

Book Reviews

Public Inquiries into Abuse of Children in Residential Care

*Corby, B., Doig, A. and Roberts, V. (2001)
London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £16.95,
paperback, 224 pp.*

The abuse of children in residential care has been a major social (and criminological) issue which emerged in the late 1980s, continued throughout the 1990s and shows no sign of abating in the twenty-first century. Despite the subsequent media and official furore, there is a paucity of knowledge and literature on this subject, and if for no other reason, this book is to be welcomed.

As the title makes clear, this book is about public inquiries into the abuse of children in residential care. The book consists, in effect, of two quite distinct but dovetailing parts. 'Part 1' looks at inquiries from a very general perspective, examining the history of residential care (Chapter 1), the 're-discovery' of child abuse (Chapter 2), inquiries in other settings (Chapter 3), inquiries into community-based abuse (Chapter 4) and inquiries into institutional abuse (Chapter 5). The second part of the book focuses upon the North Wales Tribunal of Inquiry (NWTI) which examined allegations of abuse in Clwyd and Gwynedd between 1974 and 1996. It looks at the events leading up to the Tribunal (Chapter 6), issues of process (Chapter 7) and outcomes (Chapter 8). The book then returns to its more generalist approach, discussing the impact of inquiries on residential child care currently (Chapter 9) and the future of such inquiries (Chapter 10).

On starting to read this book, my first impressions were that the authors had chosen a subject which, while important, was unusually narrow. However, as I read on I began to appreciate the very considerable - and worthwhile - effort they had invested in locating residential abuse inquiries in the broadest of contexts. There is, all too often, a tendency for issues to be viewed in isolation and this can seriously handicap understanding. This is something the current authors have very definitely avoided and in doing so have produced something of a tour de force.

Given the broad sweep of this text, it is difficult, and would perhaps be unfair, to highlight particular messages. Chapter 1, for example, provides a potted, but valuable, overview of the development of residential care (from the Middle Ages). Besides being very informative, the chapter is full of challenging and thought-provoking ideas as to how the historical conditions of residential care might explain the abuse which took place in the last few decades. Discussing the original rationale for residential care for instance, the authors argue that it was 'to make living conditions worse inside than out; these were essentially places of punishment for being poor or places of reform for being bad' (p.26). Similarly, Chapter 6 can be seen as a classic case study of the all too common situation where allegations of abuse were covered up or inadequately investigated; Chapter 7 provides a useful synopsis of how the NWTI functioned - adopting an adversarial as opposed to the intended inquisitorial approach whereby 'All the classical strategies of cross-examination were used to discredit their [complainants'] accounts' (p. 139); Chapter 8 addresses the issue as to whether there was a 'conspiracy' in North Wales which included people in positions of power; and Chapter 10 contains an interesting discussion as to how the contribution made by inquiries might be improved.

That said, there are perhaps two key arguments in this book which should be highlighted. Firstly, that inquiries have come to play a major role in the development of residential child care (as they have in field social work); and secondly, while they have produced some valuable lessons for policy and practice, they have also had detrimental consequences (again, as they have in field social work).

It could be that some readers perceive the central subject matter of this book - inquiries - as being too specific. However, the authors seek to explore this subject from such a range of perspectives, that the book provides a much broader discussion than might be imagined from the title. Thus, the book has a good deal to say about inquiries (in general, and in children's homes) but also residential care and institutional abuse.

Not surprisingly, this book will, in the main, appeal to those who have an interest in residential child care. However, this audience should be drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including not only residential care staff, SSD managers, providers in the voluntary and independent sectors, and researchers, but also those who have any connection with local authority Chief Executive offices and increasingly, Mayors.

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Comparative Social Policy: Theory and Research

Kennett, P. (2001) Buckingham: Open University Press, £15.99, paperback, 176 pp.

As part of a new Open University Press series entitled *Introducing Social Policy*, Patricia Kennett's book represents a very good addition to the burgeoning field of comparative social policy analysis. It is written in an accessible manner and should easily find its way onto reading lists for relevant undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The book is likely to be of interest to readers with a relatively limited knowledge of the key debates in comparative social policy as well as to those who are already familiar with the topic. A broader readership is likely to be attracted by the book's emphasis on issues relating to the process and design of comparative studies in social policy. The book differs from existing texts largely in the breadth of its coverage, since its focus extends beyond the advanced industrial nations to incorporate issues relating to social policy in developing nations.

Comparative Social Policy is organised into five substantive chapters which are complemented by an introduction and (very) short conclusion. Kennett appropriately introduces her book with a discussion of the ways in which social policy can best be defined for the purposes of comparative analysis. She argues that definitions of social policy still tend to emphasise rather too heavily the role of the state in providing welfare to individuals. For comparative research, it is preferable to define

social policy in more pluralistic terms to reflect the important roles played by other providers of welfare, such as the family, the market and the voluntary sector.

The first substantive chapter offers an overview of the changing international context and the potential impact of this on national social policy systems. With reference to globalisation trends, there is a useful (if rather routinised) summary of the key economic changes that influence the capacity of nation states to develop their social policies independently. Importantly, Kennett notes the ability of nations to resist a seemingly inevitable 'race to the bottom' when seeking to maintain their economic competitiveness alongside a well-developed welfare state. The chapter also reviews the increasing role of international bodies such as the United Nations, International Labour Organization, World Bank and World Trade Organization in determining social policy outcomes across the world. Against a background of globalisation and a general shift in economic ideology from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism, Kennett makes the useful point that the nation state continues to represent the most important player in most nations' welfare systems. Even under the influence of supranational bodies, such as the EU, individual countries tend to maintain responsibility for the central components of social policy. This factor highlights the continued relevance of undertaking cross-national comparisons of the multitude of divergent social policy systems that exist around the world.

The nature of cross-national comparison represents the subject matter for a second substantive chapter. Having reviewed a variety of definitions of comparative research, Kennett summarises the range of approaches that have been adopted in comparative social policy research. She also refers to a number of difficulties associated with comparison. A central theme of this discussion surrounds the equivalence of key concepts that are routinely employed in international studies. In order to draw attention to the potential pitfalls, the book offers a useful summary of the difficulties associated with generating comparable evidence on concepts such as 'poverty' and 'social exclusion'. The familiar message to emerge from this chapter is that there is a need to take a critical view of the

findings of comparative social research, even where these are based upon seemingly equivalent concepts and respected international data sources.

In a third chapter, Kennett addresses the role of theory and analysis in cross-national social policy research. Here she reviews some of the ways in which researchers have sought to explain the development of welfare states in comparative perspective, as well as to account for variation between welfare states. This material is covered well in other standard texts, but bears repetition. The chapter provides a critique of research that seeks to link welfare state development to the progress of industrialisation or to broad-brush modernisation theories. Attention is also paid to the potential influence of left-wing politics in producing divergent types of welfare state, and to ideas relating to postmodernism. In addressing the important strand of work on welfare regimes initiated by Titmuss and developed along different lines by Esping-Andersen and Leibfried, Kennett usefully summarises critiques of the regime-building approach. She points to the way in which feminist researchers have drawn attention to limitations associated with original attempts to compare nations (by concentrating too heavily on income-maintenance policies), and highlights weaknesses in relation to the ethnocentrism and limited coverage of welfare regime typologies. At this point it would have been useful for the book to draw attention to a more fundamental type of critique of this type of comparative social policy research emanating from the likes of Peter Baldwin. Essentially Baldwin is arguing that the exercise of placing nations into different welfare regime categories is pointless, and fails to acknowledge properly the true complexity of national social policy systems. It might also have been possible to explore the impact of other types of social divisions, such as age or health, in relation to cross-national differences in welfare systems.

In an original contribution to debates in comparative social policy, Kennett proceeds to address welfare issues in developing nations with particular attention being paid to Africa and Latin America. She points to the need to treat developing nations as a heterogeneous category in relation to social policy, with culture, history and

the economy playing a major role in generating a range of different responses to individuals' welfare needs. The final substantive chapter offers an interesting analysis of the role played by gender and ethnicity in determining the boundaries of citizenship in three nations – the UK, Australia and Japan. While it is not entirely clear why these nations were selected for the analysis, Kennett shows how comparative research in social policy can yield important conclusions that highlight the strengths and weaknesses of different nations' welfare systems.

For a relatively short text intended to provide an introduction to the theme of comparative social policy, this book can be regarded as a success. It is well written and engages well with the relevant literature. As such it would represent a useful addition to the shelves of most libraries.

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Adult Day Services and Social Inclusion: Better Days

Clark, C. (ed) (2001) London: Jessica Kingsley (Research Highlights 39), £15.99, paperback, 240pp.

Day services for adults in the UK have been relatively marginalized by the focus on domiciliary based services as an alternative to residential care in the 1990s, and more recently by the explicit focus on the development of intermediate care services designed primarily to relieve pressure on the acute sector of the NHS. Nevertheless, they remain an important provider of services to a range of people, including older people, people with learning disabilities, people with dementia and carers. Despite this, there is a glaring lack of a systematic research foundation upon which to base reviews of services or for managers, policy makers and social workers to develop services.

The authors in this edited volume freely admit that, despite it appearing in a series entitled 'Research Highlights', they have not contributed significantly to overcoming this gap in research. What the

volume does instead is draw together the views and experiences of providers and academics working in and reviewing a range of day services (the editor is careful to avoid using the term 'day care'). It is intended as a guide to the effective provision of day services, and is deliberately upbeat about the possibilities offered, at least for some groups of service users, by some of the innovative practices described.

The volume is split into two parts. In the first, the authors look at the existing policy in the UK concerning day services. Clark discusses the way in which day services have been transformed since their inception and points out that the subsequent authors all make powerful arguments that there are considerable changes that need to take place in day services if they are going to come anywhere near providing social inclusion for their users. Tester looks critically at the policy aspects of day services for older people, particularly since the implementation of the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act. She makes the point, echoed by other writers throughout the volume and never satisfactorily answered, that day services, no matter how well-intentioned, often serve the interests of providers rather than users. Stalker, in one of the more robust and well researched chapters, tackles the issue of day services for adults with learning disabilities, providing a useful introduction to some of the conceptual debates in this area. Basing much of her critique on her analysis of users' own views (who repeatedly say they do not want services which are divisive, provided on the basis of 'client group' rather than aiming towards providing users with access to the education, skills, work and leisure opportunities that would enable them to participate socially) she points out the conflicting policy aims between, for example, assisted employment and benefits schemes that work against the interests of adults with learning disabilities. In her chapter on services for adults with mental health problems, Connor looks at a range of service models designed to facilitate a return to 'normal' work after an episode of mental illness. She focuses on supported employment as a means of breaking away from traditional patterns of day service provision. In the final 'policy' chapter Cooper looks at a service sector traditionally dominated by third sector, rather than statutory sector, provision:

services for homeless people (although she recognises that the term can have limited usefulness), and discusses the difficulties associated with developing effective services when reliant on short-term, marginal funding.

The second part concentrates on case studies that illustrate the ways in which the policies discussed in part one have been played out in practice – this section will be of particular interest to managers and service commissioners. Moriarty looks at services that are provided for older people, and gives interesting examples of services that have tried to be innovative in breaking away from traditional patterns of provision that are 'buildings bound'. She makes the point, echoed by other authors but never really resolved properly, that there is a conflict between providing services that meet the needs of users and those that are designed to relieve the pressure on carers. The following chapter by Hunter and Watt also look at case studies of services for older people. They show how services need to move from being service-led to being 'person-centred', but really fail to tackle the disempowerment and social exclusion of older people, and the systematic failure to involve them in a meaningful way in designing and commissioning services which has contributed to the way in which services have failed to meet users' needs. Ridley's chapter is one of the few that give the reader a wider flavour of the conceptual debates and possibilities around supportive employment projects for people with learning disabilities, showing how difficult it is to put innovative ideas into practice, particularly when the philosophical basis for those ideas is complex and sometimes contradictory. Lloyd and Cole give a practice-based account of the trials and tribulations involved in trying to break away from traditional methods of providing day services to promote the social inclusion of adults with learning disabilities, and show how often the development of such services rely upon the resilience and commitment of key project staff. In the final chapter, Grove and Membrey address some of the research gaps around what constitutes the provision of effective mental health day services, again centring around supported employment and alternatives to employment, showing how social values play a part in limiting the service options available to people with mental health problems.

Whilst all the authors in varying degrees attempt to draw on research or practice that is driven by users' views, a fundamental weakness in the volume is the lack of a strong user voice. All the practice examples discussed skirt the thorny issue of the relative powerlessness users have in designing and commissioning services that reflect their needs. The reader is left with the nagging feeling that some of the fundamental issues surrounding day services have remained unanswered. Can services designed and run by service providers rather than users offer real scope for social inclusion? It is notable that the one user group who have managed to successfully challenge the dominance of the social work and other therapeutic professions' hold over the provision of services is physically disabled adults, and they are the one group for whom the provision of these types of services are no longer seen as tenable. If older adults, adults with learning disabilities, those suffering homelessness and mental health problems had anything approaching a powerful voice in the provision of services, would day services disappear altogether?

Nevertheless, this is a well-written and valuable volume which does go some way towards addressing the huge gap in research-based evidence for the provision of effective day services, and it will be of interest to many managers concerned with the commissioning and provision of these services.

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Anti-Discriminatory Practice (Third Edition)

Thompson, N. (2001) Basingstoke: Palgrave, £13.99, Paperback, 208 pp.

The task of marrying theoretically cogent and informed discussions of oppression and discrimination in contemporary societies with a focus on the practice issues in anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive strategy and policy is incredibly difficult to do. Translating conceptual strategies for equality, rights and justice into 'lifeworld' ideas and practices involves a clarity of

understanding of the relationship between structural social determinants, the contested field of cultural representations and the subjective experience of social process, institutions and orthodoxies. Neil Thompson's work, principally both this text - in its third edition - and his *Promoting Equality*, is an exceptional example of how this is done well. Thompson is quite simply essential and required reading for any academic, student or worker in the areas of public services and social care (1).

This text is probably his most directly accessible to practitioners, though its academic value is considerable. In the first chapter, he identifies and cogently presents the complexity of multiple oppressions that impact upon people's 'lifeworld' experience and requires an understanding of the need to develop a generic but subject sensitive model for understanding oppression and building anti-oppressive strategy. Usefully, he begins his discussion by arguing with clarity and eloquence that a concern with anti-oppressive strategy is not a segmented product of ideological and ethical commitment but intrinsic to good practice in the work-place and with those public services and social care seek to support and enable.

Chapter Two outlines his PCS (Personal, Cultural, Structural) model for understanding oppression and discrimination. This model recognises the inextricable yet often dislocated relationship between personal 'lifeworlds' and political discourse, and argues the necessity of their integration, with special emphasis upon cultural practices in everyday work and social contexts, and the use of language, representations and discourse to develop anti-oppressive practice. The strength of this model is that it also allows Thompson to directly address the 'hearts and minds' issues of transition from oppressive to anti-discriminatory environments and relationships.

The remainder of the book focuses on separate chapters on gender, race, ageism and disability, with a more general chapter looking at oppression on the basis of difference, using examples of religious belief, sexuality and mental illness as areas where anti-discriminatory practice can be engaged. Finally, there is a concluding chapter which provides a summary of the main themes of

the text, reinforcing both the principles of anti-discriminatory practice and the problems of engaging in anti-discriminatory practice.

The text is never less than clear and lucid, with case studies interspersed within the narrative to make real the issues raised. The academic content is represented with clarity, but without losing its sophistication. It is an extraordinarily readable text, and a text that can form the basis of informed and intelligent discussions of the scope and limits of anti-discriminatory practice, and how principles are translated into strategy and practice.

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It is common for reviewers to seek to interpret the need for a balanced appraisal of a text to involve finding points of weakness, oversight and error. For what this book does and says, this reviewer would rather recommend that it is read by every person who is interested in a less discriminatory world, who suffers discrimination and wants it to stop, or who sees it happening and wants to be active against it. It is an extraordinarily valuable resource and an excellent beginning to the task of thinking about and participating in the struggle for a non-discriminatory world.

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(1) Thompson, N. (1998) *Promoting Equality: Challenging Discrimination and Oppression in the Human Services*, Basingstoke: Macmillan

Asset Stripping: Local Authorities and Older Homeowners Paying for a Care Home Place
Wright, F. (2002) Bristol: Policy Press, £14.99, paperback, 48pp.

Asset Stripping explores a little researched area of social care policy – that which concerns those older people who fund their own care in a residential or nursing home. The study covers the views of local authority care managers and finance officers, older people and their relatives as well as care providers in all sectors.

The report commences with a useful list of acronyms used throughout which should assist the ‘lay’ reader, minimising as it does the use of professional jargon.

The introduction reminds us that approximately one third of all older people residing in care homes meet their own care costs. This is a substantial minority who are, as the report shows, discriminated against in the ways they locate and then pay for the care that they need.

Chapter two provides the reader with a clear and comprehensive historical context for means testing and the provision of long-term care. Wright begins in the 1980s, takes us through the community care legislation and on to the present.

The crux of the problem for many self-funders is highlighted in this chapter. We are reminded that everyone who appears to have a need is entitled to a care assessment. However, this often does not happen in practice for those with capital over the upper limit who are denied information about the range of options for care. As a result, older people may enter residential care unnecessarily, when care at home may have been more appropriate, or enter a home with fees higher than local authority limits. In either case, an authority may subsequently refuse to contribute financially when their capital drops.

Despite the intention of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, there is still a bias towards entering residential care as this is often viewed as most cost effective for local authorities with limited budgets. Chapter three examines local authority policies and the restrictions they place on spending on care for older people. Wright points out that authorities have devised a range of strategies for controlling their expenditure, including the use of cost ceilings and avoidance of care assessments for older homeowners. She is clear about the legal duties of local authorities has, but is equally clear about the failure of some authorities to meet their responsibilities.

Chapter four looks in more detail at the way authorities view property and the way they treat older homeowners. It is clear from this chapter

that local authority practice varies enormously and that this results in inequity for older people, their carers and family.

Chapter five turns our attention to the relationship between care providers and the local authority. This can be problematic, as providers often maintain that authorities will not pay enough for state funded residents, while some authorities believe that care providers are greedy. In this context, it is hardly surprising that self-funders are viewed positively by care providers, since they are often, in effect, subsidising state funded residents, though not necessarily receiving better facilities or a higher standard of care.

Chapter six records the views of a number of older people about why they entered a home. Research shows that self-funders often enter residential care when they are relatively independent for a variety of reasons. These include pressure from other people, but also a lack of information about other options. The next chapter looks in more detail at the lack of reliable and accessible information available. One gets the impression that each of the information sources identified in the study has its own vested interest and that older people find it quite difficult to obtain good, independent advice.

The final chapter summarises the key findings of the research and looks to the policy implications. Unsurprisingly, the need for better information and advice is identified. Other issues include the need for greater levels of funding, more equity for carers and the need for self-funders to have a needs assessment to prevent inappropriate entry into care.

This report is extremely clear and forcefully presents the case for greater equity for older homeowners or those with capital. The research is very definite about the rights that older people and their families in this position should have. We are aware that many local authorities are operating with limited budgets. However, this report points out their statutory duties nonetheless and should be essential reading for all local authority staff dealing with assessments. The findings recorded in *Asset Stripping* may prove to be a useful tool for authorities and others wishing to press for greater resources.

Gail Elkington
Help the Aged

