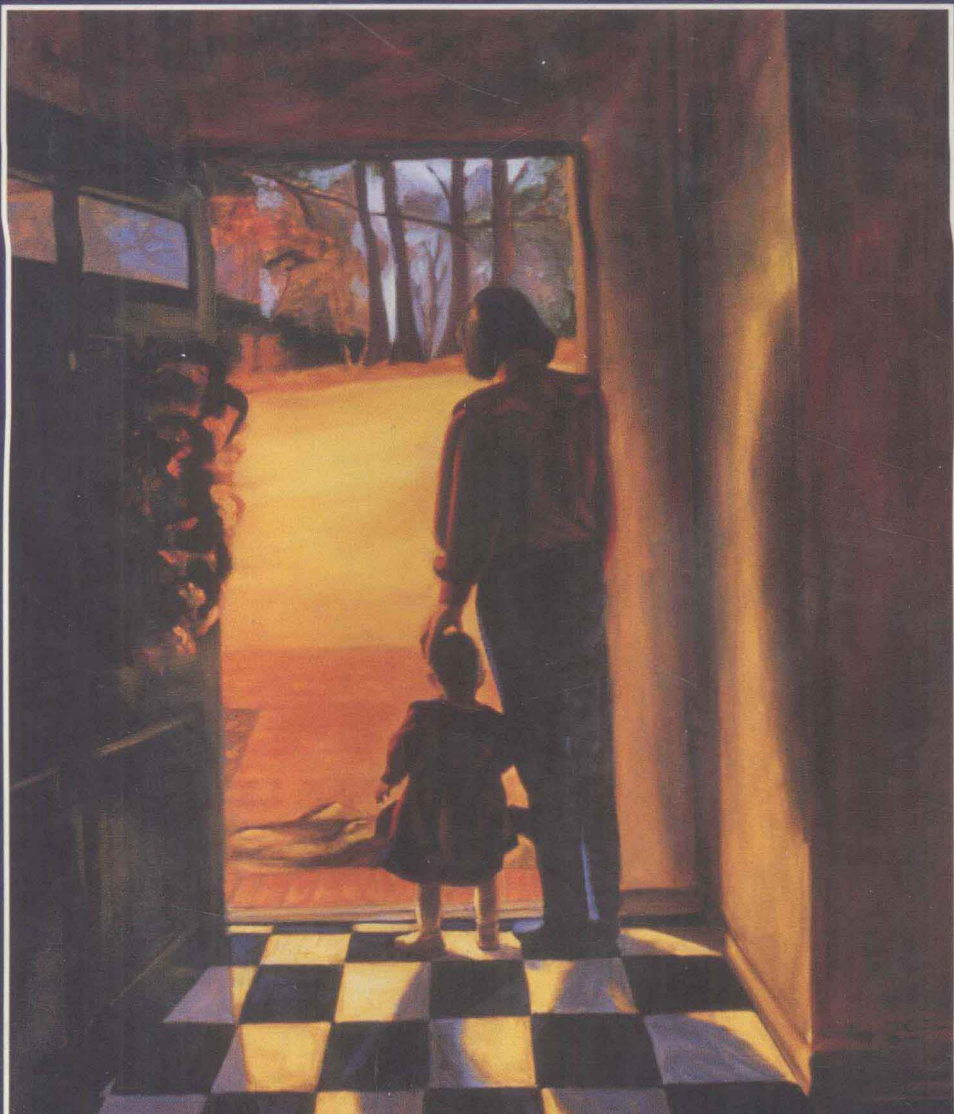


Social Welfare

A World View

KATHERINE VAN WORMER



SOCIAL WELFARE

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to people of courage: conscientious objectors of the world, out-of-the-closet gays and lesbians, rape victims (men and women) who take a public stand against rape, and murder victims' families who publicly oppose the death penalty, and above all to the persons who see themselves not as citizens of a particular nation or commonwealth but, rather, as citizens of the world.

PREFACE

My search for an appropriate textbook for the course, *Social Welfare: A World View* was unproductive. Various edited volumes contained single chapters on a selection of countries; these did not inspire me. When I consulted fellow instructors at a regional conference, they recommended the use of several small paperbacks, each covering a specialized and unrelated topic. The lack of continuity discouraged me from this plan. The one highly-readable and well-integrated textbook available, was hopelessly out of date due to events in eastern Europe which could not have been foreseen by the author.

At first when the thought occurred to me to write my own book, to present the United States and its social welfare system through international lenses, the task seemed insurmountable. While dismissing the recurring thought, I found myself excitedly collecting material from a magazine here, and a textbook there. From the United Nations and its affiliate, the World Health Organization, I gathered shocking statistics on missing females in Asia, facts on the AIDS epidemic in southeast Asia and Africa, and figures on death through illegal abortion. On a local radio station I heard a commentary on rural Iowa as a Third World Country. I called the radio station and requested a copy.

Why not just do a preliminary chapter outline, I thought, and see if these bits and pieces of knowledge, these disjointed data, fit together somehow? So I did, and they did. How exciting to view policies across the world, and to draw from these policies a sense of the global interconnectedness.

One land's blight, disease, or war spilling over into another's territory, one country's sick economy shaking up the balance of trade elsewhere, one nation's war reflected in a neighbor's refugee crisis: these all demonstrate the interdependence of countries of the world. Industrial pollution, similarly, contaminates

earth and water without heed to national boundaries. In short, health, welfare, and environmental problems are becoming increasingly international in scope. There are positive aspects of the global network too: One nation's economic market may create demands for goods or services elsewhere which, in turn, may enhance cultural and technological growth. A communications revolution significantly decreases the sense of distance between places so that knowledge from around the world becomes the new world of knowledge.

This vision of interrelatedness combined with the need to ensure our common future has given shape to what is now this book, *Social Welfare: A World View*.

WHY AN INTERNATIONAL FOCUS

Persons who have lived in another country and been immersed in its folkways and language have a unique advantage in viewing the social welfare system of either their home or host country. They can understand the host country's pattern and identify incongruities. They can quickly pinpoint the customs and values of both the country of origin and the adopted country. Most natives of a particular country do not enjoy this perspective; they do not see the forest for the trees. Nor do they know the variety of trees that may grow there.

A view beyond regional borders reveals problems and solutions in a broader light. New possibilities abound. Indeed, for students of social welfare, merely learning the facts pertaining to one's own national policies (for example, legal stipulations and agency goals such as permanency planning) is less significant in the long run than learning to make connections between the facts to see how the parts belong to the whole. Policies come and go, but a holistic view can serve for all time.

Consistent with social work's focus on the person-in-the-environment, the focus of this book is on the country-in-the-world. The country is the United States, the topic is the social welfare system, and the framework is a holistic or ecosystems approach. The rudiments of this model will be discussed in chapter 1.

The reality of global interdependence extends to everyday social work practice. Increasing numbers of illegal immigrant, refugee, and cross-cultural child welfare cases reflect the growing diversity of the U.S. population. To provide competent service, persons in the helping professions will require familiarity

with the values and customs of diversified populations. At the policy-making level, knowledge of other countries' social welfare innovations can contribute to the resolution of domestic problems. While comparative study of other western welfare systems introduces the student to sophisticated social welfare options, recognition of a commonality of social problems between the United States and countries in the eastern and southern hemispheres is crucial to the amelioration of mutual concerns. The ubiquity of organized crime, terrorism, drug abuse, and disease epidemics graphically illustrates the interdependence of nations. Other problems such as high infant mortality, homelessness, and street crime represent the shared failure of nations to meet the needs of all their citizens. In short, for creative, well-informed policy-making on the local, or global level, a multicultural worldview is paramount. The word, *worldview*, is used in a double sense here to denote the perspective of the world as in Germany's worldview, and when used as two words, *world view* refers to a consideration of the whole world.

Accordingly, *Social Welfare: A World View* is designed to challenge, even provoke readers into examining their preconceived notions concerning their country's treatment of the poor, the sick, and the elderly. The comparative approach helps reveal the uniqueness of the United States' ideology regarding human need and suffering. There is much to learn from a study of alternative solutions to common problems.

This volume has been shaped to achieve two often mutually exclusive objectives. The first objective is to critically examine social welfare issues from an international perspective. It is imperative that students of social welfare recognize the bearing of cultural factors on a society's allocation of resources. International material challenges complacency and raises questions concerning traditional policy responses of a given society.

The second objective of this book is to provide a highly useful and comprehensive study which covers in detail the fundamentals of the history and structure of the social welfare system in U.S. society. As a general textbook, the content is organized to follow course outlines for basic, introductory courses which examine social welfare programs, policies, and issues. *Social Welfare* also discusses specific populations which have suffered particular hardships within the broader society. These groups include women, African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, gays and lesbians, persons with mental and physical illnesses, and the unemployed. The social, psychological, political, and economic dimensions of the United States' treatment of minority groups are highlighted. The cross-cultural perspective, additionally, should provide a resource

for both undergraduate and graduate-level courses concerned with global problems and development.

Due to the vastness of the subject matter and material available, the selection has necessarily been quite limited. Selections for boxed readings are based on human interest, relevance to the chapter's subject matter, and cultural diversity. Readings on environmental destruction in Haiti, homelessness in Japan, and prostitution and slavery worldwide are chosen to parallel similar crises in the United States. Such thought-provoking material from the worldwide press and autobiographical sketches are geared to personalize the presentation of the text.

Based on the knowledge provided in this textbook, students who complete a course in international social welfare should be able to: understand how values may be an aid or hindrance in the provision of social services; grasp how a society's social welfare system is dependent upon the financial and human resources available; be familiar with services or programs available for the dispersion of resources; learn of the structure of the provision of services; realize the social psychology of helping and punishing vulnerable citizens; be familiar with policies pertaining to the provision of social services throughout a person's life cycle (e.g., services for infants, the sick, and the aged); view the social policy issues of the day within the context of the global corporate economy; and recognize the international similarities and differences in social work roles in the development and provision of social services. This textbook offers the following features:

- An ecological, interactionist framework for viewing the personal dimension within the social environment.
- Composite portraits of alternative responses to social problems of global concern in Japan, Mexico, Norway, Canada, and Great Britain, as well as the United States.
- A developmental focus in comparing problems facing impoverished children and families in both industrialized and non-industrialized nations.
- Attention to the physical environment and the interrelationship between the environment and society; emphasis on the need for a sustainable world.
- A multifaceted survey of social welfare subsystems such as child welfare, health care, corrections, and services to the elderly (women's and minority issues will be infused throughout the text as well as dealt with in separate chapters).
- Attention to oppressed populations, including gays and lesbians in various parts of the world.

- Dynamic excerpts from international and popular sources revealing the human side of social issues.
- Summary and review questions at the end of each chapter.
- A comprehensive instructor's manual to accompany the text.

COUNTRIES CHOSEN

The countries singled out for close study in this comparative text are Great Britain, Japan, Mexico, Canada, and Norway/Sweden. Each of these countries should be of special interest to social welfare students for its following attributes:

Great Britain: The roots of the North American social welfare system are in the British Poor Laws which introduced a system of residual assistance for the destitute. The political and economic affairs of the United States and the former mother country have been intertwined over the years.

Japan: A densely populated country of the Far East with relatively few social problems and one of the highest life expectancies in the world, this capitalist society provides a welfare system dependent on employers and women family members. The collectivist thrust contrasts sharply with American individualism. Japan represents a clear political polarity in terms of reliance on the state for social welfare entitlement.

Mexico: A Latin American country undergoing rapid social and economic change due in part to the trade agreement with the United States, this nation is chosen to represent a nation where most welfare comes from family care and yet one in which the national statistics on life expectancy, human rights violation, literacy, crime, and environmental pollution are indicative of a developing nation undergoing rapid change.

Canada: A country often overlooked by internationally oriented American textbooks, Canada offers proximity, a federal system covering a similar expansive territory, historic, and ethnic heritage, yet alternative approaches to health care, poverty, and crime control to those found in the United States. The economic systems of Canada and the United States are intertwined, nevertheless.

Norway/Sweden: Both countries represent the welfare state *par excellence*. Here prevention of problems is given precedence over treatment. These largely homogeneous societies provide universal, cradle-to-grave protection for their citizens. Despite trends toward privatization (especially in Sweden), faith in the

government to provide social services is in sharp contrast to the U.S. suspicion of government interference in the private doings of individuals.

Each of these societies selected for study in the chapters to follow represents a different geographical region and tradition, and each has developed its own unique approach to social welfare, embedded in the social fabric of the culture.

To present a complete picture of social welfare internationally, illustrative material is included from various parts of the world. The selections include the slaughter of street children in Brazil, street social work in Hong Kong, care of the elderly and dowry deaths in India, organized crime in Russia, and the human side of marketing alcohol in central Africa. The inclusion of this diverse material is consistent with social work's commitment to resolving issues of global poverty and oppression, and learning from other countries' social welfare innovations.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

This text is divided, like Gaul in the old Latin schoolbooks, into three parts. The five chapters comprising part I concern the functions and structure of social welfare. In order to elucidate the more specific material, chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework of the book and of social work as well, and provides the concepts, definitions, and teachings of other disciplines (psychology, sociology, and anthropology) pertinent to this work. Analysis of social value systems and methods of regulating the poor lays the groundwork for what follows.

Chapter 2 deals with the structure and underlying ideology of social welfare in the United States. In addition, for comparative purposes, alternative social welfare arrangements in Great Britain, Japan, Mexico, Canada, and Norway/Sweden are described, with emphasis on cultural and value systems.

Beginning with the earliest known religious and philosophical traditions, chapter 3 on the foundation of social welfare places the Anglo-American method of providing social help in historical context. International social phenomena of present and past — war, serfdom, and slavery — are viewed in terms of human suffering.

Social work, the profession most closely associated with social welfare, is examined historically and internationally in chapter 4. Unique among the professions, the practice of social work is shaped by economic and political

forces: Economics determines the scope of the services offered, politics determines their form. These two factors are often intertwined. Today's notion of the free market economy, for instance, is both economic and political. The recent upsurge in right wing politics throughout the Americas and western Europe has drastic implications for the social work profession. Punishment is in; treatment and rehabilitation are out. This chapter considers the implications from a cross-cultural perspective. While social workers in all societies are committed to improving the social welfare of the people, social work is also marked by diversity in the roles performed. Much of this diversity is related to the economic and political climate of a given society.

Poverty, the subject of chapter 5, is an issue with worldwide implications. On the continents of Asia, Africa, and South America, the majority of people live at near subsistence levels. Due to famine, wars, and overpopulation, the number of poor has increased in urban and rural areas everywhere. Global economic policies can also be shown to bear responsibility for the growing discrepancy between the rich and the poor across the globe.

Whereas part I is concerned with the structural aspects of social welfare, part II presents the human dimension. The organization of this section of the book is in terms of the lifespan or life cycle—the universal human progression associated with chronological age and developmental tasks.

Chapters 6 through 9 will cover the spectrum from birth until death, emphasizing informal as well as formal systems of care. What is the societal response to basic human needs? To child welfare? To work and family welfare? To health care and housing? And to care for the aged? These issues exist in every part of the world. After all, human needs at various parts of the life cycle are the same. Yet every culture deals with life and its progression in its own way—the care of young and old, the protection of families, and the provision for health care and housing. Chapters 6 and 9, therefore, are concerned with contemporary needs and trends in rendering services across the spectrum of age. Facts presented in these chapters sensitize the student to the growing array of client problems, issues that transcend international boundaries, and to compelling human rights issues as well.

Part III surveys social policies in the modern world. The chapters included in this section reveal the extent to which we live in a global village. Nations of the world have become increasingly interdependent. This trend is manifest economically, politically, and technologically. The focus of chapter 10 is on special populations in an international context. The growing diversity of the North

American population is replicated throughout the world as refugees are forced to migrate across borders. The theme of the chapter is the nature of prejudice and its consequences. Treatment of ethnic minorities, women, and gays and lesbians is also considered.

Human rights issues are dealt with in chapter 11. Topics included in this section range from human rights violations in times of war to a comparative study of criminal justice systems across the world. Whether in war or peace, the ability of the state to deprive its citizens of life and freedom represents the ultimate power. The definition of crime and appropriate punishments differs by country and state. Human rights violations, when measured in terms of international standards of justice, are surprisingly widespread. Today, in the West, the fervor to punish is strong; mandatory sentencing and removal of prisoner privileges have become politically popular. Financial resources invested in building prisons are diverted from other social welfare programs.

The connection between the physical and social environment is increasingly recognized by social workers all over the world. The depletion of natural resources is the cause of severe suffering in non-industrialized nations. Pollution from industry is associated with health problems everywhere—a burden carried disproportionately by the poor. The physical environment, a primary global issue for today and the future, is the subject of the concluding chapter titled Sustainable Development. The international economy, through corporate activities and the restructuring requirements of the World Bank, has been associated with the despoilment of the environment, thereby reducing the quality of life in many areas. The air, land, and water have all been affected. Family planning, the resettlement of refugees, and other similar welfare programs necessitate cooperative efforts across national boundaries. The emergence of an impetus for global social policy remedies through the United Nations is a significant development in international social welfare.

Observations of numerous treatment, welfare, and correctional institutions abroad and here in the United States, and familiarity with alcoholism treatment establishments here and in Norway contribute to this text. Case studies, relevant interviews, anecdotes, and international charts and tables enable the reader to witness the various aspects of the welfare apparatus. Where possible, the human element of giving and receiving (or not receiving) welfare benefits, is included. The political is forever personal. One would not want to leave the student merely poring over graphs and tables and, like the William Faulkner character, “unable to listen—too busy with the facts.”

During the final stages of production of this book, President Clinton announced his decision to sign into law a sweeping welfare bill designed “to end welfare as we know it.” The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 is expected to save the nation \$55 billion over six years. Savings will come in the form of drastic cuts in food stamps, cash assistance to poor children, and benefits to legal immigrants, disabled and otherwise. As the United States government ends federal responsibility for welfare and turns it over to the states, the lives of tens of millions of Americans will be drastically altered. Official estimates predict that the new provisions will throw a million more children into poverty. The only question is how much pain, anguish, and misery will it take before we learn once again what happens when society turns on its own? But, alas, that is the subject for a later book, one that will tell a longer and undoubtedly, sadder story.

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