

Third Edition

AMERICAN SOCIAL WELFARE POLICY



A Pluralist
Approach

Howard Jacob Karger
David Stoesz

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A PLURALIST APPROACH

THIRD EDITION

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With a Chapter on the American Welfare State
in International Perspective

by **James Midgley**



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PREFACE

As we finish the third edition of *American Social Welfare Policy*, we realize that in each edition we have faced vastly different challenges. In the first edition, the challenge was to chronicle and analyze the patchwork quilt of American social welfare policies and programs, while at the same time trying to make sense of them. In effect, we were challenged with organizing the American welfare state into a coherent framework that made it understandable. In the second edition, we were challenged with analyzing the welfare state after 12 consecutive years of Republican control of the White House. The verdict: America's welfare state remained standing, if a little bruised and battered.

This final challenge is perhaps the most difficult. In this edition we have had to confront a very different welfare state. Long the whipping boy for Republicans and conservative Democrats, the public assistance portion of the welfare state was no longer being battered but was being systematically deconstructed at its roots. Because of the importance of the elderly vote and the supposedly inviolate nature of the social insurances (e.g., Social Security and Medicare), they have emerged from the last four years relatively unscathed. Arguably, public assistance programs have been sacrificed in order to protect the social insurances. But since the social insurances account for the majority of welfare state expenditures, it remains to be seen whether they, too, will be "reformed" under a conservative One-hundred-fifth Congress and the second term of the Clinton presidency. Nevertheless, this is a welfare

state that Ronald Reagan and the conservative think tanks had only dreamed about. They dreamed of a welfare state that devolved virtually all responsibility for public assistance from the federal to the state level through block grants, a welfare state that overturned more than 30 years of precedent and dis-entitled the nation's poor from its claim to public assistance. Remarkably, it took a centrist Democrat to bring to fruition the "Reagan Revolution." In the midst of the euphoria surrounding the election of the first Democratic president in 12 years, we could not have guessed in late 1992 that the welfare state would change more in the past 4 years than in the preceding 60 years.

In 1994, America elected the Republican One-hundred-fourth Congress. Far to the right of any Congress in recent memory, this body proceeded to craft a social agenda that would have been unimaginable even in the halcyon days of the Reagan administration. Affirmative action and other race- and gender-based policies were under attack. Gay and lesbian rights received a serious blow when Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act, effectively outlawing homosexual marriages. The rapid and unbridled growth of for-profit human-service corporations was nothing short of stunning. The Aid to Families to Dependent Children (AFDC) program was replaced by the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), a program that rescinded the legal entitlement to public assistance received by the poor since the 1935 Social Security Act. TANF also used capped funding and block grants to devolve the responsibility

for administering public welfare to the states. This occurred despite the fact that the 1935 Social Security Act federalized public welfare precisely because the states were unable to mount a viable public welfare system. Despite evidence to the contrary, the American public was led to believe that today the states are capable of running innovative and fair public welfare systems.

Privatization and block grants were everywhere by 1996. At the time of this writing, the state of Texas was actively recruiting bids from private companies to run its public welfare system. Even the Department of Housing and Urban Development had plans to devolve federal responsibility for public housing to the states through block grants. All of these bills and policies were either signed, endorsed, or condoned by the first Democratic president in 12 years. Not surprisingly, by 1996 traditional welfare liberals stood in stunned silence, too numbed by the events of the past two years to even mount a counteroffensive.

When institutional practices are so out of line with human requirements, momentum builds to change social programs. This seems to have taken two forms in relation to social welfare in the United States. On the one hand, many human-service professionals are leaving the traditional settings of welfare practice—the voluntary and governmental sectors—in favor of new settings—the corporate sector and private practice. On the other hand, recent welfare reform measures have penalized disenfranchised populations—women, racial minorities, the aged, children, the handicapped, and immigrants—who have been a traditional concern of welfare professionals. As a result, much of what we understand to be social welfare in America is in flux; yet welfare professionals are exerting little influence in redefining this important social institution.

The failure of welfare professionals to act effectively in the area of social welfare policy is troubling. It is difficult to imagine changes in health policy or legal policy that did not involve the collaboration of physicians or attorneys. Yet, social workers were not consulted in the crafting of the Personal Responsibility and Work Act of 1996, the most comprehen-

sive welfare reform bill in 35 years. Social workers have not played a prominent role in welfare policy for some time. Such was not always the case. Mary Richmond proved instrumental in the Charity Organization Society movement; Jane Addams became a heroine through her work in the settlement movement; and Harry Hopkins championed programs pioneered by the New Deal. More recently, Wilbur Cohen engineered important parts of the programs that comprised the War on Poverty. But few social workers of national prominence have emerged since the Great Society programs of the 1960s.

Fortunately, this omission is being addressed, albeit in a somewhat haphazard fashion. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has mobilized a political action committee. In 1984, Barbara Mikulski, a social worker from Maryland, was elected to the United States Senate joining Ron Dellums, a representative from California, and "Ed" Towns, a representative from New York, as the only members of Congress who are social workers. It remains to be seen whether the large mass of welfare professionals will become accustomed to thinking about social welfare policy. We hope so. This book reflects our belief that social welfare policy has an immediate and profound effect on the work of welfare professionals, and our conviction is that welfare programs could be made more humane and better respond to the needs of the people they serve if these professionals were more actively engaged in setting social policy.

OUR APPROACH

In trying to bridge this gap, we have adopted a "pluralist approach" to social welfare policy. In doing so, we have organized the book around the primary sectors that have evolved in American social welfare: the **voluntary sector**, the **governmental sector**, and, more recently, both the **corporate sector** and **private practice**. These sectors have addressed the problems that presented themselves at different periods in our national life. Today, these sectors of American social welfare coexist, reflecting a diversity that is as characteristic of American pluralism as they are sometimes maddening to the student of welfare policy analysis.

The rationale for our approach is straightforward. First, social welfare encompasses, in the American experience, a complicated arrangement of policies and programs. A pluralist approach helps sort out the major institutional actors and introduces a measure of order to what might otherwise appear to be institutional anarchy. Second, many welfare professionals (and, for that matter, nonprofessionals) begin their careers in agencies of the voluntary sector. Unfortunately, these agencies are not always given the credit they deserve. In our judgment, the voluntary sector is an integral component of social welfare in the United States, even if it relates to policy with a small *p*. Our emphasis on the voluntary sector is based on the belief that as public policy shifts, more of the welfare burden will be transferred from the government to the private sector. Third, a proprietary, corporate sector has rapidly emerged during the last two decades, providing a substantial volume of services and a corresponding number of employment opportunities for human-service professionals. Failure to recognize the importance of this sector is tantamount to ignoring what is probably the most important development in social welfare since the War on Poverty and possibly even since the New Deal. Finally, many social workers have found private practice, independent of the organizational restraints associated with the voluntary, governmental, and corporate sectors, an attractive method of service delivery. The popularity of private practice among human-service professionals justifies its inclusion in any discussion of social welfare policy. Through an examination of these sectors we hope to acquaint students with the central structures and processes now shaping American social welfare.

ORGANIZATION

To facilitate the comprehension of material, we have used **Part One** to focus on the basic concepts underlying social policy analysis. This segment also includes a historical survey of social welfare in the United States and a discussion of the values, social forces, and theoretical assumptions that affect the creation, operation, and implementation of social policies. In much of this we have borrowed heavily

from economics as well as from political and social theory. Because of the disparity between the intentions of policymakers and the program realities facing welfare professionals, we have examined in a critical manner the legislative, judicial, and administrative processes that influence the design and implementation of social welfare policy. A special focus is placed on the interactional effects of social policies and programs on such vulnerable groups as the aged, minorities, women, homosexuals, and the poor, as well as on children and families. This segment of the book also provides students with a framework for understanding the complex nature of American social welfare. Throughout the book, essential social policy terms are referenced to a **glossary** located at the end of the book. With the basic conceptual tools at hand, students will find the descriptive material of **Parts Two and Three**, dealing with voluntary, governmental, corporate, and private practice, less overwhelming. Familiarity with these analytic concepts will also help students to better understand the preliminary welfare reform proposals we make in Chapter 19. Finally, we have included a chapter on the American welfare state in international perspective. Written by James Midgley, a well-known authority in the field of international social policy and the dean of the University of California-Berkeley's School of Social Work, this chapter was added in the recognition that the American welfare state exists within a continuum of other welfare states. Moreover, this chapter is an acknowledgment that we can learn from the experiences, successes, and mistakes of other nations. We wish to thank Dean Midgley for taking his valuable time to write a chapter for this book.

NEW EDITION FEATURES

Features of the third edition include:

- A thorough update of material to reflect the newest welfare reforms passed by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton.
- Complete analysis of the first term of the Clinton administration.
- A new and timely chapter on criminal justice that examines how the criminal justice system impacts American social welfare.

- An Internet Supplement. *American Social Welfare Policy, 3/e*, is the only social policy text on the market that features a user friendly guide to the basics of using the Internet for social policy research. This handy guide provides students with the basics of how to use the Internet and contains a comprehensive list of policy related web sites, listserv groups, and a glossary of Internet terms. From the “Internet-phobic” student to the more advanced Internet user, this guide has something for everyone.

The purpose of the supplement is not to dazzle students with computer technology, but to impress upon them the important contribution that the Internet can make to policy research. In fact, much of the information for this third edition was gleaned from a variety of Internet sources, including the vast array of federal documents now available on the Net. Among other things, the Internet can dramatically shorten the time between the release of information and the time it takes to access it. Although not the only source for policy information, the Internet remains an important vehicle for the policy student to master. The Internet supplement is free to students who purchase new copies of the text. Please visit our website at <http://longman.awl.com>. We have provided an index of on-line social policy resources for this text that is available through the Social Work area in the Academic Center.

A GOOD BALANCE

We have also tried to balance theory with program detail. However, we have omitted some of the details of program specifications that appear in other treatments of welfare policy. In doing so, we are less concerned with program detail—which practitioners become acquainted with during their first day on the job—than we are with defining the themes around which welfare policy is constructed. Given political developments since the mid-1970s, we believe that this corrects an error on the part of many liberal analysts. Specifically, while preoccupied with program intricacies, many welfare professionals have found, much to their chagrin, that ideologies of the political

Right have in the past commanded public attention. Many Democrats and Republicans who have attained high public office have used these ideologies effectively to alter the rules of the game in the process executing punishing cuts in social programs. If welfare professionals are to redirect social welfare policy to liberal goals, they will have to abandon questions of program “puzzle solving” temporarily and return to defining the paradigm of social programs.¹ In other words, social workers need to play more than the notes—they also need to play the music.

Social work students often ask why they are required to study social policy. Many have entered social work to help people, and thus they believe their sole concern is with the provision of direct services. As experienced social workers, we recognize the distance between social welfare policy and direct practice, and we have come to appreciate the difficulties that clients and practitioners often encounter because of social welfare policy. Accordingly, we insist that direct service is inextricably linked to policy. Clients exist in a given society and are continually influenced by the larger social forces affecting that society. The more disenfranchised the clients, the more exposed they are to the maelstrom of social forces swirling about them. Social workers help clients not only by working with them individually but by protecting the collective interests of vulnerable populations—children, the aged, racial and ethnic minorities, the handicapped, and the poor, among others. There are many ways of helping; social workers must try to learn them all.

One of our major goals in writing this book was to encourage students to think critically about social policy. We hope that students and instructors will critique and even argue about the ideas they find here. For us, that is part of the joy of policy analysis. Unfortunately, the student who studies policy analysis will soon find that few things are carved in stone and that there are many gray areas. Although sometimes frustrating, these gray areas can provide an exciting challenge. Because social policy is not rigid in its methods, it demands creative ideas and solutions. The very openness of policy requires that each student come up with his or her own answers for the major social policy questions of our times.

American Social Welfare Policy is the product of two authors, both of the same mind. Over the years we have collaborated on so many projects that it is sometimes unclear who originated what. The interaction that has led us this far is what scholarship is all about, and we have found it immensely gratifying. There is a convention in publishing about junior and senior authors. In this regard, the listing of the authors on the title page and cover is alphabetical. Both authors contributed equally, and neither was more senior than the other in the preparation of this book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE FIRST EDITION

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We also extend our deep-felt appreciation to our colleagues at Longman. As former senior editor, David Estrin showed his confidence in us by accepting the idea for this book on principle and without formalities. The manner in which he directed this publication was a model for editorial coordination. Victoria Mifsud, former editorial assistant, helped

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D. S.
Richmond, VA
December 12, 1996

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H. J. K.
Houston, Texas
December 12, 1996

NOTE

1. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

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