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Review of *The Future of Child Protection*. Jane Waldfogel. Reviewed by Leroy H. Pelton, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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power of agency or stucturation theory. Some coverage of these newer theoretical frameworks would have helped to provide a conceptual basis for analysis of the changing roles of the State, community, the church and NGOs in the development process. The volume refers continually to Malthusian notions of demographic pressure as a source of poverty and environmental degradation. Yet relatively little weight seems to be given to other, arguably more critical factors such as structural obstacles at both domestic and international levels as well as severe policy bias in all economic and social sectors which marginalizes the poor.

The final chapter, entitled 'An Integrative Model of Development', promises much but delivers little. It is something of an anti-climax, since the reader is really not much wiser about what actually constitutes the stated ideal of 'integrative' (or 'integrated') development. Indeed, although meant to underpin the volume, it is defined only in very general terms and is mentioned just briefly in the foreword and merits barely two pages in the final section. 'Integrative' development seems to equate with the UNDP's notion of 'Human Development', which is quoted in support. Yet 'integrative development' remains an elusive concept—fine practice but difficult in theory! It is to be hoped that any subsequent volume from the authors would develop this concept more centrally and comprehensively. However, in spite of the above-mentioned shortcomings, the book contains much valuable material to inform and provoke development policy-makers and practitioners into working for a better world.

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Jane Waldfogel, *The Future of Child Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998. \$39.95 hardcover.

The field of child protective services (CPS), and scholarly examination of it, invokes deep passions and fears, involving as it does the safety of children as well as abiding suspicions of the poor. "Child protection" has come to mean protection of children from their parents, and in practice, CPS interventions have predominantly been directed toward impoverished families.

For many years now, amongst those who have been engaged in CPS and/or study it, there has been widespread agreement and concern that CPS dominates the child welfare system in the United States, and that there is a continuing crisis in that system's abilities (or inabilities) to protect children, and to preserve families or otherwise provide children with permanent living arrangements.

Much has been written about these issues, and individuals and committees have made various recommendations to "reform" the system in order to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. Jane Waldfogel, in writing her book, draws partly on the deliberations of one of these groups, of which she was a member, the so-called Executive Session on CPS at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, funded by the Annie E. Casey and Edna McConnell Clark Foundations. In the process, she exhibits a very competent personal grasp of the recent literature pertaining to many aspects of the crisis, and presents a good summarization of recent facts and controversies, particularly those concerning the "front end" of the system.

Waldfogel gives us a carefully drawn and statistically detailed overview of recent trends in the annual volume of reports of alleged child abuse and neglect received by CPS agencies, the sources of such reports, the demographics of the children involved, and percentages (that constitute a descending order) of reports that are screened in, "substantiated," prompt the opening of cases, and involve child removal. Moreover, while focusing on the United States, she provides a comparative analysis with Canada, Britain, and Australia on all or most of these variables, although noteworthy here is how surprisingly minor are the differences revealed. CPS systems in these countries and ours seem to be far more alike than different.

Waldfogel accurately and fairly analyzes recent and current debates (and their implications) concerning overreporting, underreporting, subsequent underinclusion and overinclusion of families in the system, and the crisis of system overcapacity. She considers "front end" alternatives for change, such as narrowing the gateway to CPS intervention at the point of reporting, screening, and/or investigation, and perhaps coupling this with the building of an alternative service delivery system. Waldfogel opts

for a "differential response" paradigm that she claims would include these elements, in addition to "a community-based system, in which CPS continues to play the lead role"; modifications of the processes through which case-specific assessments and service plans are developed; and a more active role for "informal and natural helpers" in prevention of child maltreatment "in partnership with CPS." She is not unfair in her brief portrayals of recent alternative proposals, and demonstrates considerable awareness of the weaknesses of the proposal that she puts forth here.

However, although Waldfogel is fully aware that operating definitions of abuse and neglect vary greatly even from worker to worker, throughout the book she refers to and compares statistics concerning children who were "abused and neglected," in tacit acceptance of some presumed common meaning. Similarly, credence is given to statistics concerning "substantiated" reports although, in practice, the "substantiation" process is highly variable and arbitrary. There is little discussion here of the process itself or of what "substantiation" means. Likewise, there is little discussion of the foster care system and adoption, of why very sizable proportions of all impoverished children are removed from their homes and placed in foster care, or of the costs involved.

Currently, the CPS system is forced to institute "differential responses," that is, it is obliged to turn away many cases, simply because of the overwhelming volume of reports that it has generated for itself. This in itself is not reform. Moreover, although Waldfogel contends that her paradigm differs sharply from the current CPS approach, it merely extends it. While CPS would keep for its own caseload only "high risk" cases, it would maintain oversight over everything, and families would be "reassessed" on an ongoing basis. "Community partner agencies" and "family and community members" would be enlisted as coercive social control agents for "protective oversight" and "shared responsibility." The CPS gateway to "services" would straddle child welfare even more extensively than it does today, with the possibility of net-widening in terms of the CPS caseload itself. This will appeal to those who believe that if we don't keep a vigilant and menacing eye over the poor, who knows what horrible things they'll do.

Her suggestions for change confuse social work with coercion (which she politely terms "the use of authority"). Waldfogel is

partial to collaborations, collaborative processes, and “partnerships,” even with the very families that the system coerces. But to speak of “partnerships” between the coercively powerful CPS and the powerless impoverished families reported to it is to raise further questions of meaning. In addition, there is the problem of the further diffusion of responsibility and diminishment of any agency’s accountability that “sharing” CPS responsibility with other agencies entails.

Finally, although many of the examples of collaborative procedures that Waldfogel favorably describes in Britain, New Zealand, and some states have been in place for some time now, we are given only anecdotal evidence of what participants (workers, police, and others) say about their cross-training, team-working, collaborating, and partnering. There is little discussion of actual outcomes in terms of impact on children and families. One starts to wonder if “collaboration” is an end in itself. Nonetheless, there are some suggestions here that any commissioner of child welfare would be wise to take under consideration.

It is time to reexamine the deeper issues that CPS terminology and statistics tend to obscure. The level of explicit discussion must shift to that of underlying values, political philosophy, attitudes toward the poor, the political meaning of “authority,” the nature of social justice, and what we mean by social services and social work. If it does not, the future of child protection is dim, indeed. This book does not confront these matters but, if read along with work from other sides of the debate, might help us to see the need to move forward to this level of discussion.

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