



The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 36
Issue 2 *June*

Article 16

2009

Review of Social Welfare in Japan: Principles and Applications. Kojun Furukawa. Reviewed by Christina Miyawaki.

Christina Miyawaki
University of California, Berkeley

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

 Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Miyawaki, Christina (2009) "Review of *Social Welfare in Japan: Principles and Applications*. Kojun Furukawa. Reviewed by Christina Miyawaki.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 36 : Iss. 2 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol36/iss2/16>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.



its purpose, becoming an “infirmity” for the sick and the elderly. As a good social scientist, Wagner is curious about how almshouse residency affected the lives of inmates. Tracing inmates’ lives, he finds almshouse residency did not necessarily doom inmates to lives of penury. Some left the almshouse and seemed to prosper if they had marketable skills, demonstrating resiliency and “vertical social mobility,” while others remained dependent.

Ordinary People clearly shows how social support, personal gumption and simple chance contribute to individual well-being and success over time. Wagner’s painstaking research provides useful demographic portraits of almshouse inmates. Most were immigrants (the Irish were the largest national group) and male, more were single than married and most were relatively young (15 to 30 years old)—16.3% were skilled craftsmen, 44.6% were laborers and domestics, and 2.6% were “colored.” Wagner skillfully places his research within the context of changes in American social welfare. By the 1890s, treatment of the poor had become a concern of social elites, academics and burgeoning helping professions. To what extent, he asks, were changes in how those in need were treated the result of pressure by workers, trade unions or powerful immigrant associations? In Massachusetts, the rise of Irish political power brought new attitudes towards the poor, a change from the class prejudices of the Boston Brahmins. Eventually, Poor Law institutions such as almshouses and workhouses were replaced by categorical services for those in need. Wagner gives us tantalizing insights into the lives of “ordinary” people who needed community support in a time of rapid social change. His innovative research enriches understanding of how we have considered poverty and have chosen to deal with it.

John M. Herrick, Michigan State University

Kojun Furukawa, *Social Welfare in Japan: Principles and Applications*. Melbourne, Australia: TransPacific Press, 2008. \$79.95 hardcover.

It would not be an overstatement to say that this book is one of the most comprehensive books written about Japanese

social welfare. The original text was in Japanese and was published in Japan in 2003. The English translation was issued by an Australian publisher in 2008. The book is lengthy, with a total of 425 pages including a four-page reference section, and it also contains many figures and tables. It is distinctive in terms of its comprehensiveness and broad analysis of Japanese social welfare principles and applications.

The book deals with many issues relating to social welfare and social work in Japan. It covers topics such as social welfare research, the philosophies of social welfare, and perspectives on social welfare as a science. It provides an interesting historical perspective on Japanese social welfare since the 1920s, interwoven with an analysis of the influence of European and American social work on Japanese developments. It discusses the characteristics of Japanese social welfare and includes definitions of social welfare terminologies used in Japan. While the order of the book's contents is conventional and covers many topics found in similar descriptive accounts, it certainly provides extensive information about Japan's social welfare system.

Since Furukawa is a professor, it can be assumed that he wrote the book as a textbook. Its major strength is that it covers a wide range of social welfare topics and explains the details of social welfare principles and the application of these principles in Japanese society. The use of a formal Japanese scholarly writing style, however, makes the book rather impersonal. It is also hard to understand some of the Japanese concepts the author uses. Had he provided more concrete examples of these concepts, it would have been easier to understand them. For instance, the equivalent qualifications for Japanese "social welfare personnel" would have been easier to grasp had the author made comparisons with the qualifications used in America and other countries.

The final chapter on social welfare as a science is particularly noteworthy. It starts with a history of Japanese social welfare science research in the post-war era and ends with the underdevelopment of the field in comparison with those of related sciences such as sociology and economics. The author states that the field of social welfare in Japan is still at an early stage of development, lacking public recognition and

causing confusion with other social science fields. His approach to the conceptualization of social policy and social work as "a unified field of social welfare," which utilizes interdisciplinary perspectives is helpful.

A major weakness of this book is that it is a translation. The demands of the Japanese language and the author's scholarly writing style—which uses indirect, vague expressions and the use of Japanese characters (*kanji*)—undoubtedly make translating into English challenging. Translators tend to stress the functional meaning of the words and sentences rather than the stylistic emphasis. These translation challenges result in the atypical use of English expressions. Despite these difficulties, Furukawa has done a fine job in meeting his goal of "portraying and explaining Japanese social welfare and social welfare science." However, if he hopes to reach a broad audience, he should include more comparative examples and illustrations, which show the similarities and differences between Japanese social welfare and social welfare in other parts of the world.

Christina Miyawaki, University of California, Berkeley

Mary Keegan Eamon, *Empowering Vulnerable Populations: Cognitive Behavioral Interventions*. Chicago, IL: Lyceum Press, 2008. \$59.95 papercover.

It is well known that cognitive behavioral interventions have been proven effective for a wide array of mental health concerns. Nevertheless, mental health providers remain interested in improving their knowledge of the selection and implementation of cognitive behavioral interventions that have lasting results for vulnerable groups. The field of social work and other professions invested in improving the mental health of at risk and marginalized populations and can agree that client empowerment is an ideal treatment outcome connected to lasting results. Mary Keegan Eamon provides a source book with descriptions of the process and outcomes of vulnerable client empowerment through cognitive behavioral interventions.

The author's introductory section provides a description of the situations and pertinent factors connecting a client with a