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# Social Investments, Asset Building, and Social Development—The State of the Art: A Special Issue in Honor of James Midgley

David K. Androff and Mary A. Caplan  
*Special Issue Editors*

Social investment and social development approaches seek to promote human well-being by harmonizing social welfare with economic development (Midgley, 2014). Social development emerged from diverse traditions, including postcolonial social policy, international development, and institutional approaches to the welfare state; over the last two decades this approach has risen to prominence as a key policy and practice perspective around the globe. The social development perspective has yielded policy innovations and catalyzed practice models such as developmental social work (Midgley & Conley, 2010). From the 1995 World Summit on Social Development, subsequent Millennium Development Goals, and the current Sustainable Development Goals, social development is likely to remain integral to the global agenda. Uneven recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis and rising inequality alongside historic advances in economic development emphasize the critical role of social policy in balancing growth with social investments into peoples' social welfare. These conditions call for further examination of the benefits of social investment policies and practices.

This Special Issue examines social investment as a tool of social policy and investigates how it has been applied around the world. Social investment is an approach to social welfare policy that aims for economic participation and positive economic returns (Midgley, Dahl, & Wright, 2017). It is closely associated with Michael Sherraden's (1991) work on asset building, which seeks to develop people's financial and other resources,

and both social investment and asset building are closely linked to the broader intellectual framework of social development. James Midgley has indisputably shaped social development as a field of scholarship. This Special Issue honors his scholarship and professional contributions by presenting eight original articles that explore the current state of social investment in policy and theory around the globe.

James Midgley is Professor of the Graduate School and Harry and Riva Specht Professor of Public Social Services Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley where he is also Dean Emeritus of the School of Social Welfare (1997-2006). Born in South Africa, he studied at the University of Cape Town where he was confronted with the oppression of the apartheid era social policy. After Midgley left to study at the London School of Economics, Richard Titmuss mentored Midgley and recruited him to create a graduate program focused on social policy in the Global South. Prior to coming to Berkeley, he served as the Dean of the School of Social Work and Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at Louisiana State University.

Midgley has published widely in the areas of social development, social policy, social work and international social welfare. Midgley's significant scholarly contributions encompass landmark books. *Professional Imperialism: Social Work in the Third World* (1981) was a breakthrough that brought scholarly attention to the sorely neglected Global South and offered a critical perspective of social workers and policymakers in the Global North that remains relevant today. Perhaps his best-known work is *Social Development: The Developmental Perspective in Social Welfare* (1995) which brought intellectual clarity and weight to the field that would influence the United Nations, the Millennium Development Goals, and policy innovations in governments around the world. His authoritative *Social Welfare in a Global Context* (1997) influenced a generation of international social workers. Midgley's recent books, such as *Social Development: Theory and Practice* (2014) and *Social Welfare for a Global Era* (2017), extend his work and complement the numerous collections he has edited with colleagues into social protection, developmental social work practice, social policy in Asia, and social investment. His books have been translated into Bahasa Malaysian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, and Spanish, and have become core references for research and education.

For these contributions, Midgley has received many professional honors, including honorary Doctorates from the University of Johannesburg and the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, and honorary Professorships at the University of Johannesburg, Nihon Fukushi University in Japan, Sun Yat-sen University in China and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He has been recognized with the 1996 International Rhoda Sarnat Prize from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), the 2004 Career Achievement Award by the Association of Community Organization and Social Administration, the 2005 Lifetime Achievement in Social Work Award from the California Chapter of NASW, the 2006 International Partnership in Social Work Education Award from the Commission on Global Social Work of the Council on Social Work Education, and the inaugural Presidential Award from the International Consortium for Social Development Asia-Pacific Branch in 2012. In 2006, he was awarded the Berkeley Citation for his service as Dean of the School of Social Welfare and contribution to the University. Midgley was elected to the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare in 2010 and is a frequent keynote speaker at international conferences and universities around the world. In addition to these academic achievements, Midgley is cherished by many for his charm, his generosity of spirit, his wit, and his warmth of heart. These qualities, combined with a passionate commitment to scholarly debate, exchange, and networking, have earned Midgley respect and goodwill around the world for his role in mentoring a large global network of social work, social policy, and social development scholars.

### Overview of the Special Issue: Midgley's Impact on the Field

In April of 2016 the University of California, Berkeley School of Social Welfare held a Symposium to honor and celebrate Midgley's distinguished career. The symposium was sponsored by Dean Jeffrey Edleson of the School of Social Welfare at Berkeley. We gratefully acknowledge his support. Leading scholars traveled from the U.K., Norway, South Africa, Hong Kong, Australia, and across the U.S. to deliver papers on the current state of social investment and social development; this Special Issue was born at that meeting. By taking global stock of social

investment, this Special Issue will contribute to the literature on social policy and social work and reinforce social investment and social development models as practical strategies for promoting social welfare. The contributors comprise but a small sample of the global academic network of Midgley's colleagues and former students. The articles span Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North and South America.

The lead article, by Midgley, sets the tone for the Special Issue by providing essential historical and conceptual context. It details the relationship of social development to post-colonialism, community development, social planning, and livelihoods. Assets are placed in their historical context within the U.S., highlighting the role of federal policy, tax programs, Individual Development Accounts, and asset-based community development. Social investment is linked to basic needs approaches, the social democratic tradition, E.U. regional policy, and neoliberal critiques. Despite their different contexts, disciplines, and priorities, these perspectives are revealed to share common features that go beyond traditional consumption-based welfare state policies toward progressive social change.

The next three articles are written by Midgley's peers and analyze social investment policies in the U.S. and the Global South. The first of these is authored by Michael Sherraden, founder and Director of the Center for Social Development at the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University at St. Louis. Together with Midgley, he is a pioneer of the International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD). His article demonstrates the application of assets as a form of social investment in social policy. Sherraden traces his intellectual trajectory, summarizing years of rigorous empirical research, and theorizes what a social investment state might look like. Noting that current U.S. social policy incentivizes asset-building among the wealthiest, Sherraden argues that social investment, as a policy tool, is value neutral unless deployed toward advancing social justice.

The next article is written by Adolfo Cazorla, the Director General of the School of Industrial Organization in Spain, and his colleagues Negrillo, Montalvo, and De Nicolas. Their article operationalizes institutional structuralism and managed pluralism in a case study of a microcredit program in Peru. The program's impressive outcomes emphasize how a participatory

process can strengthen social development efforts in the Global South. The authors indicate how institutions can partner with local organizations to build capacity for social development.

The following article is by Lela Patel, the South African Research Chair in Welfare and Social Development and Director of the Centre for Social Development in Africa at the University of Johannesburg. Patel provides a comprehensive and historical overview of social protection in Africa and analyzes how social protection as a form of social investment has been implemented. Noting that the literature on social protection has been limited to the Global North, Patel demonstrates that new frameworks based on the experiences of the Global South hold significant promise and uses her analysis to critique neoliberal arguments for social austerity.

The remaining articles are authored by Midgley's former students, who extend social investment into new directions of policy and theory. The first is authored by James Lee, the former Head of the Department of Applied Social Sciences at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Lee attends to contemporary limitations of the welfare state by connecting a basic need, shelter, to social investment and social justice, as a major part of the economy. The article posits that housing is an asset that affects peoples' social welfare through its exchange-value and use-value. Making innovative use of Rawlsian theory, Lee presents the case for *predistribution* of social goods rather than *redistribution*. Lee illustrates his argument through the empirical cases of comparative housing markets in Singapore and Hong Kong.

The next article is written by Amy Conley Wright who is the Director of the Institute of Open Adoption Studies at the University of Sydney. This article reframes adoption as a form of social investment policy and integrates the child welfare and social investment literatures. Wright argues for extending Child Development Accounts, as a well-established social investment strategy for children, to children adopted into foster care. Wright provides a comparative analysis of adoption policies and studies from Australia, the U.K., and the U.S., and concludes by proposing policy prescriptions for adoption-based Child Development Accounts.

The following article is written by Mary Caplan of the University of Georgia, Margaret Sherraden, Professor Emerita of the University of Missouri–St. Louis, and Junghee Bae of the

University of Georgia. Their article argues that financial capability should be viewed as a form of social investment. Caplan, Sherraden, and Bae connect financial capability, which is highlighted as one of the Grand Challenges for Social Work, with social investment and social development. They deploy three case studies of national policies from around the globe that promote financial capability, such as conditional cash transfers and mobile banking, and conclude by assessing these financial capability programs from a social investment perspective.

The final paper is by David Androff, Associate Director of the Office of Global Social Work at Arizona State University. Androff presents human rights as a basis for social policy including social investment. Building upon social rights and the right to development, Androff explores how human rights obligate duty-bearers, including states, to make social investments in social welfare. Androff argues that social investment in the areas of poverty, health, mental health, child welfare, and older adults can advance human rights.

While each article is focused on a distinct policy perspective, taken together, these articles echo many themes of Midgley's work and build upon his legacy in social development, social policy, and international social welfare. Throughout his career, Midgley has argued in his scholarship for social change that is planned and managed by state policymakers who are held accountable by the community (Midgley & Livermore, 2009). These articles also demonstrate a sense of the creativity that characterizes Midgley's work and draw attention to overlooked topics such as social protection in Africa, housing, and human rights. The articles are appropriately international in scope, as Midgley has consistently demonstrated a global perspective and paid particular attention to the Global South.

### Reflection: Midgley's Impact upon the Editors

Midgley has had an undeniable impact upon the world of social work, social policy and development. His scholarship and career stand as an exemplar for how international exchanges can generate new perspectives with global significance. His faith in the value of scholarship and its potential to impact policy has inspired generations of scholars. Midgley's influence upon the field has been profound through his prodigious publishing,



indefatigable support for professional organizations, and deep personal connections with people around the globe, including his students. It is in this last group which we (DA & MC) count ourselves as grateful members.

I (DA) first met Midgely in the fall of 2001 when I matriculated as a Master of Social Work student at the University of California at Berkeley. I still recall his address to incoming students; he was funny, personable, and inspirational. My first of many classes with him was his enormously popular course on International Social Work; it had a waiting list. It was in this class that I met my co-editor. His lectures blended social theory, political and economic history, and personal stories with concrete examples. It was not rare for him to cover 500 years in one lecture, while also telling stories about visiting rural villages. It is his impact upon me as a scholar that I treasure the most. Over the years, Midgely graciously gave his time and encouragement as he poured over draft after draft of my dissertation. He introduced me to the community of international social work by taking me to the 2007 International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) Symposium in Hong Kong. Attending an international conference with Midgely gives a sense of the global academic community. Everywhere I travel I meet people who know and respect him, not just as a scholar, but also as a mentor. At the 2015 ICSD Symposium in Singapore, surrounded with colleagues and former students, we planned the Berkeley Symposium to celebrate Midgely's career and his transition to Emeritus Professor.

Like my co-editor, I (MC) met Midgely when I was a Master of Social Work student at Berkeley, and I chose Berkeley's doctoral program precisely because I wanted to continue to work with him. Being a student of Midgely's means that you have a mentor who is committed to your scholarly growth and excellence, and who encourages you to take intellectual risks. In this way, Midgely has had a profound impact upon my scholarship and teaching, namely in making connections between my subject of study and history. He encouraged me to think deeply and question everything, especially my own thoughts and conclusions. I would often walk away from a meeting with him feeling like a better person: stronger, smarter, and more connected to the world. I often think of his generosity in my interactions



and try to channel it with my own doctoral students, with the intention that his legacy continues on through me.

Midgley emphasized the value of creativity and originality in scholarship to both of us. He taught us that the point of scholarship is to do something new. This requires taking risks and avoiding treading where others have gone; only by doing so can the field advance. Above all, it is the responsibility of the scholar to determine which questions must be asked: not the government, not the funders, not the administrators, nor other elites. Midgley charged his students to safeguard the role of the scholar in society; his sentiment is more relevant today than ever.

And yet, Midgley is an optimist, never losing faith that true progress can be made to improve people's social welfare around the world. One of the special things about taking a course with Midgley is that he would conclude each semester by reciting Shakespeare to the class. So, as we wait to see what impact he will have next, we will indulge and share in his optimism: "True hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings. Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings" (*Richard III*: 5.2.23–24).

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