



## The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 30  
Issue 4 December

Article 15

December 2003

### Review of *From Immigration Controls to Welfare Controls*. Steve Cohen, Beth Humphries, & Ed Mynott (Eds.). Reviewed by Miriam Potocky-Tripodi.

Miriam Potocky-Tripodi  
*Florida International University*

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

 Part of the Public Policy Commons, Social Welfare Commons, and the Social Work Commons

#### Recommended Citation

Potocky-Tripodi, Miriam (2003) "Review of *From Immigration Controls to Welfare Controls*. Steve Cohen, Beth Humphries, & Ed Mynott (Eds.). Reviewed by Miriam Potocky-Tripodi.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 4 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol30/iss4/15>

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](mailto:maira.bundza@wmich.edu).



Steve Cohen, Beth Humphries and Ed Mynott (Eds.), *From Immigration Controls to Welfare Controls*. New York: Routledge, 2002. \$90.00 hardcover, \$28.95 papercover.

This edited volume addresses recent policy that has severely restricted access to welfare assistance by asylum seekers and other immigrants within Britain. This issue is of broader relevance as the British policy, the 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act, closely parallels the spirit and intent of the 1996 "welfare reform" policy in the United States, as well as similar legislation in other European states. In essence these policies position non-citizens as a lesser category of human beings undeserving of public support, based on the premise that they have not "paid into" the system. The policies also reflect age-old characterizations of immigrants as lazy, criminal, feeble-minded, unclean and immoral. Thus, these policies have arisen in the 1990s as a result of, as well as an expression of, the treatment of immigrants as scapegoats for society's ills.

For several years now immigrant advocates have been engaged in a concerted effort to document and publicize the injustices of these policies, their inconsistencies with pre-existing national and international laws, their deleterious effects upon the target populations, and their unintended consequences for particularly vulnerable sub-populations, such as children. This book is part of that effort. The contributing authors, who include immigration lawyers, researchers, and social work academicians, aim to describe the provisions of the policies, to reveal racist and capitalist motivations behind the policies, and to encourage collective resistance to the policies by welfare workers, who have been saddled with the task of policy implementation.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, labeled "Political, Historical, and International Issues," primarily traces the historical development of these policies in Britain and the various forces, identified as racism, nationalism, and classism, that have played a role. The "international" perspective is provided primarily by a chapter on the immigrant provisions of the welfare reform legislation in the United States, focusing in particular on its consequences for citizen children of non-citizen parents. Part II of the book addresses the contemporary issues in immigration and welfare. The five chapters in this section describe the various

provisions of the British policy related to asylum seekers' (and other immigrants') disentanglements from social welfare programs such as cash assistance and housing. In essence the legislation has created an entirely separate welfare system for these non-citizens, a system that is "separate and unequal." This section documents how this separate system benefits the interests of private enterprise, namely shop-owners and landlords. The section also points out how the immigration legislation is inconsistent with other legislation, in particular child welfare policy. Additionally, the chapters in this section explain how welfare workers in the non-governmental voluntary sector have been made complicit in carrying out the provisions of the legislation.

The last part of the book puts forward some bold suggestions for actions to oppose the legislation. This is really the most interesting part of the book, because it is the most thought-provoking and controversial. There are three chapters in this section. The first addresses possible legal challenges to the policy via other British policies and European conventions. The next chapter advocates the repeal of all immigration control laws worldwide, including both internal controls such as those addressed in this book, as well as external controls that restrict entry. The argument put forth for this is that "fair" immigration controls are impossible to achieve because all controls are inherently racist; hence, no controls are the only just solution. However, the author of this chapter gives very short shrift to the very serious problems that would ensue from this approach. The author also appears to take a rather relativist stance on human rights, which some readers might take issue with. The final chapter advocates that the welfare workers in the nongovernmental sector, who have been charged with implementing the legislation, take collective action by refusing to cooperate in this scheme. This is another area of controversy, as some may question whether change can best be achieved by working against the system or working with it.

On the whole this book is an important contribution to the debates on immigration policy and welfare policy. The book clearly lays out the harmful, mean-spirited, and selfish intents and consequences of the internal immigration controls in Britain, and it takes a clear and bold stance on strategies for resistance, which can serve as a launching point for further debate. The book could have benefited from some better synthesis and organization. Quite a

few of the chapters are rather repetitive. A concluding chapter that draws everything together, and that might provide more international perspective, would also have been helpful. Nonetheless, it is definitely recommended reading for all concerned not only with issues of immigration but of social justice.

Miriam Potocky-Tripodi  
Florida International University

Arnlaug Leira, *Working Parents and the Welfare State: Family Change and Policy Reform in Scandinavia*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. \$65.00.

Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. \$24.95 papercover.

Two recent books, Haney's *Inventing the Needy* and Leira's *Working Parents and the Welfare State* grapple with what both authors see as a transformation of the welfare state in response to the influx of women, specifically mothers, into the paid labor market. These works emerge against the backdrop of increased labor force participation of mothers with young children in most OECD countries; in the U.S. for example, more than 60% of all mothers work at least part-time outside the home. With a general decline in rates of marriage and fertility, and an increasing rate of divorce, studies which examine the state's ability to support working families are timely. Where the focus of *Inventing the Needy* is the Hungarian welfare state from 1948 to the present, *Working Parents* is confined mainly to developments in the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden) during the 1990s. Both Haney and Leira create a tripartite model explaining the transformation of their respective welfare state, although Leira's work is both more theoretical and analytic. However, it is ultimately their views on gender division and stratification that unite these two works.

Haney's exhaustive treatise begins with a premise that the essential characteristics of the Hungarian welfare state have morphed three times during a 50 year period, from a regime type she terms Welfare Society (1948–1968) to a Maternalistic model (1968–1985) and final to a Liberal incarnation (1985–1996). The