

2005

A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy. Patricia Kennett (Ed.).

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

(2005) "A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy. Patricia Kennett (Ed.).," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 32 : Iss. 3 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol32/iss3/18>

This Book Note is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



chapters, including one on the Philippine Overseas Employment Program and ones on France and the Netherlands, both countries with declining populations. Their approach contrasts to Australia's, which has an immigrant policy that helps to incorporate newcomers into society.

As in most edited volumes, the quality of the contributions is uneven. The editors' attempt to create a coherent whole by having the authors follow a template, including a country profile a vignette, is unsuccessful. The vignettes are not integrated into the text and the profiles often provide far too much information, leading readers' attention to wander. However, the breadth of the migration experiences described is indispensable to understanding the complexity of migration in a global world. Nobuko Adachi's story of Japanese Brazilian migration to Japan, for example, will be new to many readers and adds insight to the intergenerational dynamics of migrants' lives. *Migration and Immigration* does a service by exposing readers to new trends in the rapidly changing state of global migration.

Clare Sheridan, University of California, Berkeley

Patricia Kennett (Ed.), *A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy*. Northampton, VT: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2004. \$160.00 hardcover.

International and comparative social policy scholarship has made significant strides in recent times. Just a few decades ago, comparative social policy research was regarded as a highly specialized field pursued by specialists who analyzed the welfare systems of both familiar and unfamiliar societies. Today, comparative social welfare inquiry has become commonplace. Social policy scholarship in Europe and North America now makes far more references to developments in other parts of the world and, in other global regions, the dependence on social welfare ideas emanating from the industrial nations has lessened. International issues are now much more frequently discussed in mainstream social welfare publications; international content is being incorporated into social work and social policy curricula far more extensively and social work and social policy educators have far more contact with colleagues in other countries.

Despite these achievements, comparative social policy inquiry

is still challenged by numerous problems and it is with regard to some of these problems that Patricia Kennett has brought together some of the leading scholars in the field to discuss and debate some of the most pressing and interesting issues facing comparative social policy today. The book begins with a useful introduction by the editor and then focuses on five major topics (organized into five parts). These include the role of the state in a globalizing world; concepts and definitions international social welfare; inequality, redistribution and social policy; comparative social policy research and finally a catch-all category entitled "themes and issues." The chapters comprising these five parts of the book are wide-ranging and are indicative of the many issues, problems and challenges that characterize the field. While most of the chapters present new ideas, others restate well-established themes. One recurrent theme is the implicit equating of social welfare with governmental provision so that many of the chapters approach the subject from a Western, welfare state perspective. This tendency is reinforced by the way many chapters rely on Western welfare typologies. On the other hand, some chapters directly challenge these notions and question their global validity. Similarly, while the concept of globalization is used in a conventional, negative sense in many chapters, others offer a more nuanced and balanced account.

By bringing these diverse perspectives together in one volume, Kennett has made major contribution to the comparative study of social policy. The book will undoubtedly serve as a major resource for social policy scholars, and the editor is to be commended for taking on what must have been a herculean task. Unfortunately, the book is expensive and will probably be beyond the means of most students. It is to be hoped, however, that the book will be available in many university libraries. It deserves to be widely consult not only by those interested in international issues but by anyone concerned with the challenges facing the academic field of social policy today.

Charles Lemert, *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004. \$35.00 papercover.

Social work and social policy are now well-established academic subjects. In addition to applying sophisticated research methodologies, both are making far more use of theory than