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**Review of *Changing Welfare Services: Case Studies of Local Welfare Reform Programs*. Michael J. Austin (Ed.) and *Welfare Reform in West Virginia*. Robert Jay Dilger (Ed.). Reviewed by James Midgley.**

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not appropriately assessed. Thus, when Gough argues that the Asian financial crisis required the state to develop a more autonomous welfare state, this view diverges from the views of many East Asian scholars. Recent developments are hard to reconcile with Gough's observations on welfare pathways in Korea: the South Korea President has not followed through on his promise to set up a poverty alleviation commission, while the pro-business Hong Kong post-colonial government established such a commission in early 2005.

While these shortcomings flaw the text, the book is serious in its intent, provocative in its theoretical discussion and wide ranging in its multi-perspectives. It should not only appeal to academics interested in classification but to those who are concerned with poverty and the problems of promoting human welfare in the developing countries. Additionally, it would make a thought-provoking text for a course on comparative social policy for graduate students in both the developed and developing worlds.

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Michael J. Austin (Ed.), *Changing Welfare Services: Case Studies of Local Welfare Reform Programs*. New York: Haworth Press, 2004. \$69.95 hardcover, \$39.95 papercover Robert Jay Dilger et al, *Welfare Reform in West Virginia*. Morgantown, WV: University of West Virginia Press, 2004. \$30.00 papercover.

During the 1990s, the welfare system underwent significant changes. As a result of the 1988 Family Support Act, new educational, job-training and job placement services were introduced and these significantly augmented the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (or AFDC) program which had been in existence since the 1930s. In addition, many states obtained waivers from the federal legislation in order to experiment with a variety of innovations that departed significantly from the entitlement approach that had characterized the AFDC program since its inception. With the enactment of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, AFDC was replaced with the new Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (or TANF) program, and significant reductions in welfare caseloads around the country were recorded.

"Welfare reform", as these changes are known, have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention and the number of social work and social policy research studies dealing with the new welfare system have increased exponentially. Many of the studies have sought to evaluate these policy changes and to determine whether they have reduced caseloads and successfully moved welfare recipients of the welfare rolls into regular employment and self-sufficiency. Many have used quantitative techniques to assess aggregate changes but some have sought to obtain more qualitative insights into the way the welfare system had affected the lives of those receiving benefits. Since the implementation of the TANF program, many studies have reported on overall caseload reductions and tracked the subsequent employment career of welfare leavers. The literature on the subject is now quite extensive and much more is known about the impact of the new program.

In view of the extensive literature now available on the subject, some may question the need for additional books about welfare reform. However, the two books reviewed here are of interest since they deal with two specific geographic localities, the Bay Area of California and the state of West Virginia, and address and number of topics that will be of interest not only to academic scholars but to social work practitioners and welfare administrators.

The first book, *Changing Welfare Services*, is compiled by Michael Austin, a professor at the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. It consists of 24 chapters written by Austin in collaboration with a number of the School's graduates students. Most of these chapter report on studies undertaken in recent years under the auspices of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium (or BASSC) which is a coalition of California Bay Area county social services directors, foundation representatives and the deans and directors of Bay Area schools of social work. In addition to his academic responsibilities, Austin serves as Staff Director to the Consortium.

The book is primarily concerned with the organizational and managerial aspects of welfare reform in the Bay Area, but it also addresses a number of related topics dealing with innovative social services programs and the role of community-based approaches to welfare reform. It is divided into five sections. The

first provides an overview of the legislative and administrative changes introduced under the TANF program while the second is concerned with barriers to workforce participation. Section III focuses on community partnerships while section IV deals with staffing managerial and other organizational issues affecting agency restructuring. The final section draws the material together and speculates about future developments.

The book is extremely wide-ranging and covers of large number of topics. One of its strengths is its case study approach which provides detailed information about specific projects and allows readers to focus on those aspects of welfare reform that are of particular interest to them. Several chapters report on innovative projects introduced by the county social services agencies which transcend the traditional benefit payment approach that previously characterized the welfare services. These include, for example, a ride-home transport service, a family loan program, the adopt-a-family program and an employment hotline. Several case studies report on community-based initiatives that address issues of homelessness, workforce development, substance abuse and child welfare. An interesting and welcome feature of the book is its attempt to assess these programs in terms of the social development approach which, the editor suggests, provides a useful framework for analyzing the impact on these programs. The book finds that many of the programs introduced by the county social services agencies reveal a strong commitment to social investment but, it suggests, more emphasis should be placed on human capital programs that adequately prepare people for sustained employment and self-sufficiency.

The second book, *Welfare Reform in West Virginia*, has been compiled by a number of scholars under the direction of Robert Jay Dilger, who works for the Library of Congress Congregational Research Service. Dilger was previously a professor of political science at West Virginia University. Most of the contributors are faculty members at West Virginia University. The book's chapters deal with diverse aspect of welfare reform in West Virginia. Dilger sets the scene by tracing the history of welfare Reform and its impact on West Virginia, and reviews a number of statistical studies dealing with outcomes. He makes the point that a study of welfare reform in West Virginia should be of interest to scholars

nationally because of the state's sizable rural population and the fact that its traditional industries are in decline. Subsequent chapters deal with the socio-economic, political and institutional contexts in which welfare reform took place, and these are followed by two chapters that focus on administered issues. One chapter examines the training opportunities provided under the new TANF program while another asks whether work is, in fact, the solution to the poverty problem? Other chapters deal with the impact of welfare reform on the state's safety net and its most disadvantaged populations. The final chapter provides an excellent summary and draws a number of key lessons from West Virginia's experience.

Although there are many aspects of welfare reform in West Virginia that are unique, the book shows that the overall impact of the TANF program is decidedly mixed. Although the state's welfare caseload declined rapidly from 36,000 in 1997 to only 13,000 in 2002 (a 64% reduction), 80% of these welfare leavers are below the federal government's poverty line and that almost 50% are unemployed. While welfare reform in West Virginia had succeeded in driving beneficiaries of the rolls, it had not moved them into stable employment and economic self-sufficiency. Drawing attention to the state's lack of employment opportunities, its declining industrial base and its sizable number of poor rural people, the book is critical of a program that is concerned with caseload reduction rather than poverty alleviation. It is also critical of the way the new program treats those who remain in the system. Since state officials are required to meet federal "participation" targets, welfare recipients are required to engage in employment. However, the book finds that many clients have been placed in unpaid community service jobs and that nearly two thirds of all recipients continue to receive benefits without participating in any work-related activities. Although the TANF program is supposed to prepare clients for remunerative employment in the open labor market, West Virginia's welfare system has clearly failed to do so.

The books will be of interest to scholars wishing to understand the changes that have taken place since the introduction of the TANF program. Austin and his student colleagues have compiled a useful collection of case studies that reveal the extent

to which the Bay Area county social services agencies have sought to transcend the limitations of the program by introducing policy and service innovations that can make a real difference to the lives of clients they serve. Since the book is primarily concerned with organizational change, it does not assess the overall impact of the TANF program on the incomes and standards of living of those who no longer receive benefits. On the other hand, this is the primary focus the book on West Virginia by Dilger and his colleagues. While its findings are not encouraging, the studies reported in the former book are more optimistic. The ambiguous nature of welfare reform's impact is perhaps the key lesson to be learned from these two books. Taken together, they not only highlight the program's mixed results but provide helpful insights into the way welfare reform has evolved in recent years.

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