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Review of *Developments in Swedish Social Policy: Resisting Dionysus*. Arthur Gould. *Welfare in Ireland: Actors, Resources and Strategies*. Michel Peillon. Reviewed by James Midgley.

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the interdisciplinary nature of research teams blur some of the distinctions made about social work researchers? Are the methodologies of social work research derivative of methodologies from other fields: qualitative research, survey design and analysis, time-series analyses and mathematical modeling? Do social work researchers contribute to other fields of knowledge? Schools of social work such as those at the University of Michigan promote combined doctoral work in social science and social work, and it is not surprising to note that three of the five highest rated schools of social work in terms of publication in peer-reviewed journals publish more of their scholarly activities in non-social work journals than in social work journals (Green, Baskind & Bellin, 2002). Hence, one might ask whether or not it is too insular to look primarily at the relationship of social work research to social work practice within social work literature, or should the inquiry be expanded to systematically look at the relationship of other scientific fields to social work practice as well as social work research? Notwithstanding these questions, this book with its primary focus on social work literature provides an enormous contribution to social work history and future debates about the relationship between social work research and social work practice. And, I highly recommend it to students of the social sciences and the philosophy of science, as well as to social work students and scholars.

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Reference

Green, R. G., Baskind, F. R. & Bellin, M. H. (2002). Results of the doctoral faculty publication project: Journal article productivity and its correlates in the 1990s. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 38 (1) 35–152.

Arthur Gould, *Developments in Swedish Social Policy: Resisting Dionysus*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. \$62.00 hardcover; Michel Peillon, *Welfare in Ireland: Actors, Resources and Strategies*. Westport, CT: Praegar, 2001. \$62.50 hardcover.

Scholarly inquiry into the social welfare systems of different countries has become increasingly sophisticated in recent

decades. When social policy scholars first began to engage systematically in comparative social welfare inquiry about half a century ago, much of the research was descriptive, and numerous country case studies focusing mainly on the Western industrial nations were published. Usually, the welfare systems of Britain, the United States, Sweden and other European countries were described and attempts were made to draw comparisons between them. Efforts were also made to formulate methodologically rigorous rules for comparison. Occasionally, 'outlier' countries would be included in these studies and, in time, the focus expanded to include regions beyond the usual North America-European axis, such as Latin America.

While the country case study format has remained central to comparative social welfare research, another approach, which was less descriptive, also emerged. This approach drew on illustrative examples from different countries and regions to illuminate particular issues, arguments and propositions. While this approach became popular, it drew criticism from the purists who argued that serious comparative inquiry should not be based on the haphazard use of comparative material. Nor, they claimed, should international evidence be used to bolster particular points of view. They insist that it is only through detailed descriptive accounts that rigorous comparisons and valid generalizations can be formulated. This point of view was countered by the argument that descriptive country case studies were atheoretical, frequently out of date, and frankly boring. Some believed that country case studies were becoming obsolete and that they would soon be abandoned.

However, as the two books reviewed here reveal, the country case study format has not been abandoned. Indeed, the literature on the welfare systems of different countries has grown rapidly and today, much more is known about the way social welfare policies and programs are implemented in the world's different nations. Similarly, country case studies can transcend description by applying theoretical constructs in a more interesting way to frame and interpret domestic realities. Indeed, the two books reviewed here make extensive use of theory to frame their accounts. Their use of theory offers fascinating insights into the way comparative social welfare inquiry is today emphasizing the

role of culture, traditions and institutions in analyzing the factors responsible for the origins, historical development and current features of welfare systems.

Arthur Gould focuses on Sweden, a country he has previously included in a major comparative study of Europe and Japan. Gould is extremely knowledgeable about the Swedish welfare system and his book is of particular value because it provides an update of recent changes arising from growing pressures for retrenchment. Although the issue of welfare retrenchment in Sweden has already been discussed extensively in the comparative literature, accounts of developments in Sweden emanating from Britain and North America have tended to focus on electoral factors, the growing pressures for economic competitiveness and taxpayer fatigue. Gould's account is much more sophisticated suggesting that the pressures for change are inextricably linked to wider postmodernist forces which are challenging the country's highly structured, modernist welfare system. The result is a more fragmented, ambiguous and decentralized welfare system in which pluralism and self-determination is celebrated. Faced with these forces, the Swedish welfare system has experienced significant pressures to reduce costs, retrench services and modify long standing commitments.

However, Gould argues that the Swedes have resisted and, despite the changes which have taken place, the Swedish welfare system remains intact. It also continues to serve as an exemplar of an ideal-typical modernist welfare state. But contrary to popular wisdom, Gould does not attribute the survival of the Swedish welfare state to the persistence of social democracy or class struggle, but rather to Swedish culture which deeply values order, structure, rationality and other modernist values. Drawing on the culture of personality theories which were popular in academic circles in the mid-20th century, and particularly on Ruth Benedict's Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, Gould contends that the Apollonian features of Swedish life are so institutionalized that they will continue to ensure the long term survival of the Swedish welfare state, which it is itself a cultural artifact of this culture. Gould does not entirely approve of the continuation of these Apollonian tendencies which reveal an obsession with control and a paternalistic need to order people's lives. Echoing Lyotard's

condemnation of modernity, he points out that Swedish governments in the past engaged in dubious practices resulting from a misguided but culturally determined paternalism.

Michel Peillon's book on social welfare in Ireland also makes explicit use of the role of cultural institutions to explain the evolution and features of the country's welfare system. However, Peillon employs the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, and particularly his notion of a social field, to frame his analysis. He adapts Bourdieu's argument that the amount of cultural and other forms of capital the actors in the field control, is primarily responsible for determining outcomes. He contends that an understanding of welfare in Ireland requires an analysis of the way different actors in the 'welfare field' struggle to dominate and shape the welfare system for their own purposes. The major actors in the Irish welfare field are the state, the Catholic Church, the trade unions, the business community, voluntary organizations and the feminist movement. Peillon discusses their roles and activities in some depth, and shows how the nation's complex mix of welfare policies and programs have emerged from these struggles. While Peillon focuses primarily on the role of domestic forces in the welfare field, he is also mindful the British colonial legacy, the country's membership of the European community and its continued relationship with the United Kingdom. He suggests that Ireland may be viewed as a peripheral European country which has experienced a dependent pattern of economic development. This is another important factor in understanding the country's welfare system.

Both books show how far comparative scholarship based on the country case study format has come. They have not only transcended the bland descriptive approach which characterized earlier research, but offer a refreshing departure from the typological obsession which now dominates international social welfare. While much comparative scholarship is today preoccupied with classifying national welfare systems, these books provide far more useful insights into the dynamics of welfare systems. Both offer a richer and more nuanced interpretation of how social welfare institutions operate in the context of culture, traditions and beliefs. They may be limited in their geographic coverage, and may be criticized for being excessively concerned with the details

of particular national policies and programs, but they show the importance of referencing cultural factors when seeking to understand and interpret welfare. Gould's emphasis on national cultural preferences in Sweden, and Peillon's account of the Irish welfare field, reveal an innovative and impressive application of theory. Peillon's analysis role of the Catholic Church in influencing social welfare policy in Ireland is particularly interesting at a time that religious involvement in social welfare is again being recognized and appreciated. Both books should be essential reading for anyone engaged in international and comparative social welfare today.

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James A. Forte, *Theories for Practice: Symbolic Interactionist Translations*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001. \$68 hardcover

Forte's *Theories for Practice* is a sprawling and comprehensive overview of the intellectual spheres touched by symbolic interactionist thinkers. These include many of the intellectual watersheds of the past 100 or so years: psychoanalytic theory, Marxism, and evolutionary psychology, to name only a few. The names associated with early symbolic interactionism, including George Herbert Mead and John Dewey, are certainly major intellectual figures if not superstars like Marx, Freud or Darwin. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that humans invest the world with meaning, meanings that evolve through interaction and are continuously interpreted and reinterpreted. This framework has inspired much social science research and is resonant with qualitative, interpretive inquiry. As the title suggests, this book examines theories from economics, psychology and political science and translates them into the sociological symbolic interactionist perspective.

Social work, psychology, and sociology have a long history of mutual influence, and social work has been poised between sociology and psychology for much of its history. In several chapters Forte traces the history of sociology and social work, and points