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Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor.

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useful chapter which situates poverty in the United States in the international context. The second part of the book is concerned with anti-poverty policies ranging over topics such as income support programs, welfare reform, health and human capital investments. Part III focuses on the spatial dimension paying attention to community based interventions and housing programs for low income people. The final part of the book addresses issues of race, and the current state of research into poverty.

Despite its size, this is an extremely useful book which should be consulted by students, researchers and general readers alike. It is easy to read and summarizes a huge amount of important information in a systematic way. Although some will be critical of its atheoretical approach, this is not a major limitation. Even though theory is neglected, the book finds an appropriate balance between descriptive and policy approaches and, in this way, offers a succinct overview of what governments, communities and non-profit agencies can do to address the poverty problem. The book offers an excellent overview of the field and will be a widely used resource for many years to come.

Kenneth J. Neubeck and Noel Cazenave, *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card Against America's Poor*. New York: Routledge, 2001. \$19.95 papercover.

Social science scholarship has shown that there are many different ways of conceptualizing real world events and phenomena. Different investigators often use different perspectives to approach their subject matter and accordingly, their analyses and conclusions will differ from those who use other perspectives. This is equally true of the study of income support programs. Although much research in the field is based on an atheoretical, empiricist approach, more theoretically grounded approaches that rely on the insights of functionalism, Marxism, pluralism, gender and other perspectives are now common. However, it is only recently that scholars engaged in the analysis of welfare have explicitly sought to understand welfare from a perspective based on an understanding of race and the way racist attitudes and practices are infused into social policy. The pioneering work of scholars such as Jill Quadagno and Robert Lieberman has

been extended and reformulated by numerous other accounts including the one reviewed here.

However, the authors of this engaging book insist that previous accounts of race and welfare failed to transcend the limitations of conventional class and state centered analyses. Previous research, they argue, did not adequately emphasize the racist character of American society. It is not that racial discrimination rears its ugly head, finding expression in social welfare policies and programs from time to time, but rather than these policies and programs are totally shaped and determined by the institutionalization of racism in American culture. Institutionalized racism is, in turn, a function of the way white people have appropriated wealth, prestige and power unto themselves. To properly understand the American welfare system, scholars must, therefore, begin with an understanding of the way racism permeates American society.

The book offers many informative historical examples of how the policy making process has been saturated with racist considerations. From the time of the Progressive Era, through the New Deal to the Johnson War on Poverty and more recently the welfare 'reform' initiatives of the Clinton administration, the authors contend that race has been at the very center of welfare. By using a race-centered perspective, they show that the nation's welfare system is, in fact, a welfare racist system designed to oppress and exploit African Americans and other people of color. Specifically, the authors seek to demonstrate in several chapters that welfare racism is designed to enhance the prestige of the white population, extend their political power and increase their economic power by exploiting the poor. It is also intended to punish people for color for resisting white oppression and to control their reproduction.

The authors succeed in dramatizing extent to which race continues to pervade public attitudes as well as social policy debates on welfare. However, they often overstate the case. They also fail to demonstrate convincingly that the conspiratorial efforts of racists to use welfare for the ulterior motives outlined in the book's chapters, comprise a solid block of white racism. Indeed, they seem to downplay the efforts of many white 'progressives' to challenge and oppose racist activities. The final chapter, which

calls for a coalition of non-racial progressives that can counteract the insidious effects of welfare racism, fails to appreciate the extent to which people of many different backgrounds have already committed themselves to this task. The authors are also ambivalent about the contribution white feminists have made and, despite their efforts to integrate feminist critiques into their race centered perspective, feminist insights remain marginalized. Nevertheless, this is an important book which deserves to be widely read and discussed. It certainly succeeds in drawing attention to the on-going role of race in welfare policy. It also effectively challenges the conventional color-blind approach which characterizes so much of the social policy literature.