

# Series Editors Introduction

This edited volume by Berdayes and Murphy offers a rich tapestry of critical theorizing about the relationship of forms of physical and symbolic violence in a global world. It provides an important volume of the Springer International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice book series. The authors raise critical questions about social inaction and action and the problems of ideologies which provide mystification processes that deny positive social identity.

Of course, the spectre of problems of economic violence against subjugated groups in neoliberal globalization has endured a lasting legacy. Huge numbers of people struggle with poverty and significant pockets of poverty portend more than lack of income. Those living on the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder labor under the burden of avoidable lifestyle diseases, hunger, and related maladies, not to mention myriad social risks (Powell and Chen 2013). More than 2.5 billion of the planet's population live on less than US\$2 a day and nearly a billion still have less than US\$1 daily (Chen and Ravallion 2007). As might be apparent, in this day and age poverty creates conditions in which rationality is redefined, nation-states struggle to control circumstances, not to mention criminality, low birth weights are ubiquitous, ill-health a fact of life, illiteracy rampant, malnutrition commonplace, environmental degradation seen as the cost of doing business, and notions of social justice are brought face-to-face with priorities said to have greater standing (Beck 1999).

Focusing on the extent of the disparities for just a moment: not only is there asymmetry but real immiseration as well—only about 5 % of the world's income is earned by the poorest 40 % of its people (Estes et al. 2003). Even with the stalling of mature economies, the gulf between the most advantaged and the most disadvantaged in developed countries is no less dramatic; factor in the impact of gender, ethnicity, or other social impediments and the complexity intensifies as formidable inequalities shape well-being (Powell and Chen 2013). The disparities extend well beyond vital income differentials to quality of life issues, education, structured dependencies, or social exclusions resulting from policy decisions (Townsend 2007). Navarro (2007) posits that escalating differentials can be attributed in no small part to interventionist strategies adopted and endorsed by national governments (Powell and Chen 2013).

Not surprisingly, as a consequence of the richest segments of the population having far greater assets and control over their lives, they feel they have more in common with their counterparts in other regions than they do with their less affluent opposite number in their own regions (Hoogvelt 1997). Cross-cultural comparisons are extraordinarily valuable in helping lay out causal connections and for double-checking inferences. For example, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has a reliable cross-national comparative database of indicators of social policy expenditures in 30 member nations and their state-sponsored social welfare provisions entitled “Social Expenditures in the Period 1980–2003”. It covers public expenditures for typical forms of welfare including old age, survivors, incapacity-related benefits, health, family, active labor market programs, unemployment, housing, and other social policy areas (education excepted). Shalev (2007) points out that if health and pension benefits are combined as a share of GDP, countries like Sweden rank at the top by devoting some 14% of its GDP to health and pension protections. Data for the period 1980–2001, the latest available on the OCED Web site, suggests that Germany expends about 8% and the USA and Japan about 4%. In terms of both economics and domestic social policies, the impact of international economic relations has recontoured the landscape, so to speak, all the way to the regionalization and appropriation of economic relations. What were once bold lines of demarcation are now dotted lines more suggestive of administrative spheres than jingoistic borders. In the global century, deregulated markets are tightly integrated with political and social transformations, affecting local circumstances and communality (Geertz 1973). All in all, the globalizing influences of the early twenty-first century are producing a distinctive era in social history linked to the emergence of transnational actors as well as economics and technologies that are helping fuel the shifts. Global economic change portends more than alterations in per capita income, the nature of financial products and currency markets, or the rapid circulation of goods, communication, or technologies. It is a precursor to broad cultural and political shifts that challenge pre-contact arrangements, notions of social justice and solidarity as well as local interaction patterns. In a post-modern world, globalization is creating interlocking dependencies linked to the ways in which priorities are ordained by transnational interests (Powell and Chen 2013).

As Chen and Turner (2006) point out in a discussion focused on the welfare of the elderly but equally applicable to all social welfare, the accrual of public benefits reflects the invisible hand of market forces, the invisible handshake of tradition, and the invisible foot of political decisions. Despite avowals about the secularity of modern life, economic thinking, what might be termed spreadsheet logic, is accorded near theological status, with its canons seen as universally applicable and providing appropriate precept for adjudicating what is considered fair and just (Powell and Chen 2013). These tendencies are abetted by what is sometimes called the cyber infrastructure, or more simply, informatics, reinforcing these shifts and creating a digital divide separating those on either edge of the diffusion of innovations. Of course, there is more to this technological transformation than the appearance of new ways to communicate; it has also paved the way to a post-fordist formulation that Castells (2000) labels network capitalism.

The consequences of globalization are fraught with new risks and ambiguities in daily experience and in the way matters of worth are defined; along with the many positive aspects that are undeniably part of the process associated with privatization. Navarro (2007) points to the privatization of services, public assets, and other public provisions in asymmetrical fashion, deregulation of labor and currency markets as well as other forms of commerce, free trade, escalation of an accompanying anti-interventionist rhetoric, and encouragement of individualism and consumerism. A number of commentators have noted that a corollary of globalization results in an unprecedented pattern of social risk. As Townsend (2007) so elegantly points out, the globalization of the marketplace is changing the face of dependency. It is as though the configuration of risks has shifted from settling on just those poor down-and-outers living along society's margins to those derailed by restructuring of labor markets, the dramatic spread of employment in service sector jobs, shifts in the types of career patterns that so characterized the twentieth century, and the role of informatics affecting employability of middle-class workers (Powell and Chen 2013).

These risks are not grounded merely in the absence of resources but in an absence of personal autonomy and by people's position relative to others. Add to these factors the fact that as they wrestle with the issues, national and local governments are assailed from multiple fronts: pressed by transnational interests to provide open trade liberalization for private enterprise and pressed by the growing need for social protections and labor policies to sustain the working populace and those whose lives have fallen through the proverbial social safety net. Ever more inclusive protections call for targeted expenditures at exactly the time when expenditures are hemmed in by capacity to levy taxes of any type but especially progressive taxes and by powerful interested constituencies. The neoliberal globalizing drive has disenfranchised workers and their representatives in ways that have eroded their ability to bargain for benefits. Many commentators have noted that governments have generally adopted a *laissez faire* stance when for one reason or another they have chosen not to intervene in the disempowerment of the citizenry (Navarro 2007).

It is up to the challenge of scholars to be both critical and do something with the critical questions they raise about the chilling implications of economic and social inequities in the world. Berdayes and Murphy's edited volume rises to this challenge with an impressive depth and breadth attached to their volume. They target inequality grounded with an outstanding range of theorists whose ideas provide important lessons for how we go beyond critique and point to radical action without ever failing to see the threats that impinge on meaningful and existential social agency.

## **About the book series**

*International Perspectives on Social Policy, Administration, and Practice* is one of the first to attempt to bring together a truly international dimension of studying social policy, administration, and practice grounded in understanding the socioeconomic and cultural conditions from diverse countries. It puts the spotlight on com-

parative research of social policy, administration, and practice with an up-to-date assessment of their character and development. In particular, the series seeks to examine the underlying assumptions of the practice of helping professions, non-profit organization and management, and public policy and how processes of both nation-state and globalization are affecting them as well as specific country case studies, with valuable comparative analysis across Asian, African, Latin American, and Western welfare states.

It has become evident that major social forces of an international nature, including population changes, social-political trends, and the globalization of economies are reshaping social policies, administrations, and practices around the globe. Among the many ramifications of these changes is that globalizing influences impede the power of nation-states to establish individualized national policies based on local priorities. Multinational corporations, NGOs, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund have appeared on the scene and are factors in determining welfare policies. Depending on where a nation-state may have been on an industrializing trajectory, the influence of globalization will play out differently but inevitably in light of global influences. The emerging societies/nation-states in the global world are shaped by inward forces of health and social welfare policies as well as international forces of globalization, each conspiring to provide social protection for people uncertain in modern times. The book series will examine the driving forces of political, cultural, and economic transformations in comparative and historical perspectives. Macroscopic global trends will be highlighted as undoubtedly powerful in shaping social policy, administration, and practice experiences, yet their influence will be traced and rivalled by domestic institutional traditions in nation-states.

The series publishes books that attempt to understand social policy, administration, and practice in the continents of the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia. Given the international scope of the book series, it will be very relevant to policy-makers and practitioners interested in a comparative understanding. There is much to be learned from a critical and comparative analysis of experiences of various countries that are both struggling and adapting to the emerging challenges to social policy, administration, and practice in the emerging global century. There is any number of competing priorities facing countries around the world and the ways in which they adjudicate among the various petitioners reflecting their relative position and aspirational status in the global economy. This book series meets the challenge head-on with a rich variety of topics and case studies and teasing out the implications for comparative social welfare drawn from debates framed within a critical understanding of international social policy, administration, and practice. It assembles an impressive set of researchers from diverse countries illuminating a rich, deep, and broad understanding of the implications of comparative accounts on social policy, administration, and practice with a focus on international perspectives, especially an East-West connection.

The book series will promote examination of important issues from a diverse array of researchers from around the world. It seeks to integrate analyses of policy and practice in particular countries struggling to provide social welfare support for all the populations. The series aims at the highest professional and academic

level, with a highly international audience. There is a chronic lack of good resource materials that attempt to understand comparative welfare in its relationship to examining the problems and possibilities of social policy, administration, and practice grounded in an analysis of features of international facets of health and social welfare in nation-states spanning the six continents. The series offers academics, researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers the opportunity to propose diverse viewpoints that illuminate the problems and possibilities of social, political, economic, and demographic trends and the relative impact these have on the policy process in comparative contexts: national, international, and global arenas. It provides the necessary historical and contemporary perspectives on the development of social policy as well as present articles providing state-of-the-art developments in research methodology, theory, and practice in comparative understanding of various social issues.

A book series striving to develop the scholarship of comparative social policy, administrative studies, and professional practice will help to meet the needs of students in numerous courses offered around the world with relevant titles. Important fields include social policy and planning, social work, public administration, political science, legal studies, economics, sociology, social theory, social geography, cultural anthropology, history, education, psychology, health studies, disability studies, nursing, social gerontology, children and family studies, women and gender studies, ethnic and cultural studies, population and migration studies, urban and community studies, developmental studies, and area and international studies. The volumes in the series will also appeal to students interested in interdisciplinary courses; to professionals in health and social care and public services, as well as academics. This book series is timely given the recent proliferation of degrees looking specifically at social policy in the USA and UK being two such examples, but more generally in light of the current high profile of comparative studies of social welfare. Major English-speaking markets also include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, and India in addition to other markets such as Europe, Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Latin America, and Africa. In social work, public administration, and sociology, programs for undergraduates include related courses, typically on policy studies, administrative studies, and professional practice. These are core courses for all degree students but are also a popular option for students registered for degrees in other social and human science subjects. Particularly interested will be libraries in the USA and UK, plus mainland Europe and developed and fast developing Asia, including China and India, and also in Latin America and the Middle East. Social security agencies all around the world and scholarly organizations with large membership may also make up the specific audience for the book series, including social policy associations, sociology departments, public policy departments, social work departments, etc. as key customers of social policy books.

The book series' cross-disciplinary appeal is one of its major strengths: The variety of case study of nation-states in the international arena and examples used to illustrate those debates will allow debates around the impact of health, welfare, and other types of social provisions on contemporary social life into new realms:

realms that students and practitioners can utilize to reflect upon their own experiences in challenging assumptions about international social policy, administration, and practice and relationship to health, welfare, and other types of social provisions; learning from experiences of other cultures. The series seeks to encourage debate about the implications of the most pressing health and social welfare issues for people of all ages, ethnicities, and classes in nation-states. Substantive areas include social development, social welfare, social security, social assistance, employment policy, education policy, cultural policy, health care policy, social rehabilitation, housing policy, child welfare, gender policy, family policy, population policy, minority issues, migration policy, equity and diversity, NGOs, social enterprises and social capital, social support networks, international social work practice, community organization, administrative studies, and other major social development issues that impact and are interwoven with social policy practice, research, and theory development.

This book series promotes discussion of comparative policy and practice issues, encourages submissions of interdisciplinary work from Asia, the Americas, Europe, and other parts of the world and thus expands cross-cultural opportunities for exciting and cutting-edge research. The series particularly welcomes:

- Research studies on the influence of national and global issues in social policy practice and development;
- Theoretical works that explain the origin, development, and evolution of the multidisciplinary fields of comparative social policy, administration, and practice as well as their research methodology;
- Reviews and meta-analysis of research scholarship written on the topic of social policy, administration, and practice for systematization into textbooks and other educational tools.

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