

be imposed on private property. However, even though the author provides some of the reasons for the development of restrictions in this period, this reviewer was left wanting to know more about the forces driving the increased popularity of regulating and controlling residential space. What, in Fogelson's view, accounts for the transformation of the consciousness of the home buyer between 1880 and 1920? How did the sanctity of private property become less important? Why did the fears become operative at this time? The reason that he gives, the desire for permanence in the face of rapid change, may well be true, but the point needs to be more forcefully made and with more evidence. Similarly, he makes a powerful claim that restrictive covenants were universal by the inter-war period, at least in America's burgeoning middle-class districts. Statements such as 'by the 1920s many middle-class subdivisions were restricted' (p. 77) litter the study. There can be little doubt that a proportion of the suburban middle class (and some of the working class as well) lived under restrictive covenants. However, Fogelson makes no attempt to provide any evidence for just how many. Nor does he show how many lived under rigorous and less rigorous restrictions. Despite these limitations, Fogelson has written a wonderfully accessible, interesting, timely and important book that will appeal to the student and to the academic.

**R. Lewis**

University of Toronto

**John Welshman**, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded 1880–2000*. London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006. xxix + 271pp. Bibliography. £25.00.  
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The idea of an 'underclass' has been an important part of poverty discourses over the last 120 years. In this book, John Welshman performs a valuable service in tracing its reconstructions from the late nineteenth-century concept of the 'residuum' right up to New Labour's redefinition of poverty as 'social exclusion'. In the process, he implicitly asks the question: what continuities and discontinuities can be observed as every generation seems to rediscover its own 'underclass'?

A variety of late nineteenth-century social commentators were convinced that a growing 'residuum' existed in densely populated urban areas. (Interestingly, in Britain there was not the same discussion of a 'rural residuum' as occurred in the USA.) Yet it remained an elusive, chimerical concept, unamenable to empirical verification, and co-existing uneasily (for example, in the writings of Charles Booth) alongside more economic analyses that located the causes of poverty in structural factors such as the trade cycle. Indeed, some later poverty investigators (notably, Rowntree and Bowley) remained little influenced by it. However, the inter-war years witnessed the rise of eugenics: hereditarian models of transmission appeared to demonstrate that there was a 'social problem group' that was growing in size. Yet empirical studies (such as that by E.J. Lidbetter) were vague and speculative – and certainly insufficiently convincing to muster enough public or political support for suggested remedies such as voluntary sterilization. As Welshman rightly argues, inter-war eugenics is more interesting for its symbolic importance than for its tangible achievements.

Drawing on his already-published and important articles on the 'problem family' concept of the 1940s and 1950s, Welshman then analyses this next reconstruction, exploring the tensions that existed between the three principal participants in the

debate over whether a recognizable sub-class of such incorrigible families existed – the Family Service Units, the Eugenics Society and some medical officers of health. Once again, the most enduring feature of the ‘underclass’ concept was the strongly held conviction by its advocates that the dysfunctional behavioural traits of its members could be vividly described; yet research studies once again produced results that were inconclusive. The American poverty debates of the 1960s were in part underpinned by the ‘culture of poverty’ idea – no less ambiguous than its predecessors, and equally difficult to verify empirically: value judgments of self-damaging behaviours were often highly class-selective. Welshman shows how the theories of Oscar Lewis engendered considerable debate, partly because they were open to different interpretations, and were woven into the War on Poverty’s community action recipes (which also had an influence on the British Community Development Projects). In perhaps the strongest section of the book, Welshman traces the controversy over Sir Keith Joseph’s ‘cycle of deprivation’ concept of the early 1970s – yet again, an unwitting revival of many of the familiar themes. Finally, there is a discussion of the American ‘underclass’ debate of the 1980s, which justified the conservative-led ‘welfare backlash’ and the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. It was to an extent imported into Britain, but received a generally hostile reception.

This book provides a comprehensive and detailed account of a tantalizing, controversial and long-enduring perspective on poverty. As such, it will be a welcome addition to the existing literature, filling a large gap. The scope of the book is commendably ambitious, and this seems to have necessitated a very ‘history of ideas’ approach, in which competing theories tend to be outlined in a rather descriptive way, without an explanation of background socio-economic changes. The American ‘underclass’ debate, for example, is really a debate over rival interpretations of very complex long-run trends in poverty, employment, ethnic achievement, family formation and so on, going back to the 1930s, and these trends need to be explained if the competing interpretations are to be properly understood. Again, a more critical analysis of some of the participants’ ideas would have been useful: Charles Murray’s *Losing Ground* (1984) may have been ‘brilliantly argued’, but it was subjected to a devastating critique by American social scientists. However, doing full justice to this important topic would probably have required a book of unreasonable length. As it is, its long history has been well presented and documented.

**J. Macnicol**

London School of Economics

**Daniel Eli Burnstein**, *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 232pp. £24.95.

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In *Next to Godliness: Confronting Dirt and Despair in Progressive Era New York City*, Daniel Burnstein addresses the significance of Progressive Era reform politics though the lens of debates over street cleaning. He argues that Progressives consistently associated physical disorder, in the form of dirt and litter, with social disorder and immorality. For Progressives, dirty cities represented immorality and disorder among their citizenry. The classic Progressive concern with environmental