



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY**

The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 34
Issue 4 December

Article 11

2007

Review of *Welfare Discipline: Discourse, Governance and Globalization*. Sanford F. Schram. Reviewed by Pranab Chatterjee and Kathleen M. Alman.

Pranab Chatterjee
Case Western Reserve University

Kathleen M. Alman
Case Western Reserve University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Chatterjee, Pranab and Alman, Kathleen M. (2007) "Review of *Welfare Discipline: Discourse, Governance and Globalization*. Sanford F. Schram. Reviewed by Pranab Chatterjee and Kathleen M. Alman.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 34: Iss. 4, Article 11.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.3301>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol34/iss4/11>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



**WESTERN
MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY**

democratic principles and donors' control and power is incomplete. In an ideal world, Frumkin could have suggested a progressive income tax, which, for example, would tax 70 or 80 percent of all annual income above one million dollars. Such a progressive tax system would be more distributive and would not leave social interventions to the whims of the mega-rich. Such a tax system might be sufficient to afford national health care.

But, Frumkin is a believer in the benevolence of the rich and the importance of making philanthropy work. He raises interesting and provoking questions, but he does not cross the line of his belief in philanthropy and his unquestioned sympathy for big donors. As such, the challenge is not fully met and the focus of the book is on how to make philanthropy more effective without really advancing the democratic challenge. At many times, Frumkin dismisses his own challenges without evidence to be able to advocate for philanthropy, yet, he opens the door for public discourse on the role of philanthropy in our society. Regardless of Frumkin's personal preferences, when the next congressional committee to study the role of philanthropy in the American society convenes, *Strategic Giving: The Art and Science of Philanthropy* will be its first and foremost source of guidance. This book is a must for all students of the nonprofit sector and philanthropy, as it covers new territories and opens a plethora of new intellectual challenges.

Ram Cnaan

Sanford F. Schram, *Welfare Discipline: Discourse, Governance, and Globalization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006. \$ 64.50 hardcover, \$ 21.95 paperback.

Sanford F. Schram, a professor in the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College, critiques current trends in welfare policy and argues for using new approaches in studying welfare policy and governance. The new approach features a compassionate emphasis on

reducing harm in order to allow for diversity while building community in an era of globalization. Through essays he is able to address current debates of welfare, including issues resulting from globalization, race, gender, and strategies for policy improvement.

Schram begins by describing the entrenchment of welfare in the United States that began in the mid-70s due to globalization discourse until the passage of welfare reform in 1996 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. Schram argues that this welfare reform became a model for other countries. He emphasizes "that different countries will choose differently based on their history, culture, political economy, and welfare state traditions (p. 27)." He describes the U.S. reform as the most punitive. For example, the U.S. does not provide substantial social supports or paid family leave whereas countries such as Denmark provide both. However, more European countries have followed the U.S. example in using work requirements and sanctions to encourage work for those accessing the welfare system moving towards an active welfare state.

Schram further describes how welfare continues to be biased towards the necessity of a two parent household in fulfilling personal responsibility. He relies on numerous feminist scholars, such as Martha Fineman and Nancy Fraser, to highlight gender biases in the globalizing dependency discourse. Suggestions on how to better promote gender justice are provided.

Schram explains how neutral discourse regarding U.S. welfare policy upholds racial disadvantages. "Welfare reform is therefore an ostensibly neutral public policy that is part of a vicious cycle of race bias: it is a policy that grows out of and reinforces racially biased institutions and practices in the broader society, concerning education, jobs, housing, and other factors affecting life chances (p. 77)." This is occurring in Europe as race and ethnic differences become more of a problem due to migration and immigration. As nonwhite recipients' reliance on welfare becomes disproportionate, it becomes "its own self-fulfilling justification that the problem must be with recipients and their behavior, not with the structure of society, the economy, or its labor markets (p. 104)."

The limits of asset building approaches to combating poverty are offered, including promoting poor families to imitate middle class families. Schram ends the book promoting compassionate liberalism for welfare policy with harm reduction as a postmodern ethic for the welfare state. This approach moves from the "tough love" approach of encouraging people to take more personal responsibility to a "practice designed to resist judging others so as to help them live their lives better on their own terms (p. xvii)."

There seem to be at least two paradigms to engage in scholarship about social welfare policy. The first can be called "scholar for social welfare," while the second is "scholar of social welfare." The first one focuses on how the state does not provide enough for everyone who needs it and how to change that. The second paradigm, on the other hand, calls for a balance between equity (call it welfare) and efficiency (call it market activities) that make welfare possible. The second paradigm focuses more on dealing with the unintended consequences of social welfare, and less on the intended. The professionals in social work usually support the first paradigm as they advocate for more services for their clients.

The intended consequences of social welfare are increased services and meeting the needs of more people. However, the unintended consequences are: chronic welfare dependency, cost overrun, unemployment (Philips curve), increased bureaucracy and diminished capacity for productivity in the market. Schram's book pursues the intended consequences, by promoting compassionate liberalism, but does not address the issue of its unintended consequences. His work rates a "high" on advocacy and a "low" in capacity. This is classic, party-line, social work advocacy: high on entitlements and advocacy, and low on capacity.

Because Schram does not address the issues within the second paradigm, we are unable to gain more knowledge on how to deal with the reality that not all states have the surplus to support a welfare system. And for those states that do have a surplus, it is not in unlimited supply. We need to learn how to evaluate the capacity to provide welfare, and based on that capacity, critically discuss how to ration who should benefit from that surplus. Schram's book falls short on answering

these latter issues. Consequently, Schram's book turns out to be another work on liberal redistribution (or pro-Fabian redistribution, as the British used to call it) that supports the party line in social work. In so doing, it fails to educate us about how to build and maintain a surplus that makes the continuity of a safety net possible.

Pranab Chatterjee
Kathleen M. Alman
Case Western Reserve University

Wendy Haight and Edward H. Taylor, *Human Behavior for Social Work Practice: A Developmental-Ecological Framework*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books, 2006. \$ 39.95 papercover.

This is an interesting text on an important aspect of social work education which is complex. Human behavior and the social environment currently has an extremely large number of texts. This text by Wendy Haight and Edward Taylor draws upon knowledge about human behavior and places it in the context of social work practice, a different orientation.

The authors explore the complex relationship between human behavior and social work practice. They present a developmental-ecological framework as the conceptual orientation for the rest of the text. They use this framework in the context of social work with individuals through the life span. For example, they illustrate social work with infants and young children, children and middle-childhood, adolescents, young adults, mid-life adults in a mental health context, and medical social work with older adults. The developmental-ecological framework is used as a conceptual framework for social work practice with these groups of people, and it is also applicable to other populations.

They suggest that their text be used in conjunction with readings selected by an instructor, primarily to present the relationship between human behavior and social work practice. It should be noted that they provide a very nice list of references and web-based resources and they sprinkle their