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Review of *Overcoming Welfare: Expecting More from the Poor and From Ourselves*. James L. Payne. Reviewed by James Midgley, University of California at Berkeley.

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attitudinal barriers professionals may have in working effectively with children.

The student will not understand all of the services areas, however. Petr's book, like all books, is limited. He chooses to highlight two service areas, child welfare and mental health, and only briefly touches on education, health, recreational, or rehabilitation services. The book does not purport to cover the broad spectrum of children's services, and it does not. What it does accomplish, and in a creative way, is to craft a way of thinking, a mindset, a perspective for approaching children's services. The author weaves this mindset into the policy and practice issues he covers in the book, but when one closes the book, it is the altered way of *thinking* that one takes away. And learning new slants on thinking is the best cross-training any professional can do.

Dorinda N. Noble
Louisiana State University

James L. Payne, *Overcoming Welfare: Expecting More from the Poor and From Ourselves*. New York: Basic Books, 1998. \$26.50 hard-cover.

The ideological struggle to shape America's social policies has been fought for more than a decade, and many would agree that it has been largely won by those on the political right. The enactment of the 1996 *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act* embodies ideas promoted by thinkers on the right, and was championed by conservative political leaders. The enactment of this legislation was touted as a major achievement of the *Republican Revolution* of 1994, and is regarded by Republican leaders as a significant step towards the creation of a vibrant, enterprise society.

It may be surprising, therefore, that income support programs continues to come under attack from those on the political right. Despite the retrenchments and limitations imposed by the 1996 legislation, writers such as James Payne, a former fellow at the Heritage Foundation, continue to believe that attempts to reform welfare have failed in the past, and will fail in the future. This,

he contends, is because of the entrenched interests of bureaucrats and social workers who continue to perpetuate an inappropriate 'sympathetic giving' approach to welfare. Sympathetic giving is fundamental to social work's philosophy of helping but it has failed disastrously. Until it is replaced by a philosophy of 'expectant giving', welfare will continue to debilitate the poor and perpetuate the culture of dependency which has sapped the nation's vitality.

Unlike other writers who have not paid much attention to the role of social work in welfare, Payne devotes a significant amount of space in his book to the profession. He believes that social workers have exerted a pernicious influence on the formulation and implementation of social welfare programs. Aided by the bureaucracy and the courts, they have ensured that the 'sympathetic giving' approach is perpetuated. There is not much chance, he believes, that social workers will change their approach. Citing widely from introductory social work textbooks, he claims that social workers are committed to unconditional giving rather than rehabilitation and self-sufficiency.

Payne clearly overestimates the influence that social workers have had in the political debates that have raged over welfare. Indeed, many lament the fact that they have so little influence in the world of public policy. Despite the best efforts of the National Association of Social Workers, the profession continues to play a limited role in policy formulation at the national level. By using selective citations from social work textbooks, Payne also distorts social work's philosophy of helping. While many social workers are indeed motivated by compassion, they also believe in a *strengths perspective* that seeks to enhance the capacity of individuals to functioning independently and be self-reliant.

Although Payne's book may be dismissed as an attempt to discredit the profession, it should be taken seriously. If social workers are to respond to the charges levied against them, they need to understand the arguments made against them. It is only by understanding these arguments that an effective response can be formulated. The fact that attacks of this kind are made on the profession is indicative of its lack of effective public relations

and ability to articulate its message in ways that capture public support. Hopefully, Payne's book will facilitate a more effective engagement in the public policy arena.

James Midgley

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