques, of course, took as their starting point the failures of the very programmes whose origins she describes.

The book appears to be based upon a doctoral thesis that was completed in the late 1980s, and it would have benefited from an additional chapter reflecting on later welfare debates and literature. Even so, it is still a compelling account of a time when a US President sincerely and confidently committed his administration to the elimination of poverty in all its forms.

ALAN DEACON
University of Leeds

C. Talbot (2005), *The Paradoxical Primate*, Exeter: Imprint Academic, 96 pp., £8.95 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406240273

Colin Talbot's book is a bravura attempt to synthesise the insights of numerous disciplines in the natural and social sciences within a common framework, proceeding at a breakneck pace through the complexities of evolutionary theory, chaos theory, and a host more besides. His ambition is clear from the outset. He seeks to establish that we inhabit a world of paradox, where we face a daily struggle to resolve how our impulses and instincts (themselves the subject

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of internal tensions) interact with our social contexts. This interaction, he claims, produces infinite variety within what seem to be limited 'possibility spaces'.

As the main thrust of his thesis, this ambition is fulfilled. We can agree that individuals' behaviour is subject to a combination of tensions between 'paradoxical' instincts and 'paradoxical' institutions (and cultural environments). However, Talbot's claim that his model of paradoxical human instincts provides a robust bedrock upon which to build explanations of human behaviour may require more detailed support than that found in these relatively short 96 pages. Briefly, this model suggests that human behaviour varies according to how the tensions between four sets of 'paradoxical' human instincts are resolved (conformity–autonomy; co-operation–competition; peace-making–aggression; altruisim–selfishness). Talbot acknowledges that some commentators might find fault with his selection of variables (p. 83), and subsequently anticipates a number of criticisms. Nevertheless, he argues that his model is useful for 'communicating the basic ideas of paradoxical human social instincts'. This is fine in such a short text, but the criticisms must eventually be dealt with more substantially. The further justification of Talbot's model therefore remains an exciting prospect for future publications.

One key dimension of human behaviour that directly underpins his model appears to be beyond challenge – that people are both self-oriented and other-oriented. The evidence for this from a wide range of disciplines seems overwhelming (and Talbot is thorough in tracing much of this evidence). The author's inference that the different facets of these relationships (with self and with others) make for complex and tension-bound patterns of accommodation therefore seems entirely sensible. He places two aspects firmly under the microscope in considering individuals' behaviour: paradoxical institutions (and cultural environments) and paradoxical instincts. In terms of the contextual variables, it seems clear that within different cultural and institutional forms there are different patterns of accommodation between competing but also complementary sets of values, systems and practices (6, 2003; Birchall and Simmons, 2004). Similarly, the author's evolutionary explanations for the development of individuals' paradoxical instincts have a good (and growing) pedigree (Axelrod, 1984, 1997; Dawkins, 1989, 1998). Talbot then uses the idea of 'rational intelligence' (the choices we make both over competing instincts and values and over the less complex dilemmas and choices we confront) to attempt to show how such accommodations are reached, usefully making the point that rationality varies between individualistic and collectivistic positions. This is a believable rationality, showing that choice is not always self-oriented.

What seems to be unclear in this analysis, however, is any clear sense of the 'emergent properties' of these accommodations. Some sense of what kinds of patterns emerge when different elements within the model are combined (in other words explaining how the theory helps us to go beyond 'infinite variety') might be informative. In considering these issues, it might be helpful to return to the work of Bob Quinn (who Talbot cites as a key influence). In particular, Quinn and Hall's (1983) ideas around 'congruence' might provide a useful perspective. Further, the author has not engaged explicitly with some of the other interesting literatures around paradox. These include grid-group cultural theory (Thompson *et al.*, 1990) and Sieber's (1981) 'fatal remedies' (see Hood and Peters, 2005 for a review). These literatures may have helped to elucidate and categorise some of the ways in which the above tensions are settled.

In short, Talbot plots some interesting arguments in a very interdisciplinary way. The author's theme of consilience is apt in charting this intellectual territory. While it may not have been absolutely essential to span such a wide range of disciplines to identify these themes as an underpinning logic of social organisation and behaviour, the book is all the better for it. The author's project to demonstrate the congruence of insights from these different specialisms is

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both impressive and entirely in keeping with the spirit of the text. As a further contribution to the already 'warming' theme of paradox in the social sciences, it is therefore to be welcomed. The author's good nature and humour also help to keep the main arguments chugging along despite the occasional leaps he asks us to make in the course of his wide sweep of life, the universe, and everything (yes, he even takes in science fiction). His caution that much academic analysis in this area is too simplistic (either-or dualities) or overly complex (determinism vs. relativism) is a familiar one, but the persistence of both perils is good enough reason to reissue this 'health warning'. So, overall, this is a highly enjoyable text that should provoke readers to themselves consider how the intellectual space within their own disciplines might be either more complex or simpler than it currently seems.

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RICHARD SIMMONS
University of Stirling

A. Clarke, P. Allen, S. Anderson, N. Black and N. Fulop (eds) (2004), *Studying the Organisation and Delivery of Health Services: A Reader*, London: Routledge, 350 pp., £18.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S004727940625027X

This reader is intended as a companion volume to the 2001 *Studying the Organisation and Delivery of Health Services: Research Methods.* It contains 30 extracts, mainly from journals and mostly relating to the UK; each has been edited down to about 3000 words. They are arranged in six parts, grouped around six themes: workforce issues, evaluating models of service delivery, change management, studying health care organisation and two on aspects of patient- and carer-centred services. For each theme, the editors provide a short introduction in the form of a summary of the extracts which follow.

Books which describe themselves as 'readers' can perform a variety of roles – they are potentially very useful – for example, as teaching or learning aids – pulling together in one place a selection of illustrative material which can enliven and extend a didactic text. This one fulfils that role well, in support of its companion volume. They can also provide a wonderful opportunity for serendipity, which this reader also does. Depending upon one's inclination, there is a great opportunity here to dip into the mysteries of the under-use of coronary revascularisation procedures, or local labour market analysis of labour turnover in the NHS, or the impact of continuity of care on patient satisfaction with GP services.

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One is almost bound to come across something new and stimulating. Several of the extracts try to explore really complex issues. One, for example, is from a 2000 paper by Stephen Shortell and others which looks at whether particular aspects of 'organisational culture' (and specifically the use of Total Quality Management) have a discernible impact on clinical outcome, in this case, for patients having coronary artery bypass graft surgery: a massively important question – does the much-debated organisational culture (a vaunted panacea for so much) actually matter for patients. The answer, by the way, appears to be no! Others, such as the 1998 paper by Karen Hassell and colleagues, look at rather neglected but equally important topics (which have particular relevance in the light of current British health policy). Entitled 'Advice provided in British community pharmacies: what people want and what they get', we get a fascinating glimpse of the quotidian reality of front-line health care through an ethnographic lens.

But readers strengths can also be their weaknesses. If you are looking for depth rather than breadth – systematic coverage of a particular issue, for example, or you do not particularly want to work through the companion volume – 'readers' can be a little frustrating. The remit of this work is very broad – for each of the six themes, there is the full range of qualitative and quantitative approaches to cover: the macro, meso and micro levels of care; all the various relevant academic disciplines (psychology, epidemiology, economics, policy studies and the rest); all the staff groups in health care . . . and just 30 extracts between them.

Readers can also work well in fields where there is a small, established cannon of seminal texts with which anyone new to the area would wish to be familiar. Health service organisation and delivery is perhaps not such an area, though – for example, only two of the 30 extracts date from before 1990, and all but six are less than ten years old.

So who would get most from the book? Those primarily looking for guidance in the substantive topics (workforce issues or change management, for example), may find it too selective, and sometimes a little superficial. For example, in a discussion on pay and other rewards, the editors state: 'Health care managers need to ensure that doctors . . . have the opportunity to achieve an optimal balance.' But people interested in dipping their toes in health services research for the first time will find many examples of different approaches – varying methods, different sorts of research question, different settings – which will provoke thoughts and comparisons. Others will enjoy the serendipity. All would benefit from having a guide to get the best out of it – either in human form (a teacher) or through the companion volume.

MARCUS LONGLEY
University of Glamorgan

G. Room (2005), *The European Challenge: Innovation, Policy Learning and Social Cohesion in the New Knowledge Economy*, Bristol: The Policy Press, 200 pp., £22.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406260276

This book is about how understandings of growth, dynamism and innovation can be harnessed and used to generate policies to meet the needs of a rapidly transforming EU. It is set within the context of the EU's struggle to compete with the USA and Asia and secure a place in the economic transformations accompanying the evolution of new knowledge-based economies based on advances in Information Computer Technologies (ICT's).

It accomplishes the task of the catering for both newcomers to the field of policy studies in modern Europe and for experienced policy-makers wishing to keep abreast of new trends and patterns. It retains a sociological slant through the authors' ever-conscious awareness and explication of the re-structuring of social, economic and political relationships associated with

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globalisation and the impact these changes have for the quality and types of interactions taking place between actors in diverse fields.

The main point made throughout the book, is that data collection in relation to ICT's is so scant at present that it can only provide a partial view of the current state of affairs. This, in addition to other complexities arising out of the EU in relation to citizenship, political rights, state power and governance makes the role of policy makers incredibly precarious. The book highlights a wide range of barriers preventing a full catalogue of data collection on the use, users and take-up of ICT's to be completed. These include a frequent trade-off between timeliness and accuracy resulting in the employment of 'quick and dirty surveys' (p. 142), uncharted rules and relationships between private actors and public bodies in relation to data collection and provision, pertaining to issues such as confidentiality agreements and patent registers.

These barriers are what hinder the authors from making the connections between the information provided by research and data and policies that could be derived from them. The authors are quite expansive and meticulous in drawing the readers' attention to the diversity of agencies, both public (e.g. the European Innovation Scoreboard Indicators, and the EU Science and Technology Benchmarking Indicators used by the European Commission) and private sector (e.g. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education), who are involved in data collection. They also describe different kinds of shortcomings in the analysis of the relatively scant data that is available, resulting in two-dimensional instead of multi-dimensional understanding of factors relevant to different issues, and ultimately to policy development.

It is these widespread gaps in the range and depth of statistical analysis that makes the book a stilted read. Since no matter what field the authors venture to describe, e.g. private sector enterprise, education and training, public body relationships with private organisations, inter- and intra-organisational learning and transformation, there is insufficient data to guide policy development in any overarching and coherent overall strategy. This is captured most eloquently and straightforwardly through the point made that although it is important to assess the claim that new information technologies are displacing face-to-face relationships and undermining elements of social cohesion, there is insufficient data to assess this claim (p. 122).

I have a few minor quibbles with the book. It is stated that increased breadth in the use of ICT's will lead to improvements in quality of life (p. 51) but this not qualified. The authors recognise that there is a disjuncture between citizens as consumers and citizens as active participants, and I would venture that factors indicative of improved quality of life might be in tension, depending on which view of citizens you have in mind.

Loosely connected with this, is the fact that I noticed phrases such as 'virtuous use of ICT' and 'virtuous innovations' (p. 87) being used in the text but also without ever being qualified. What is meant by 'virtuous use of ICT's', within the context of the EU, relies also on virtuous uses of data collection and provision. However the EU is not a nation-state and each of its member states are relatively powerless to exercise control over social, economic and other activities by reference to their own boundaries – and that allows a lot of room for non-virtuous uses of data collection and provision both between member states and between the EU and external agencies. The authors don't have very much to say about the potential misuses of data collection.

They do however present a wealth of evidence supporting the cumulative disadvantage thesis (p. 113) which also challenges the virtuousness and ICT link. They repeatedly refer to the wonderful promises and the huge pitfalls of new knowledge economies. In particular they cite the increasing opaqueness of knowledge-based economies and the risks of excluding people from influencing the political and cultural direction of their societies. Despite this the book

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ends by suggesting that the EU is wedded to a strong agenda of social rights. For me, however, the fact that the word 'citizen' is only introduced on page 109 (of a total of 166 pages) suggests that the citizen is very much conceived of as a change-taker and not a change-maker (p. 133).

GRAINNE KETELAAR
University of Ulster

N. Pearce and W. Paxton (eds) (2005), *Social Justice: Building a Fairer Britain*, Institute for Public Policy Research/Politico's, 406 pp., £9.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406270272

At the time of writing, social justice has again become the flavour of the month within the UK at least. New Labour claimed the title of the party of social justice when it was first elected in 1997; the Liberal party leadership election has led to counter-claims that that mantle belongs to the UK's third party; and the election of a new Conservative Party leader was followed swiftly by the establishment of a Commission on Social Justice, chaired by a former Conservative Leader who had himself recently established a Centre for Social Justice. The term is espoused also on both political left or right elsewhere in the world. Is social justice then to become one of those weasel phrases or words, like 'community', which means everything or nothing?

Although analyses of the meaning of justice, or social justice, can be found in the mainstream of political philosophy, from Aristotle and Plato onwards, theoretical debates within the UK date effectively from the first publication of John Rawls major work, *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1971). The term did not significantly enter the political lexicon until the creation of the Commission of Social Justice, at a time (1992) of widening and deepening inequalities after 13 years of Conservative rule. John Smith, then leader of the Labour Party, died before the Commission's report (Borrie, 1994) was published but New Labour picked up much of the rhetoric of the book as it prepared for its eventual election in 1997.

The Commission's work was supported both in terms of its research and administration by the (then relatively new) Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR). IPPR decided ten years on to return to this issue. In some ways, then, this is an audit of progress of eight years – the first two terms – of the New Labour government, the book being published as New Labour was poised to enter its third consecutive term of office, a term in which tensions between 'Old Labour' and New Labour are coming more obviously to the surface as the Blairite project appears to be moving further away from a leftist policy position on many key issues.

The first difficulty with the book as a critique lies in its close connections with the New Labour project. Seen from outside the metropolis, the criticism of a 'revolving door' (once applied critically to the movement of senior civil servants and politicians from government to private business and back again) could now equally be applied to the work of many think tanks, not least the IPPR. As a political critique, then, the book is something of a curate's egg, given that a substantial number of the authors have been senior advisers to the government about which they are now writing. The metropolitan focus of the list of authors, more than three-quarters of whom work or are domiciled in London, also means that at least one interesting opportunity is lost, which is to explore the extent to which the creation of devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and (albeit intermittently) Northern Ireland has led to differing understandings of social justice. Both the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly have badged many of their programmes as social justice programmes and it remains as yet unanswered as to whether this actually means a divergence in terms of policy or outcomes. Perhaps the IPPR wanted to keep a strong consensus in terms of its 'line' (perhaps illustrated best by Geoff Mulgan's comment that 'Labour's positioning still looks broadly right' – his ambiguity, not mine) but it seems

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extraordinary that the book did not make use of the many commentators outside London who might have made a significant contribution to the book. There are many who would have had other perspectives on the impact of the New Labour project, for example in terms of key issues such as employment policy, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, rural policy, the impact of New Labour on the voluntary and community sectors, or regional devolution.

In reality, the book is a mix of theory and critique with several chapters reflecting on emerging understandings of social justice and half the 16 chapters reviewing some key policy areas such as migration, welfare provision, the environment, employment, education, crime and the economy more generally. Some chapters could not have been written in 1994: for example, the chapters on migration, globalisation and the environment, themes which are now very much at the forefront of policy discourse. Other chapters, notably the chapter on the relationship between happiness and social justice, push the boat out to areas of debate which are far from being in the mainstream of debates about the goals of social justice – yet. One major lacuna is the absence of any serious discussion of the issue of 'race' in almost all of the individual chapters. Given the continuing impoverishment of some ethnic minority groups, the disturbances in Northern cities (which were certainly observed from London), the Islamophobic impact of the so-called 'war on terror' and debates on community cohesion, integration and multiculturalism, this is an extraordinary omission, not compensated for by a small discussion within a broader analysis of migration policy.

There can be no doubt that the impact of the New Labour project has been uneven: it has made life better on many dimensions for many people and has lifted some children across the poverty line. But evidence increasingly suggests it has not fundamentally addressed the profound inequalities of income and wealth it inherited, and it is raising serious concerns about its stance towards human rights and its increasingly authoritarian or market-led positions on other key policy issues. Many commentators would argue that it has drifted substantially from the centre-left rhetoric of the Borrie Commission to a centre or even centre-right position.

The chapter on attitudes to social justice suggest strongly that public opinion is hostile to the levels of poverty and inequality in the country and will pay to address them if improvements in service provision follow and the principles of reciprocity and entitlement are upheld in so doing. The conclusion of the book however is that the gaps in social justice which New Labour needs to address are somewhat more modest, to do with the emerging 'crisis of care', 'greater progression within the labour market' and 'the need to reduce child poverty'. As the final section observes, this is a question of political leadership; how New Labour has got to where it is and whether it is possible to move it in a substantially different direction is the subject of another book, one written probably at greater political distance.

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GARY CRAIG
University of Hull

S. Edwards (2005), *Disability: Definitions, Value and Identity*, Abingdon: Radcliffe Publishing, 156 pp., £24.95 pbk.
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Discussion about disability has for a long time foundered on the problem of definition. Who are 'disabled people'? Is there any point in trying to establish a collective identity for a group of

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people who not only have very different needs, but also cross class, race, and gender categories? If there is point, especially in terms of welfare provision, how can it be done? Recent theorists could be described as occupying a place on a continuum of explanation, where the opposing ends are an 'individual' or a 'social' model of disability. In the former, definitions of 'the disabled' link disability to an individual impairment or lack; in the latter, while individuals may be impaired, 'disability' is located in the lack of access and services provided in the public sphere. Both definitions have implications for any discussion of disability, especially in resourcing need. Both definitions have strength and weaknesses, and both can be defended from ideological or political perspectives as well as from practical locations. This book offers a clear, well-argued and philosophical assessment of the positions, and formulates an alternative way of considering disability.

Steven Edwards writes from a philosophical perspective and style. He presents his arguments in clear stages, taking into account all possible considerations, and building a case for both defining disability and for using a particular definition. The great strength of this book seems to me to lie in the clear exposition of what disability is, and of how that definition of category is reflected or contradicted by current discussion, provision and social assumption. This is a running thread throughout the book, though the main arguments are presented and analysed in Part 1. It is a welcome addition to that discussion, and takes the problem past oppositional definitions. Added to this, his style is crystal clear so that even readers or students new to the debate will understand the arguments.

Part two of the book addresses a policy issue in the sense that Edwards shapes his discussion of 'a good human life' through arguments about pre-natal screening and the potential termination of pregnancy. His main focus is that there is little or no philosophical support for the idea that a foetus with evidence of impairment will become a disabled person and therefore not able to have a good life. He argues that this premise is based on assumption not logic and reflects normative devaluing of disability. His carefully built argument is irrefutable and can be adapted for use by campaigners in a variety of fields. However, he builds this argument around two examples, one of a fictitious 'syndrome Z' and one from a single first person account of pregnancy termination given in the press. Readers used to a research base for argument may find this unsatisfactory. Certainly for me, the personalisation of the argument became distracting. The third part of the book, 'disablement and the person' does not follow this path. It is the most purely philosophical part of the work, concentrating on implications of a disabled identity for individual persons. Here, Edwards argues that disability is identity constitutive, rather than an identity in itself.

Steven Edwards does not set out to locate his discussion in public policy. He explicitly refuses to explore the implications of his argument for tax payers and welfare providers, except in the broadest possible terms. However, tax payers and welfare providers are also stumbling to provide an effective and useful definition of disability. Current discussion of who is sufficiently ill or disabled to receive incapacity benefit is a case in point. Gate-keeping this benefit requires some decision about what constitutes disability, and what value system underlies our treatment of disabled people. To this extent, this book is a timely and useful contribution to policy discussion. It does not, and does not attempt to, contribute to knowledge about the individual or the social experience of being a disabled person. Nor does it contribute directly to social policy discussion about ways in which the welfare of disabled people can or should be provided for. It does provide a readable, clear and well-formed discussion about ways in which disability is interpreted and how these interpretations reflect value judgements about disabled people. Professor Edwards is meticulous in presenting an argument of worth that will contribute to all people and disciplines that need to explore disability in a constructive way. This book looks beyond a narrow physiological or medical discourse and raises fundamental

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questions about what it is to be a person, disabled or not, and what it is to lead a good life.

CLARE BECKETT
University of Bradford

J.A. Morone and L.R. Jacobs (eds) (2005), *Healthy, Wealthy and Fair: Health Care and the Good Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 382 pp., £18.50 hbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406290275

Although the United States is the wealthiest nation in the world, it is by no means the healthiest. In *Healthy, Wealthy and Fair*, Morone and Jacobs compile leading scholars' perspectives on the reasons for persistent health inequalities in the US. In Part I, Ichiro Kawachi demonstrates how poorly the US compares to other industrialised nations along key indicators of well-being. Lawrence Jacobs draws attention to health disparities that exist *within* the American populace. Both authors argue that one of the main underlying factors for these disparities is the high degree of economic inequality in the US.

Part II begins with Deborah Stone's argument that wide disparities in healthcare access are attributable to market ideology. Instead of a healthcare financing and delivery system based on the principle of 'medical need', the US has adopted a market-based arrangement that prioritises concepts like 'consumer preference'. Stone gives concrete examples of how market principles in the healthcare system play out negatively in the everyday lives of marginalised populations. Mark Schlesinger provides an historical account of how the market, as a conceptual frame, developed in the US. Schlesinger also points out, however, that the adoption of market principles may not be as strong as commonly thought and that there may be fault lines in the seeming hegemony of market ideology.

Part III focuses on the roles of organised labour and interest groups in the healthcare arena, both of which have had negative consequences for disadvantaged groups. Marie Gottschalk argues that organised labour has become so enmeshed in the patchwork policies of employment-based social welfare provision that its position now reinforces the status quo. Constance Nathanson discusses how the political culture of the US helps to erect barriers to representation for disadvantaged minority groups, which in turn has profound implications for advancing their interests.

Part IV begins with Mark Peterson's analysis of healthcare reform efforts in the US legislature. Peterson's stark, indeed shocking, reminder that 'not a single health care reform initiative has ever come to a vote on the floor of either chamber of the US Congress' (p. 209) gives weight to his characterisation of the legislature as a 'graveyard' for reform. Peter Jacobson and Elizabeth Selvin argue that pinning hopes for reform on the judicial branch of government is also highly problematic because courts are much more willing to defer to the legislature and/or the market on questions of large-scale social change.

Parts V and VI identify success stories and formulate strategies for improvement. Colleen Grogan and Eric Patashnik trace Medicaid's roots as a stigmatised program for the poor to an expanded and more widely accepted entitlement serving various beneficiaries. Elizabeth Kilbreth and James Morone point to the success of school-based health centres, highlighting the effectiveness of joining middle-class demands for services with efforts to reduce inequality.

The chapter entitled 'Thinking Big' begins, somewhat ironically, with Lawrence Brown's argument in support of incremental change. Brown notes that 'the case for incrementalism in US health policy is not that it is the best, or even a very good, approach but rather that it is, politically, as good as it gets' (p. 323). Benjamin Page notes that contrary to prevailing myths,

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most Americans want more egalitarian public policies. The main roadblocks to enacting such measures, he argues, is the complex, decentralised nature of the US federalist system and the high degree of political inequality within it.

In the conclusion, the volume's editors contextualise current inequalities in light of globalisation and point to the inadequate response of the US government in protecting citizens from changing economic forces. They encourage reform advocates to think big and recommend insuring healthcare for all Americans, increasing access to higher education, and protecting the wages of less-skilled workers.

This volume succeeds in documenting the degree of inequality in healthcare and in providing evidence of some root causes, but there are two main shortcomings. One is the book's almost exclusive attention to coverage/access as the reason for disparities in health. This is an important 'bird's eye' view of the problem but there are considerations that go beyond this structural level that deserve mention. Readers wanting more information on how healthcare delivery affects disparities will need to find other resources (e.g. Institute of Medicine, 2003). Second, the recommendations in the final part of the book, and to some degree within each chapter, do not provide much detail. The editors argue early on that overcoming health inequalities in the US will require big thinking and bold action. As they state: 'Small reforms will not remake a political economy that reverberates with self-interest' (p. 14). However, a comprehensive plan for moving beyond small reform is lacking. These limitations notwithstanding, this book contains an impressive set of scholarly essays that would be highly valuable to those interested in US health policy, and particularly those committed to reducing health disparities.

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STACI T. LOWE
University of Wisconsin-Madison

G. Hayward and S. James (2004), *Balancing the Skills Equation: Key Issues and Challenges for Policy and Practice*, Bristol: Policy Press, 254 pp., £22.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S004727940630027X

Introducing the key themes of *Balancing the Skills Equation* in their opening chapter, Hayward and James describe their task as a critical examination of policy makers' assumptions around the apparent link between national competitiveness and the need for action on workforce skills. The remaining 11 chapters report from a range of organisational settings, policy contexts and national debates to collectively challenge the idea that productivity gaps in western economies can be explained only with reference to skills gaps, which can be addressed only through government intervention on the supply-side. Conversely, the authors draw attention to the need to engage employers as full partners, as providers and users of vocational education and training (VET).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the book has a strong focus on UK VET. Chapters by Fernandez and Hayward (on provision for 14–19 year olds), Fuller and Unwin (on variable quality of provision and outcomes produced by MAs), and Stanton and Bailey (tracing the series of missed opportunities and 'false starts' that have plagued post-war VET policy) form a powerful critique of a system where employer voluntarism and funding gaps, combined with

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the political deployment of VET mechanisms to soak up unemployment in times of recession, have undermined halting attempts to develop a consistent approach to workforce training and development.

Stanton and Bailey's critique of English training policy particularly highlights the damaging effects of voluntarism, and the resulting dislocation between VET provision and employers. The same authors are strongly critical of the operation of Training and Enterprise Companies in the 1980s and 1990s, and the perverse incentives provided by their 'output-oriented' funding of NVQs, which rewarded numbers of qualifications achieved with little reference to the quality or suitability of training. If Stanton and Bailey are still a little forgiving of the mistakes made during this period and since, Keep and Payne's chapter on the 'changing meaning of skill' offers a withering and sometimes darkly satirical analysis of the implementation of the competence-based NVQ system since its establishment in 1986, modelled, they argue, on 'discredited behaviourist learning principles' from the US. Many educationalists will identify with Keep and Payne's critique of how 'the competence movement descended on skill', imposing a form of 'extreme technicist reductionism' so that even the lowest level work task could be certified as an 'acquired competence or quasi-skill'. The authors are perhaps on less certain ground with their more general complaint about the broadening of the definition of skill, which the shift towards competence-based VET undoubtedly reflects. Their concern that the inclusion of personal attributes such as motivation and attitude under the concept of 'skill' risks robbing the term of any real meaning is understandable. But surely we must accept that the dominance of the service sector within western economies means that how workers behave towards customers is, justifiably, of crucial importance to employers? And if these behavioural attributes (we need not, and should not, call them skills) are not present among elements of the workforce, there may be a case for supply-side intervention. Keep and Payne, to an extent, acknowledge this reality with a nod towards the important work on 'aesthetic labour' and VET conducted by Chris Warhurst and Dennis Nickson.

Finally, *Balancing the Skills Equation* also provides a useful international perspective. Greenwald's comparison of school–business collaborations in the UK and US notes the potential gains in providing young people with preparation for the workplace, but also warns against the sidelining of educationalists' concerns that an uneven distribution of corporate support could reinforce inequalities (an argument with resonance for the current debate on city academies). Ertl contributes an informative discussion of the current struggle to reform the German 'dual' system, while De Meulemeester and Rochat point to the role of the EU in reinforcing national governments' collective obsession with developing individuals' employability as the main route to increased productivity. Huag's chapter on the progress of the Bologna Process on Higher Education identifies parallel themes in EU-level approaches to both HE and VET provision, with 'meeting employers' needs' through measures to promote employability an increasingly important priority.

Balancing the Skills Equation acts as a timely reminder of the need for employers to be full partners in the drive to create high-skilled economies and workforces, as opposed to merely passive consumers of their benefits. The chapters that retain a strong empirical focus, which provide the basis for the above remarks, will be of greatest interest to most readers. These chapters provide the evidence for the book's articulately framed challenge to European policy makers, to move beyond the simplistic rhetoric of individual employability, and engage employers in an attempt to develop a consistent analysis of the way forward for VET policy.

COLIN LINDSAY
Napier University

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N. Manning and N. Tikhonova (eds) (2004), *Poverty and Social Exclusion in the New Russia*, London: Ashgate, 288 pp., £49.95 hbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406310276

Since the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, economic and social conditions have fluctuated drastically. These changing conditions have had, for the most part, negative effects: falling life expectancy (particularly for men), increasing crime rates, high inflation, and increasing poverty and income inequality, especially following the 1998 economic crisis. The authors, building on previous work that documented these trends in the late 1990s, now ask whether these negative effects are the painful, yet temporary, consequences of economic transition, or whether these effects will persist, contributing to long-term social stratification and the emergence of a socially excluded underclass. Rather than building a statistical picture of poverty in Russia, the authors approach this question by carefully examining the processes leading to poverty, as well as the subjective experience of poverty in 105 poor households in Russia.

The families interviewed are drawn from three urban centres in three different regions: Moscow, Volgograd and Vladikavkaz, the capital of North Ossetia. The authors are careful to include a variety of families in this small sample, including single-parent households, ethnic minority households (in this case, ethnic Ossetians) and the multigenerational households common in the former Soviet Union. The study used scales of markers of social deprivation along seven dimensions: work, medical care, education, culture, relationships and social networks, autonomy, and housing. Interviewees were also allowed to identify their own markers of poverty, which might serve as useful metrics for future studies.

Overall, the authors conclude that the effects of transition on poor households in the post-Soviet decade are not temporary. Poor households initially relied on social networks, family and friends for resources, but these social networks are slowly being depleted. These networks are changing in nature, with social contacts increasingly providing simple economic resources such as food and cash, rather than job opportunities and connections that will lead to long-term prosperity. Although there is no single predictor of a slide into poverty, several risk factors emerged: alcoholism, job loss, regional conflict (in North Ossetia) and family breakdown. These risk factors, although often one-time events, lead to a series of decisions and circumstances that further entrench poverty in the household. Families over time report increasing hopelessness, shame and inertia, which leads to further impoverishment.

The authors also gather evidence of an emerging social class that is truly excluded, rather than just poor. Families that are initially just income-poor become increasingly excluded as they lack the material resources to access social networks and cultural institutions, including educational opportunities, newspapers and other media, cultural events and visits to families and friends. Throughout their discussion of these interview findings the authors, quite rightly, emphasise that, although low income often leads to social deprivation, there is more to social exclusion than just being materially poor.

This study of contemporary poverty in Russia provides a more holistic view of the costs of transition than aggregate economic statistics could yield, even if, as the authors are careful to note, the qualitative nature of the analysis and the small sample size makes the findings from this study somewhat limited in terms of applicability. The authors do ultimately augment their qualitative work with some quantitative analysis of a pan-Russian household survey, which generally support the interview findings. The introductory chapters also help place what would otherwise be an insular case study into a larger context, although it would have been even more helpful if this introductory material also included more background on social and economic inequalities prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union, particularly with regards to how these Soviet-era conditions could have contributed to current patterns.

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The 'natural experiment' of economic transition to capitalism allow us to see in action the dynamic pathways that lead to poverty and exclusion that might well apply in other contexts, and it is unfortunate that the authors do not try to place their findings into some sort of international context. Indeed, the emerging social and economic inequalities along racial and regional dimensions, as well as the processes that lead to these inequalities, seem very similar to patterns and processes of stratification in other industrialised countries. Ultimately, however, this book marks an important contribution to the literature on the mechanisms of social stratification, particularly along dimensions other than income.

ANNIE DUDE
University of Chicago

J. Dixon and M. Stein (2005), *Leaving Care: Throughcare and Aftercare in Scotland*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing, 191 pp., £19.99 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0047279406320272

The subject of leaving care has, in the past two decades, turned into a veritable cottage industry. Mike Stein, one of the authors of this book, has been heavily involved in the field since the mid 1980s. Both authors come from the Social Work Research and Development Unit (SWRDU) at the University of York. The research on which this book is based was commissioned by the Scottish Executive and was designed to remedy our relative lack of knowledge on the nature of the problems in Scotland.

Nowadays, research on this subject needs to take account of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 (to which, indeed, Mike Stein made a considerable contribution). That point is qualified here and this particular research, focussing on Scotland, reflects the increasing significance of devolution to the debates that take place on this subject in different parts of the UK. In any case, the implementation of the Children (Leaving Care) Act was delayed in Scotland and the bulk of the research on which this book was based was conducted between 1999 and 2001. The overarching legislative context here is the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

The research consisted of (1) a national questionnaire survey of Scottish local authorities and other agencies on the leaving care services that they provide and (2) case studies of three local authorities ('County', 'City' and 'Shire') that use different models of leaving care provision. This second part of the research involved surveying 107 young care leavers and their support workers. Finally, a subset of both groups was involved in a six-month follow-up study.

It should be said, first, that as a research report the book is a significant and welcome contribution to this field. It will certainly be valuable to leaving care workers or potential leaving care workers in Scotland and to any policy-makers, professionals (and social work students) that are likely to come into contact with care leavers or to develop initiatives for them.

However, one of the frequent defects of such books is that they are often not sufficiently translated from detailed accounts of a project and its results into something that meets the needs of a wider audience. That defect applies, to some degree, here. In places, one drowns in a plethora of data. Also, the book has a curiously ahistorical air. From reading it, one does not get a sense that care leavers had been the subject of significant national policy concern and action by the UK Labour government since 1997. The location of care leavers within wider policy debates about tackling social exclusion is absent.

The profile of these young people is similar to that from other leaving care studies. As a consequence, the results – on the important of placement stability and continuity, of education and adequate leaving care preparation, for example – are not unexpected. That is why it is so important, and welcome here, that we understand the human side of this story by looking at

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the direct, lived experiences of these young people. One of the best features of the book is the extensive use of quotations from young people in order to highlight the issues. On the other hand, this would have been better if it had been integrated into the discussion of findings. As it is, the quotations tend to be tagged on to the end of discussions and just used to illustrate or raise particular themes.

The overuse of statistical data is particularly evident in the chapter on the follow-up study. Given the small sample size, the plethora of statistics about this group isn't necessarily that helpful. The chapter comes into its own later, when it considers the qualitative advice of the young people on what makes a difference in leaving care. Indeed, these data are under-exploited. It is presented minimally in clusters of comments on specific subjects (being positive, not leaving care too soon, getting an education, staying out of 'trouble' and getting support).

While the methods and results were generally coherent and worthwhile, one area of concern for me was that there was insufficient questioning of the data provided by local authorities in the first part of the project, the survey. What is the difference, for example, between policies on paper and practice? In truth, we don't know and it is difficult (probably impossible) to research the issue on this sort of scale. However, it ought at least to have been considered and discussed. The survey data are valuable, but it shouldn't be accepted uncritically as a statement of the facts within local authorities.

The conclusions are helpful, but in most cases these actually focus on recent policy rather than drawing on the research already presented. The emphasis on the centrality of educational achievement is welcome. So, too, is the point about the relatively early age of leaving care (it cannot be often enough emphasised that these young people are becoming independent in the mid to late teens, which is much younger than their non-care peers). However, not enough is made of it. It is, surely, the single biggest explanatory factor in the history of failure that is UK leaving care provision.

Overall, this is a welcome book that sheds particular light on the relatively neglected research area of the Scottish leaving care experience. While it does suffer from an overly narrow focus on the research and its findings, within its limitations it provides much valuable data that can help spark wider debates on leaving care provision within Scotland.

JIM GODDARD
University of Bradford

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