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statute is particularly interesting and informative. This is a well written and useful book that deserves to be widely read.

Steven Shardlow and Malcolm Payne (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Social Work: Western Europe*. Ashgate Publishing Co., Brookfield, VT: 1998. \$63.95 hardcover.

Just a decade ago, few comparative studies of social work had been published. Despite the fact that the journal *International Social Work* had been in existence for many years, comparative research in the field remained underdeveloped. Very few books on the subject had been published and articles appearing in the journals tended to focus on developments in particular countries. Few attempts had been made to contrast social work education and practice in different world regions.

Today, the situation is very different. Numerous books about international social work have been published and increasingly, these books seek to identify the key features of social work around the world. Some of these books are concerned with particular world regions while others are more general in scope, focusing on international trends in general.

The publication of a book about social work in Western Europe adds to the growing body of knowledge about social work in different parts of the world. Although this is not the first book about social work in Europe, it contains country case studies which report comprehensively on social work in diverse Western European nations. These nations include Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Britain. The book also contains a brief introduction and concluding section.

The book's various chapters are detailed and provide a wealth of information about social work in Western Europe. However, despite the editor's efforts to standardize the material, the individual chapters cover different topics which make it difficult for readers to cross reference key points of information. Also, the chapters are primarily descriptive and it is difficult to extract the key similarities and differences between social work in these nations. The concluding chapter would have been more helpful if it had attempted a summary of this kind. Nevertheless, this is an important reference work which provides valuable information about recent developments in social work in Europe. It should be

a useful resource for anyone interested in the field of international social work.

Martin O'Brein and Sue Penna, *Theorizing Welfare: Enlightenment and Modern Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998. \$74.50 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

Within universities, the study of social welfare is often viewed as a vocational preoccupation, committed to the training of social workers and social administrators rather than the scholarly investigation of a disciplinary subject matter. While faculty in schools of social work are regarded as kindly individuals whose commitment to improving social conditions is laudable, their work is not believed to be within the mainstream of serious academic scholarship. The study of social welfare is somehow regarded as of peripheral importance to the primary concerns of the academic community.

Theorizing Welfare should dispel the stereotypical image of social welfare inquiry a fundamentally non-academic. The authors have succeeded in writing an extremely sophisticated book which displays a impressive knowledge of current trends in social theory, and their implications for social welfare. Although billed on the cover as an 'accessible introductory text', it is not a work for the beginner but requires a sound familiarity with social theory, and a grasp of the way theorists approach the field. Of course, similar books have previously been published, particularly by British writers, but this is one of the first to focus on the most recent developments in social theory. Indeed, its niche is to focus primarily on those post-Enlightenment theories that have implications for current thinking in the field of social welfare. The chapters in the final section of the book which deal with a variety of post-modern currents in social thought are undoubtedly the most interesting. These chapters range over the work of theorists as disparate as Foucault, Jessop, Giddens and Offe and provide helpful summaries of their ideas.

The book's wide sweep is commendable but it comes at some cost to an in depth analysis of the implications of current social theory for social welfare. Although each chapter discusses these implications, the discussion is brief, and tends to emphasize critical rather than policy aspects. Similarly, the organization of the