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SPRC Newsletter

No 36 March 1990

Editor: Jennifer Young

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Social Policy Research Centre

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
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The Social Policy Research Centre (originally the Social Welfare Research Centre) was established in January 1980 under an agreement between the University of New South Wales and the Commonwealth Government. The initial agreement, for a period of five years, was renewed in 1984 and, most recently, in 1989. In accordance with the agreement the Centre is operated by the University as an independent unit of the University. The Director of the Centre is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor and receives assistance in formulating the Centre's research agenda from an Advisory Committee and a Research Management Committee. Under the most recent agreement the Centre was re-named, and the existing Advisory and Research Management Committees have been replaced by a Board of Management.

The Centre undertakes and sponsors research on important aspects of social policy and social welfare; it arranges seminars and conferences, publishes the results of its research in reports, journal articles and books, and provides opportunities for post-graduate studies in social policy. Current research areas cover poverty and inequality, social security and the labour market, taxation, unemployment, the social wage, the welfare state and community support services for the frail elderly and younger people with disabilities.

The views expressed in this Newsletter, as in any of the Centre's publications, do not represent any official position of the Centre. The Newsletter and all other SPRC Publications present the views and research findings of the individual authors with the aim of promoting the development of ideas and discussion about major concerns in social policy and social welfare.

FROM THE DIRECTOR ...

This is the first issue of the Newsletter under the Centre's new five year funding agreement that began in January. You will, I am sure, have noticed by now from the cover page that the Social Policy Research Centre formally replaced the Social Welfare Research Centre at the beginning of this year. Although this is the first Newsletter under our new name and in our new funding cycle, it may also be one of the last to appear in the current format. For the last six months or so, we have been looking at the full range of publications produced in the Centre and a range of associated issues. I should perhaps allay fears at this stage by indicating that there is no suggestion that the Newsletter be discontinued. It serves far too important a role in publicising the activities of the Centre to our many constituents and other interested parties.

Having said that, however, there is a need for us to ask whether some of the resources currently devoted to the Newsletter might be better employed on other aspects of the Centre's publication and information services. The Centre is increasingly faced with resource constraints which mean that priority settings and allocation decisions need to be kept under constant review. (I need hardly tell this to those of you directly involved in welfare agencies.) No final decisions have yet been taken and I certainly do not wish to pre-judge any of the issues at this stage.

One important consideration relating to the Newsletter is the use made of its various contents by its readers. The Newsletter circulation list also represents one of the Centre's most valuable resources, containing as it does the names, addresses and main areas of interest of some 3500 individuals throughout Australia and overseas. In order to increase the value of both aspects, we have decided to ask each of you to complete the questionnaire distributed with this issue of the Newsletter. This will allow us to get your views on the usefulness of the Newsletter itself, as well as providing us with a range of extra information to be used to upgrade the quality of our mailing list. **PLEASE FILL IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN IT TO THE CENTRE AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.** By so doing, you will not only assist us to produce a Newsletter that better meets your requirements, but will also allow us to identify your own interest better and thus direct specific information material to you or your organisation. Thank you.

Publications

No new reports have appeared in the SPRC Reports and Proceedings series or as SPRC Research

Resource Reports since the last Newsletter. I am, however, able to indicate that we are making plans for the release of five reports in the former series, each containing papers presented to the National Social Policy held last July. These reports will contain in total well over fifty of the contributed papers presented at the Conference and will thus be of broad scope, as well as of considerable value. Together with the invited Plenary Session papers (published in November 1989 as No. 79 in the Reports and Proceedings series) these reports should serve as a comprehensive overview of the state of Australian social policy research at the end of the eighties.

Some readers will have noticed that the last Reports and Proceedings subscription series has now ended. Information on the new subscription series can be found on page 9.

The following three papers have been released as SPRC Discussion Papers since November 1989:

- No. 16 Bruce Bradbury, Jennifer Doyle and Peter Whiteford, *Trends in the Disposable Incomes of Australian Families, 1982-83 to 1989-90*, January 1990.
- No. 17 Peter Saunders, *Selectivity and Targeting in Income Support: The Australian Experience*, February 1990.
- No. 18 Bruce Bradbury and Peter Saunders, *How Reliable are Estimates of Poverty in Australia? Some Sensitivity Tests for the Period 1981-82 to 1985-86*, February 1990.

Discussion Paper No. 16 has received very considerable media coverage since its results were first presented to the Third Australian Family Research Conference last November. It is an extremely comprehensive and thorough piece of research that looks at trends in family living standards under the Hawke Government. All SPRC Discussion Papers are distributed free of charge on a first-come, first-served basis, and only limited numbers of each paper are available, so be quick if you wish to receive this one! Descriptions of all three new Discussion Papers are provided on pages 3-5.

The following SPRC Reprint has also been issued since November:

- No. 54 Peter Whiteford, Bruce Bradbury and Peter Saunders, 'Poverty Traps in the Australian Social Security System', *Economic Analysis and Policy*, Vol. 19, No. 1, March 1989.

FROM THE DIRECTOR ...

Pricing Policy

The price of our publications has not been increased for some time. At present, revenue from sales does not even cover our production and distribution costs. Decisions about pricing of our Reports need to be taken now because a new subscription series is about to commence. This implies that the price increases announced on page 9 will remain in effect at least for the course of the new subscription series. Even at the new higher prices, our publications are excellent value for money. I do hope you all understand the need for prices to rise at this time.

National Social Policy Conference

The Centre will sponsor another National Social Policy Conference in 1991. The Conference will again take place at the University of New South Wales. We are currently in the very early planning stages of the Conference but will be making an initial announcement indicating the Conference theme(s) and calling for contributed papers in the very near future.

Staff

Don Stewart resigned from the Centre in early February in order to accept an offer of appointment with the New South Wales Government Public Service to work in industrial relations, dealing with industrial health and safety matters. I have, in relation to Michael Wearing, both good and bad news to report, at least from the point of view of the Centre. The good news is that

Michael completed and submitted his PhD thesis late last year. His thesis topic is 'The Documentation of the Poor. Surveillance and Control in Welfare Agencies', a study of welfare bureaucracies. The bad news (from the Centre's, not Michael's point of view I should hasten to add!) is that he too is leaving us, to take up a position as Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Behavioural Sciences at Cumberland College of Health Sciences. Don and Michael have both been at the Centre for several years and it is sad to have to say farewell to both of them at the same time. Each of them is going to a good position elsewhere and I would like on behalf of my colleagues to express my thanks and best wishes to both of them.

Looking to the future, I am pleased to welcome two new people to the Centre. In January, Roselyn Melville joined the Centre to take up one of our Research Scholarships. Roselyn is a graduate of the University of Queensland and has tutored in the Department of Social Work there. She intends to write a thesis on the Organisational Structure of Non-government Welfare Agencies, under the supervision of Adam Jamrozik. Marina Paxman commenced duties as a research assistant in February. Prior to joining the Centre, Marina worked as a research assistant for the Australian Council for Educational Research. She will be working initially with Russell Ross on research into labour market aspects of social security programs. I hope that both Roselyn and Marina will find their time at the Centre to be enjoyable, informative and productive.

Peter Saunders
Director

NEW SPRC PUBLICATIONS

SPRC DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 16

TRENDS IN THE DISPOSABLE INCOMES OF AUSTRALIAN FAMILIES, 1982-83 TO 1989-90

by

Bruce Bradbury, Jennifer Doyle and Peter Whiteford

January 1990

In November 1989 staff of the Centre presented some initial results from the Centre's 'Trends in Family Disposable Incomes' project to the AIFS Third Australian Family Research Conference. These results are now available as SPRC Discussion Paper No. 16.

The paper's results are based on the 1985-86 Income Distribution Survey adjusted by micro-analytic simulation techniques to simulate the expected distribution of family disposable incomes in both 1982-83 and 1989-90. The simulation process reflects the changes in employment and earned and unearned incomes, as well as developments in the personal income tax and social security systems over this seven year period. A model of the determinants of current mortgage repayments is also developed and used to assess trends in housing costs and in incomes after housing costs are deducted.

The paper's conclusions on the trends in after-tax incomes of families can be summarised as follows. When full account is taken of the family income increases due to increasing married women's employment, the overall real increase in median family incomes is estimated at around 6.5 per cent between 1982-83 and 1989-90. However, 1982-83 was a particularly bad year for the rural sector - reflecting the impact of the drought. As a consequence, when farming families are excluded this increase is reduced to only 3.3 per cent.

Different family types, however, experienced quite divergent trends. These trends in disposable incomes for non-farming families are summarised in the table. For these categories of families, the greatest increase in median incomes has been for sole parents, whose median income has risen by 12.8 per cent over the period - though their income levels still remain very much below that of other families with dependents.

Couples without dependents have also experienced significant median real income gains of 6.5 per cent and 4.3 per cent for those with heads aged under and over 65 respectively. The single aged have had median income increases of around 3.7 per cent. The family types with the smallest income growth have been single young people and couples with children, whose real median incomes have remained essentially stable over the period. Indeed, if it were not for the increasing labour force participation of married women, it appears that (non-farm) couples with dependents would have experienced falling real incomes.

Percentage Change in Real Disposable Incomes 1982-83 to 1989-90

Family Type	Percentile			
	10	50 (median)	90	99
Single Person				
<25yrs	2.4	0.5	-0.3	-3.9
25-64	4.1	2.3	-3.7	3.0
65+	3.7	3.7	1.4	1.5
Couple, without dependents				
Head<65	7.5	6.5	0.9	9.6
Head 65+	3.9	4.3	0.2	0.6
Couple, with deps	12.0	0.8	1.9	4.0
Sole Parent	15.3	12.8	-2.6	-1.7
All Families	4.7	3.3	1.8	4.0

Note: Non-farming families only
Source: Discussion Paper 16, Table 10.

As well as disaggregating by family types, the table also illustrates trends in the distribution of incomes within each family type. At the very top end of the income distribution, increases in capital incomes have led to large real income increases for some families. Setting these aside, the trend within each family type, and for families overall, appears to have generally been one of either stable or decreasing inequality. Possibly this conclusion would change if the model took account of evidence of increasing inequality of wages, but this evidence also needs to be assessed in the light of possible changes in non-monetary incomes resulting from the introduction of the fringe benefits tax.

Irrespective of whether the Federal Governments' pledge to 'end the need for child poverty' has been met, it is clear that their family package of increased additional payments to low income families with children has had a significant impact upon the living standards of the poor. The table indicates that the real income levels of the 10th percentile of two parent and

NEW SPRC PUBLICATIONS

sole parent families with children have increased by 12 and 15 per cent respectively. For two parent families at the median income, however, the tight targeting of this assistance means that they have barely maintained their real incomes.

In addition, however, many families have faced large increases in housing costs over the last few years. Because of the magnitude of these changes and their implications for living standards, the paper devotes significant attention to the estimation of housing cost trends. The largest increases in housing costs have been for home purchasers, who, as a group, have encountered significant increases in home loan interest rates and house prices. The paper estimates that, on average, these housing market changes have led to families purchasing their homes paying an additional \$48 per week in mortgage repayments (in 1989-90 dollars). This is an increase of around 50 per cent on what they otherwise might have paid if interest rates had not increased and house price inflation had not been greater than non-housing inflation between 1982-83 and 1989-90. Because of the interacting patterns of interest rate protection, house price trends and repayment methods, this increase is much greater for younger income units. Those with head aged under 30 years, for example, are estimated to be paying \$79 per week more in mortgage repayments.

More than half of this increase in mortgage repayments (for all ages) has been due to house price increases. These have increased repayment rates not only because real house prices have risen steeply in recent years, but also because of the lagged impact of house price inflation on current home loan repayment rates.

Whilst governments have little control over house prices (at least in the short-term), interest rates are more directly a reflection of government policy. The paper also estimates the impact of some possible changes in interest rates on mortgage repayments. A reduction of interest rates to 13.5 per cent, for example, is estimated to lead to a \$14.50, or 8 per cent reduction in average housing costs for purchasers. For couples with heads aged under 40 and without children, such an interest rate reduction would lead to a \$26 per week reduction in housing costs.

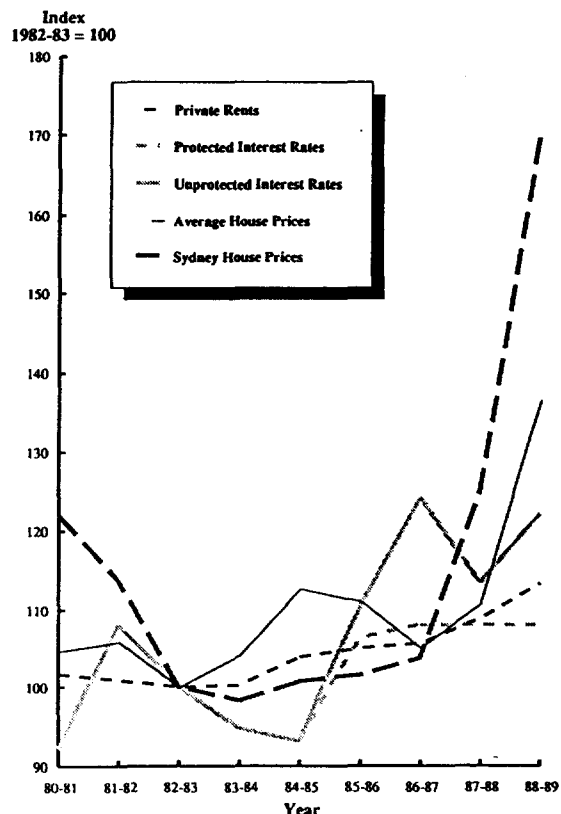
Finally, the paper considers the impact of these housing market trends on incomes after housing costs had been deducted. Over all tenures, real housing costs increased by an average of \$14 a week. As a consequence of these trends, even when including farming families, median after housing incomes are estimated to have declined for non-aged single people and couples with

children. Overall, real median after housing incomes are estimated to have increased only slightly (1.5%) - though if farm families are excluded the overall trend is a decrease in after housing incomes.

Whilst the limited nature of the analysis does not allow a conclusive response to the statement that 'the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer', this evidence does point strongly towards the conclusion that increases in employment and income support for families with children over the last seven years have significantly improved the circumstances of the poorest groups. The rise in capital incomes does also seem to have benefited the very rich and those with significant savings (e.g. the middle class aged). Middle income families however, have not done so well, particularly when incomes after housing costs are considered. Unfortunately for governments, median income families also tend to contain median voters.

It is anticipated that the methods used in this simulation exercise will be further improved over the course of 1990, and a further, more detailed report issued towards the end of the year.

Indices of Real Housing Costs, 1980-81 to 1989-90



Note: All price indexes deflated by the consumer price index (excluding housing costs). For sources and detailed definitions see text.

Source: Discussion Paper 16, Figure 3

NEW SPRC PUBLICATIONS

SPRC DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 17

SELECTIVITY AND TARGETING IN INCOME SUPPORT: THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

by
Peter Saunders

February 1990

The Australian income support system is often characterised as one of the most selective in the Western industrialised world. This paper examines the sense in which the Australian system is selective, and discusses the distinction between selectivity and targeting in income support provisions. The paper contrasts longer run developments in social security outlays and recipient numbers over the last two decades with those occurring since the election of the Hawke Government in 1983 in order that the nature and impact of recent policies introduced to increase targeting can be identified. The statistical analysis indicates that increases in recipient numbers have been the dominant factor underlying the past growth in outlays.

Discussion in the paper illustrates how the targeting strategy employed in recent years has been primarily directed at restraining the growth in recipient numbers. Attention focuses in particular on the impact of recent moves to tighten the administration of social security through the introduction of mobile review teams and expansion of the scope of other departmental reviews of eligibility and entitlements. Data presented from the Annual Reports of the Department of Social Security indicate what the impact of these reviews have been in terms of cancellations or alteration of payment levels.

A method is then devised to measure the degree of selectivity in income support programs. The method involves comparing the actual costs of programs with an estimate of what costs would have been if benefits had been provided on a universal flat-rate basis to all those eligible for support. The ratio of these costs is converted into a selectivity index which varies between zero and one, increasing towards one as the program becomes more selective. The selectivity index is then calculated and the method applied to developments over the 1969-89 period in age pensions, family assistance and sole parent's pensions. The results show how the degree of income support selectivity varies between programs at a point in time and within programs over time.

SPRC DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 18

HOW RELIABLE ARE ESTIMATES OF POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA? SOME SENSITIVITY TESTS FOR THE PERIOD 1981-82 TO 1985-86

by
Bruce Bradbury and Peter Saunders

February 1990

The alleviation of poverty is one of the most important objectives of the Australian social security system. Estimates of poverty across different groups and over time are thus in principle a significant indicator of the effectiveness of social security programs. This paper investigates the reliability of Australian poverty estimates for 1981-82 and 1985-86 by assessing their sensitivity to changes in the assumptions used to construct a poverty line. The exercise utilises data from the 1981-82 Income and Housing Survey and the 1986 Income Distribution Survey. Data from the two surveys are used to investigate the sensitivity of conclusions about changes in the incidence of poverty over time, or about the structure of poverty at a point in time. Poverty estimates are presented using the standard Henderson methodology developed as a part of the work of the Poverty Commission.

Variations are then made to the method used to update the poverty line, the position of the poverty line relative to household disposable income per capita, the equivalence scales used and the reference family. Analysis is undertaken of how each of these influence estimates of the structure and incidence of poverty. Many of the results are illustrated with the help of a cumulative income distribution function which allows the reader to select their own poverty line for various groups and read off the implied level of poverty.

Overall, the results indicate that many broad conclusions about poverty incidence and trends are robust over the period studied. However, poverty estimates exhibit considerable sensitivity for those groups heavily reliant on the social security system for their income. This finding has potentially important implications for income support policies that rely on poverty estimates to determine the adequacy of income support payment levels.

MORE NUMBERS PLEASE - WE'RE COUNTING ON THEM

In an article titled 'Poor Australia' published in the February 1990 issue of *The Independent Monthly* Fred Gruen from the Australian National University provided a useful summary of poverty research in Australia. Towards the end of the article, he also made reference to the need for better and more up to date information on social trends if social policy performance is to be monitored and new issues of concern identified. To quote Fred Gruen: 'We devote substantial resources to surveying and monitoring the economy: a similar effort is required in the social area.' I couldn't agree more. If we are to change thinking about the value of social and economic information, as well as about the kinds of information given the highest priority, the more often these views are expressed the better.

Current practices reveal some interesting contrasts. Compare, for example, the enormous effort (and cost) that goes each month into the collection and production of our balance of payments statistics, with the fact that regular national surveys of family incomes currently take place only once every five years. Or that we know far more about the market valuation of our large corporations than we do about the number of homeless young (and old) people in this country. Or that since the introduction of the assets test, we know more about the wealth holdings of the poor than we know about the wealth held by the rich. One can but imagine how things might change if some of these were reversed. If governments had to confront the monthly release of statistics on poverty or homelessness rather than on the current account, it is hard to believe that priorities and thus policies would not be very different from what they are now, or that many community attitudes would not be turned on their head, or at least subject to some pretty fundamental re-thinking!

All of this is not to argue that improved social statistics should replace existing economic collections. The great value of economic data to economic forecasting and thus to economic policy formulation and economic performance is widely acknowledged. Nor is it intended to be critical of the very valuable data and other services currently provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). What it is intended to highlight is Fred Gruen's essential point that both economic and social statistics have considerable value, and that this needs to be recognised. To be most effective, social policies must be based on social research and such research in turn must be grounded on high quality and pertinent data. Better data (or, for that matter, better quality research) will not guarantee better policies. But they will increase their likelihood, particularly in the longer-run, by providing a more

rational basis for public debate and critical assessment of the merits of alternative points of view.

One of the more disturbing aspects of recent Australian developments in this context is the increasing tendency for ABS to charge for its publications and, because of lack of resources, to review ways of reducing data collection and release. Again, this is not entirely the fault of the Bureau, who are acting in line with broader imperatives that require all government agencies to introduce user charges where possible. Although 'user pays' proposals are normally associated with the doctrines of economic rationalism, they have little or no rational basis and make no economic sense in the current context. Even first year economics students learn that one can't apply the principles of the market to price public goods or services that are of benefit to the community as a whole. Since much of the data released by ABS has a significant public good component, only a public agency like ABS should produce them and they should be financed from public revenue not from individual user charges. So much for the 'economic' arguments.

More significantly, if recent trends and resource constraints on the collection of social statistics continue, the longer run social policy implications do not bear thinking about. Neither do the social and, ultimately, the economic costs that will follow as a consequence. It simply makes neither social nor economic sense to cut back on the collection and release of statistics at the very time when both the technology and techniques used for their analysis are advancing so rapidly. In the social arena, there is pressing a need for more data not less, and thus for more not fewer resources to collect and ensure their release. There can be few better uses for the enormous budget surplus that has been accumulating in the Treasury coffers over the past few years.

If extra resources were to be devoted to improving the quality and availability of social statistics, one obvious beneficiary would be this Centre. Readers are right to be wary of arguments for more public resources in areas which benefit those presenting the argument. I generally find this an excellent litmus test of whether or not the arguments themselves are likely to have any logical basis or merit. Consideration needs to be given to the merits of the case, rather than to the credentials (or lack of them) of its proponents. Unfortunately, in recent times in Australia too many have fallen into the trap of assuming that, since many proponents of increased government intervention base their arguments primarily on the benefits flowing to the organisations or groups that they represent, the same must be true of all

MORE NUMBERS PLEASE - WE'RE COUNTING ON THEM

arguments for increased government intervention. All that I can say in the current context is that I have no objection to having my arguments subject to that test.

Of course, in the absence of requisite and timely data, social researchers are forced to seek alternatives. In the increasingly important areas of income inequality and poverty, no-one other than the government has the resources to undertake large scale income surveys, which only a body like ABS can and should do. However, if this is not being done researchers will turn to other approaches. One involves the conduct of much smaller scale studies, focusing on groups, issues or regional areas of specific concern. These studies are, if conducted properly, of enormous use for the specific purposes for which they are designed. They often provide an enormous wealth of quantitative and qualitative data that informs both other research and government policy. Their main problem is that, being based on small samples, results cannot be generalised with any (statistical) confidence, so that they are often of only limited relevance to national issues.

A second approach involves using data from ABS surveys conducted at particular points in time to construct synthetic data for other time periods. The methodology used in this approach, referred to as microsimulation, has been developed in social research institutes around the world in the last decade or so. An excellent example of the microsimulation approach is the report on **Trends in the Disposable Incomes of Australian Families, 1982-83 to 1989-90** by Bruce Bradbury, Jennifer Doyle and Peter Whiteford. This report was first presented last November to the Third Australian Family Research Conference and has just been published in the **SPRC Discussion Paper** series. The report has received a great deal of publicity in the media in recent weeks, and rightly so, for it is a meticulous and comprehensive study. The fact that members of both the Government and the Opposition have referred to it when defending and attacking government policies, respectively, indicates that it is an authoritative and objective piece of quantitative social research.

The method developed in the report utilises data from the **1986 Income Distribution Survey** undertaken by the ABS, in order to construct income distribution data for other years (in this particular case, for the years 1982-83 and 1989-90). The simulated distributions can then be used to see what has changed over the period, why it has changed, what the impact of government policies have been, what alternative policies might have achieved, and so on. The microsimulation method is innovative and the model used to construct the income

distribution data is very complex and has taken a good deal of time to construct. But as with all models, it inevitably embodies a number of assumptions, and the estimates are themselves only as reliable as those assumptions. The assumptions can, of course, be checked by comparing results with other relevant statistics where possible, and the sensitivity of results to changes in the assumptions can also be tested.

The essential point, however, is that the numbers produced from microsimulation models are not data, in the same sense as the original ABS survey data from which they were derived. They are instead a complex combination of original data and modelling assumptions. This should always be borne in mind when assessing the results produced in studies like that by my colleagues Bradbury, Doyle and Whiteford (as they themselves would be quick to point out). These microsimulation models are the modern equivalent of the econometric models developed in economic research institutes and government agencies in the fifties and sixties. Variants of these econometric models still play a major role in economic forecasting and in identifying appropriate macroeconomic policy responses.

As with social research models, the results from the econometric models are only as useful as the assumptions on which they are based (a feature often ignored by the model builders when discussing their forecasts). But, being based on detailed and frequently available data, the econometric models can claim, with considerable justification, to be more soundly based than the new socioeconomic microsimulation models which are very much in their infancy.

With improved research expertise and computing technology, the quality of the microsimulation models will increase substantially. So too will their usefulness for descriptive, research and policy purposes. But improved and more comprehensive data are also necessary. Indeed, in sense they become even more necessary as a way of checking the accuracy of results produced by the microsimulation models. All of which suggests that moves to reduce the quality or scope of social and economic statistics, or through increased charges to make them less available to researchers and the public at large, are most undesirable and should be avoided. The long term welfare of the Australian people may well be at stake.

Peter Saunders

BOOK REVIEWS

HOSTELS TO HOMES? THE REHOUSING OF HOMELESS SINGLE PEOPLE

by Tim Dant and Alan Deacon
Avebury/Gower, Aldershot, 1989

Reviewed by Michael Fine

Hostels to Homes presents a detailed account of a study of a rehousing scheme for homeless single people, the Leeds Shaftsbury Project (LSP), established in Leeds, England. Although the study design is strongly influenced by an evaluative approach, it is not, strictly an evaluative study. Instead, the book describes the rehousing project and presents a wide range of information drawn both from interviews with those who were rehoused and surveys which compare the characteristics of those who participated in the rehousing scheme with those who used large residential hostels and others allocated housing by the local housing authority. In addition, there is a review of much of the recent British literature on homelessness, with a particular focus on the development of the concept of 'single homelessness'. A brief summary of findings is presented in the final chapter, together with a discussion of the implications of the Thatcher Government's 1988 Housing Bill and some observations of the authors on rehousing the single homeless.

The LSP rehousing project consists of a community placement scheme whereby the residents of certain large scale hostels (or shelters) for the homeless in Leeds are given their own homes. At the time they are placed in their own accommodation, generally disused or unpopular council owned dwellings, they are provided with a considerable amount of personal support and arrangements made so that problems such as the cost of furnishing, electric power, heating bills and so forth can be most easily managed. Details of the project are, however, rather patchy and, to my mind, incompletely provided in the book.

Almost all of those involved in the LSP study were male (96%), and only a small minority (18%) were aged under thirty. All in the sample were unemployed outside of work in hostels, many with a history of alcohol abuse, prison or psychiatric problems. These characteristics reflected the populations using the

hostels from which the participants were drawn, and are not necessarily indicative of the larger population of homeless people in Britain in the 1980s. The study follows a group of participants in the project for over a year (1985-86), providing data drawn from a 'time series' of four interviews conducted at three monthly intervals. These results are then compared with data on others rehoused simply with a direct housing allocation. Further comparisons are also made with the larger population of hostel residents in Leeds, from whom the original rehousing sample were drawn.

The study was evidently a difficult and rather messy one. Clearly, homeless people, many of whom find it difficult to develop ongoing personal relationships, will not always be prepared to discuss their problems in great depth with researchers. Others, no matter what efforts are made, appear to be unlikely to be able to move successfully to a permanent home, at least the first time it is offered to them. There were originally 108 referrals to the research team, 90 of whom were respondents in the first interview. Only 31, or one third of the original respondents, responded to the fourth or final interview. Some of the sample were never in fact rehoused. Others simply 'moved on', the result of being sought by police, being admitted to a prison or psychiatric hospital, or being evicted by their landlords, in this case the LSP rehousing scheme. Given these, and a host of other research difficulties which affected the project, it is not surprising that the authors were generally reluctant to describe their research as providing definitive information. Indeed, instead of claiming to have conducted a detailed and accurate evaluation of the LSP project, they note, in the final chapter, that their intention was:

to study the process of rehousing, to understand how rehousing was experienced by those involved, and to examine the factors which influence whether or not those rehoused do indeed 'settle down' in their new home. (p. 99)

Unfortunately, the book appears to have been only partially successful in achieving this aim. There are few passages in which any glimmer of the subjective experience of rehousing is apparent. Further, despite the emphasis on a 'time series' of interviews, it is very difficult for the reader to glean any idea of the longer term dynamics affecting the process of rehousing. Instead of case studies or in-depth narrative, descriptive or interpretive accounts, data are presented in a series of snapshots. The authors seem to become bogged down in a summary of the statistics from each of the four interview series conducted. The following paragraph

Continued on p. 21

PRICING OF SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE PUBLICATIONS

The price of **SPRC Reports and Proceedings** has remained unchanged at \$5.00 since 1984. Since that time, costs have risen considerably and at the present time revenue from our publications does not cover even the printing and distribution costs. We have therefore decided, somewhat reluctantly, to increase the price of future **SPRC Reports and Proceedings** and the **SPRC Research Resource Series** to \$8.00, and to adjust the price of earlier publications in these two series. The price of **SPRC Reprints** will increase henceforth to \$2.00.

The Social Policy Research Centre places great emphasis both on the quality of its research and on the importance of disseminating the results of its research in the community. The additional revenue resulting from these price increases will help us to better undertake both activities.

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provides an illustration of the form of data presentation most frequently encountered in reading the work:

Meeting new friends can be important in establishing a new home in a new area. It did not however seem to be connected with relieving loneliness in the LSP group - 62% (13) of those who at the third interview said they were lonely had met new friends (see Table 5.6). (p. 76)

Unfortunately this potentially rich insight, which hinges on the distinction between meeting friends and relieving loneliness, is not developed or elaborated on in the text. I suspect that previous publications, dealing with the research in progress, have already explored these sorts of issues more fully. However, as there are only a few very general cross-references given to other works from the same study it is not possible to trace the development of such ideas with any certainty.

Nevertheless, despite the limitations of the book, there is much to recommend it to those in Australia interested in the question of homelessness. The findings and recommendations, reported in the final chapter, present a wealth of UK experience in a succinct manner. The literature review, in particular the examination of the recent evolution of the concept of the single homeless, and the discussion later in the study of the meaning of the concept of 'home' are also worthy of attention. But perhaps most significant of all is the authors' continual insistence that attention be paid to the social factors which underlie homelessness, rather than simply to the personal characteristics of the those who are themselves homeless.

Although it is perhaps not surprising, the conclusion that rehousing will not work for everyone, despite its generally desirable outcomes, is of particular note. Further, shared accommodation appears to be largely unsuccessful (except perhaps with young people) as most people seem to want their own place if they are going to be independent. Equally interesting, however, was the finding that a background in domestic skills does not appear to be required, and preplanned living skills courses for homeless individuals are unlikely to be productive.

Rehousing the homeless is often confused with a range of other good intentions, such as finding permanent employment for them, or redeveloping their commitment to family relationships. The study emphasises the limitations of this approach, clearly demonstrating the intrinsic value that establishing 'a home' has in itself. From this alone there is much to be learned.

LETTING GO

by Ann Richardson and Jane Ritchie
Open University Press, Australian Distributor
Allen & Unwin

Reviewed by Sara Graham

Letting Go is a book about separation. It explores the dilemmas faced by parents contemplating the possible move away from home of a son or daughter with an intellectual disability.

The book is based on a two year study by two very experienced social researchers. This was undertaken in two local authority areas in England and involved discussions with over one hundred parents sometimes in groups, sometimes individually. All had adult offspring with disabilities still living at home. All kinds and levels of intellectual disability were represented.

Letting Go is written with two main audiences in mind, parents themselves, and those professionally concerned to understand the problems of caring at home for people with intellectual disabilities. It is well suited to both these audiences, indeed, for the latter, I would argue that is essential reading. It is a pity that the recommended retail price of \$24.95, which seems very high for a paperback with fewer than 100 pages and with no illustrations, is likely to deter many people. Another audience which I believe would greatly benefit from this book are students both of research methods and of social policy. The book provides an excellent model of qualitative social research which demonstrates clearly the contribution which this type of research can make, when well done, to the development of social policies. In my view it represents qualitative social research at its very best, although some may find the absence of tables, percentages or even a single number, problematic!

The authors are at pains to point out that all parents face the prospect of losing their dependent children and that people experience and cope with this loss in many different ways. However, whereas in the case of normal development, the quest for independence is a natural part of the maturing process, where there is an intellectual disability, childhood dependency continues, to a lesser or greater extent, into adulthood. The natural protectiveness of all parents towards their children is

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therefore also more likely to continue into adulthood and to be more pronounced when there is an intellectual disability. In such cases separation is likely to be a much more difficult experience than it is for parents whose children have no disability.

The book deals with what for most parents, is a highly charged emotional issue. The very word 'separation' conjures up images of pain, of loss and of bereavement. By the time an intellectually disabled child has reached adulthood, many parents have come to find the actual physical and technical tasks associated with caring considerably less onerous than they once were. Nevertheless, at this stage many parents experience immense concern about what will happen to their offspring when they can no longer care for them. So painful is the mere thought of this that some parents cannot bring themselves to prepare for this eventuality. It is, in many cases, an issue never raised with other family members, let alone with the intellectually disabled offspring themselves.

The book carefully explores the many issues and dilemmas associated with the move from home. While some parents, who have, from the beginning, attached great importance to the development of their children's skills and independence, take a very positive view of their offspring living apart in the right sort of home, others continue to be highly protective. Where some see advantages both for themselves and their children in such a separation others, who may have experienced little external support along the way, simply cannot conceive of any other person assuming a parental role on their behalf. In certain cases there is the further difficulty that the parents have become as much dependant as depended upon.

The research found an immense variability of response amongst parents to the necessity of 'letting go'. The response seems in part related to the parents' own circumstances, emotional relationships and needs and in part to experiences of alternative forms of care and support. Some parents have clearly had such bad experiences of short term care and of professional insensitivity that they find themselves unable to face entrusting anyone else with the care of their offspring. Perhaps one of the most telling findings to emerge is how poorly prepared many parents are for the inevitable break. The opportunity to discuss both the practical and emotional aspects of this with a competent, informed and compassionate professional has been totally lacking for many parents.

Of course, ultimately most parents find themselves with no alternative to 'letting go' and most have a very clear

idea of what sort of alternative home they want for their dependent offspring. It would seem that they look for three core qualities. It should provide love and affection, an understanding of individual needs and a rooted sense of belonging - in other words precisely the qualities that we would generally consider desirable in any home for people with or without disabilities.

I think this is an excellent book. It is very well written and it sets out the issues with great clarity. The numerous quotations are always apt and often exceptionally moving. It is sensitive, balanced and provides some quite clearcut directions for social policy, underlining the importance of flexibility and choice of provision in response to great diversity of need. It is unequivocally written from the perspective of parents and provides an important source for that advice and support the research itself has shown to be so lacking. A similar study from the perspective of people with intellectual disabilities themselves would be invaluable.

THE ANATOMY OF SUPERVISION: DEVELOPING LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE FOR SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

by Derek Gardiner
Milton Keynes

The Society for Research into Higher Education
and Open University Press,
Paperback (\$39.95)

Reviewed by Michael Wearing

What is it that makes the student social worker's relationship to a supervisor, or for that matter any teacher-student supervision, so significant for the student? To dissect the anatomy of student placements in social work education is both a brave and difficult task. Gardiner's work provides the specialist reader with a worthy dissection, though it suffers the pitfalls of confusion in its conversion and possible substantial editing from a PhD thesis.

The strength of Gardiner's qualitative research and subsequent interpretations of student supervision in social work placements is the focus on students' and supervisors' experiences through case-study data. Four case-studies of supervisor-student relationships are used

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to illustrate differences in the way a student gains practical knowledge and expertise in social work agencies through supervision. The approach Gardiner takes to supervision could be described as an 'adult learning method'. Conversations between student and supervisor were recorded and used by Gardiner to assess students' experiences of supervision particularly the use of language in such encounters. Gardiner discovered in his research that certain words and concepts from traditional case-work and therapeutic approaches to social work have 'concept leakage' into the area of supervision. His main conclusion on student supervision is that,

the key feature was the 'leakage' of concepts from the therapeutic arena [of social work] to describing the supervisory process, which led to the continuing debate about whether supervision was therapy. The form of teaching associated with that model is traditional, hierarchical and directed towards students learning the 'right' way to practise.

Students who did not learn the expected ways were pathologised or called 'uneducatable' - New Supervisors were placed in hierarchical relationships with college tutors.

The influence of traditional case-work approaches to supervision and the hierarchy of knowledge about how to conduct placements gleaned from college tutors (field-work co-ordinators) combined in the supervision process to make the 'unconventional' student unpalatable to the official rules and authority upheld by supervisors.

Gardiner's findings indicate the importance of social work supervision in 'gatekeeping' and entry into the profession. Gardiner is unclear as to the degree of significance such supervision performs in the processes of exclusion and inclusion to the profession. He tends to emphasise individual styles and personalities in this process, especially the amount of discretion supervisors exercise in relation to students' education. What emerges from the study most of all is that those students defined, either through behaviour or through their supposed inability to learn the way a supervisor wants them to, are deemed to have unacceptable 'professionalism' and are often subject to failure on placement.

While Gardiner's findings offer a new perspective on supervisory relationships there are several faults in his framework which confuse his argument and speculation on the meaning of such findings. One fundamental

problem is the need to clearly theorise the exercise of power and authority in supervision. This is an area that is given critical appraisal early in the book but never satisfactorily clarified in the case examples. A second problem, is that research focused on the 'meaning' and 'experiences' of supervision can obscure more critical evaluations of the social processes that might be involved.

The major weakness of Gardiner's interpretations of supervision is that he does not, or is not able to, effectively stress what the exercise of power and authority does in a one-to-one supervision session. While recognised as an essential feature of supervision the book never explicitly states what the effects of these social concepts are. What does it mean for a social work student (especially those with little experience of welfare services) to come under the official and sometimes very public gaze of authoritative professionals, experts and other officials whilst on placement with an agency? The exercise of unwarranted authority in these settings can make or break the prospective career of a student. Gardiner's use of case examples gives some indication of how this may occur. Students appear to fail placements not because they lack personal ability, intelligence or the practical sense to co-operate with a supervisor's wishes, but because they cannot tune into the teaching style of the supervisor. This is a rather startling finding for those who are involved in the supervision of students. Social work educators and supervisors may be unaware that the style they use to interact with or convey information to students actually inhibits or interferes with a good learning environment.

As a specialist text for social work educators, fieldwork co-ordinators, social workers and welfare practitioners, I would recommend this book. There are a number of valuable insights that such an audience can gain into the pitfalls of inadequate or superficial styles of supervision. No doubt the variety of styles of supervision and the potential for mismatch between students' expectations of a supervision session and the supervisor's style play an important role in the outcome of placements. These factors alone, however, do not lend themselves to an explanation of why students might feel unduly humiliated or punished by such processes.

As a text for a broad lay audience the research method and presentation of evidence is sometimes confused and unhelpful. A great deal more could have been said of the role of supervision amongst staff in welfare services; and, for that matter supervision in all human service administrations and educational institutions

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including academia. Supervision, or what goes under the title 'supervision', in the face-to-face interactions of both public and private service administrations offers a key to understanding the way the status of a range of professional and official relationships are maintained. Perhaps if Gardiner had considered these relationships, the framework he develops to grasp supervision would have a more significant impact on welfare education and training.

SOCIAL POLICY: A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION: ISSUES OF RACE, GENDER AND CLASS

by Fiona Williams

Cambridge, Polity Press and Oxford Basil Blackwell
(Australian Distributor Allen & Unwin)
236 pp., \$25.95 (Paperback)

Reviewed by Adam Jamrozik

This is a well written, readable, very interesting, although at the same time a frustrating book, at least for this reader. The author's main theme and argument is that 'race' and gender issues have been neglected and marginalised in the discipline of social policy, with corresponding negative outcome in practice for women and Black people (Williams advisedly uses upper case for Black people, with appropriate justification, and she also places 'race' in quotation marks, thus emphasising the social rather than biological basis for this concept). Her purpose in writing the book is to demonstrate and analyse the relationship between the welfare state in a capitalist society and the oppression of women and of Black people, and then to formulate a strategy for overcoming those deficiency.

The social context Williams analyses is Britain and there are very few references to any other country or system. The issues she raises have been raised before but the difference is that Williams makes the issues of race and gender into the main theme of the book and analyses them in depth, with a degree of repetition and, one might say, some overkill. The welfare state in Britain is seen to be based on the traditional power of patriarchy and capitalism and the 'Founding Father' of the British welfare state, Beveridge, receives strong criticism. Williams points out that Beveridge is 'the arch-villain in much feminist writing', and his famous Report was described by one feminist writer as 'one of

the most crudely ideological documents of its kind ever written'. Worse still, 'Beveridge's welfare policies were firmly grounded in terms that related them to the advancement of national efficiency and racial supremacy' (pp. 124-125).

Many of the proposals concerning motherhood and family life in the Beveridge Report (1942)

were couched in terms of maintaining the British race and British values. The national unity derived from Empire would be replaced by a unity derived from Welfare. (p. 7)

The oppression of women and Black people, Williams argues, has not received much attention in the writings of social policy and the welfare state. Except for feminist writings, other writings differ only in the degree to which they ignore or marginalise these issues. No perspectives and no school of thought escape unscathed from this criticism. Williams identifies seven distinct theoretical approaches to social policy: anti-collectivists (e.g. the 'New Right'); non-socialist welfare collectivists (Beveridge, Keynes, Pinker); Fabian socialists (Crosland, Titmuss, Donnison); radical social administrators (Townsend, Walker); political economy of welfare (Gough, Ginsburg, Offe); feminist critique (Wilson, Land, McIntosh, Pascall); and anti-racist critique (Gilroy, Lawrence, Solomos and others).

Of the first five groups, the writers on the political economy of welfare receive some positive critique from Williams. The Fabians do not fare well because they were clearly nationalist and racist. These attitudes were later reflected in the developing of discipline of social administration. As Williams says,

The nationalist and racialist superiority of the earlier Fabians re-emerged in social administration as a form of moral evangelism, a pride in Britain and the British welfare state. (p. 7)

Williams thus presents the evolution of the British welfare state in a different perspective from one which is usually presented in the text books. Her criticism of the discipline of social administration is not really new; many other writers have criticised that school of thought for its empiricism, a-theoretical approach and weak social theory (e.g. George and Wilding, 1976). It is now generally accepted that the early mainstream social administration was largely empirical and pragmatic, focusing on the issues of poverty and welfare provisions, but this sort of criticism can be carried too far. The contributions of Titmuss and

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Donnison have been important, not only in their analyses of issues in social policy but also in their theoretical insights into societal arrangements in the allocation and control of resources.

The criticism Williams expresses of the various schools of thought on social policy can be regarded as rather biased. It is certainly strongly value-laden, and I do not think that she would deny this. At the same time her classification of the existing perspectives on the welfare state is excellent; certainly a very clear way of presenting the scenario. She illustrates how each perspective is based on certain assumptions and values, how each views the role of the state, distribution of resources and the relationship between economic and social policy.

A similar classification Williams presents of various feminists perspectives on the welfare state, pointing out that there is libertarian feminism, liberal feminism, welfare feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism and Black feminism. Each of these has some common links with the various perspectives on social policy. Williams points out that the issues of class and race are influential factors in feminist approaches to social policy. She observes that many of the strategies offered by liberal feminists 'have more relevance to the interests of white middle-class women' than to their working-class and Black sisters, commenting that

the history of welfare provision has been one where it has often been middle-class professional women who have controlled their working-class sisters into being 'good' wives and 'good' mothers. (p. 64)

Black feminists, too, Williams notes, are critical of white feminists' views on the family, pointing out that the Black family has been a site of resistance in struggles against slavery and white oppression.

So, it is a very interesting book indeed. Why, then, this reader's frustration? A number of reasons. First, the analysis of social policy is confined entirely to Britain. In the last few pages a brief reference is made to Denmark and Sweden and Williams acknowledges that the issues of gender and race have been treated differently in those countries, but she qualifies this immediately by saying that

we should, at the same time, be aware of the dangers of creating 'models of achievement from countries with different economic and social histories. (p. 209)

She also adds that the evil of patriarchy is still present in these two countries because the weakening of family patriarchy has been replaced by the strengthening of social patriarchy.

The second reason is that Williams is concerned with the position of women and Black people (both sexes) but Black men do not get a mention in the book. It is difficult to see where do they figure in the scheme of things. A related issue is the issue of class. Although the book is ostensibly about the issues of race, gender and class, the last of these receives very little attention. Are all women and all Black people disadvantaged and oppressed in the capitalist welfare state? One may suggest that some of the issues which Williams relates to race have a solid basis in the class structure. For example, the views on the family which, she says, Black women hold are probably not much different from the views of working class white women. Feminism has not made much impact on working-class women either in Britain or in Australia and has remained essentially a middle-class movement.

Finally, Williams presents an excellent critique of what is wrong with the capitalist, patriarchal welfare state but her suggestions for change are less clear. In fact, although written as an analysis of societal power, it is not as good a political analysis as it could be. However, whatever weaknesses the book might have, it provides a fascinating reading and should be listed as a text in social policy and sociology of the welfare state as well.

PILBARA BUSHMAN
The Life Experience of W. Dunn

by Graham J. Wilson
Hesperian Press, Perth WA, 1989, 89 pp.

Reviewed by Russell Ross

Pilbara Bushman is the biography of Bill Dunn, a part-Aboriginal pastoralist in outback Western Australia, who overcame social disadvantage to become a stock and station owner. The book chronicles his experiences, as told to Graham Wilson, from his birth in 1911, as the result of a relationship between an itinerant prospector and a Western Desert Aborigine, until after his retirement in 1976. The book has sixteen chapters, each of which focuses on a distinct period of Dunn's life experiences. Each chapter centres on a number of

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anecdotes and the writing is based on Bill Dunn's taped recollections. These experiences give a fascinating insight into the problems one man experienced in the Western Deserts in his efforts to bridge two cultures while not being fully accepted by either, although the impression is gained that he was more accepted by all the Aboriginal tribes with which he interacted than by the white communities. Although he was highly valued as an employee by various government agencies for his detailed local knowledge, including being able to communicate with a number of different tribes with distinct languages, and desert expertise he was usually treated as an outcast by white society. *Pilbara Bushman* is full of wonderful anecdotes and is very easy to read. While it makes for very enjoyable reading it also indicates very sharply the prejudice and discrimination that Dunn experienced, the barriers put in his way to becoming a land owner, the hardships suffered in following his lifestyle in undeveloped regions, especially in the first half of the century, and the sacrifices he made in order to achieve his goal of being a stock and station owner. Even as a young boy of nine he was working long hours, picking up skills which would stand him in good stead later in life. Within a few years, he had become competent at many of the mundane cattle station tasks.

Bill Dunn's early adult work experiences were as a stockman. By his late twenties he had developed a reputation as a versatile and reliable stock manager, and he soon began to dream of owning his own station even though he realised that his lack of formal education would be a huge barrier. His first efforts to acquire land were to be his introduction to the real extent of discrimination. The pastoral ethic of the day did not allow equal opportunity of access to land ownership for Aboriginal Australians (this ethic was most evident in the barriers that white pastoralists raised via their contacts in the bureaucracy). As with all the other obstacles and set-backs he had to endure, Dunn eventually overcame these attitudes and acquired an interest in a 300,000 acre station. Later he was to add a second station.

The author writes that

Juraji [Bill Dunn] looks back on his outback life and is well pleased. It has been full of interest, and crowned with personal success. He is particularly grateful that he was shown some special skills and insights at an early age by the significant elders in his life, both Aboriginal and European. They taught him an ethic of enterprise which led in due time to the achievement of some long-held ambitions. Above all, however, by

pleasantly and purposefully pursuing those values and strengths most respected in any society, he has found a ready acceptance and respect within each of the Pilbara bush cultures, both ancient and modern. (pp. 70-1)

Dunn clearly made light of the barriers he had to overcome and as a piece of social history this short book is of tremendous worth.

TAKING THE STRAIN

Families, Unemployment and the Transition to Adulthood

by Susan Hutson and Richard Jenkins

Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1989, 186 pp.

\$32.95 (paperback)

Reviewed by Jennifer Doyle

As the title suggests, this book is concerned with the social and political consequences of long-term unemployment amongst young people, in particular its effect on relationships and conflict within the family. These issues are largely discussed from an anthropological base with liberal use of quotations from ethnographic data.

A total of 58 families, each containing at least one 18 to 25 year old who had been unemployed for over 6 months, were interviewed. The sample was drawn from three areas in South Wales: 'Abbeyview', a council housing estate in Port Talbot, working-class and Labour voting; 'Ty-Gwyn', a private owner-occupied housing area in West Swansea; 'Hi Oak', a small and 'desireable' council housing estate in West Swansea, which although still very much a working-class estate, occupied an intermediate position between Abbeyview and Ty-Gwyn. Interviews were carried out between February 1985 and November 1986. Responses were compared by sex and geographic area.

Chapter 1 sets the 'intellectual' scene in which the research project was planned. Chapter 2 attempts to gauge the contribution of unemployment to family tension and conflict, while Chapter 3 focusses on the centrality of money, housework and gender divisions as sources of conflict, the strategies adopted by family members to limit and control conflict and the role of the mother in the management of the financial and

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emotional needs of the family. Chapter 4 is devoted to changes in decision making, financial relationships and the 'balance of power' in courtship relations. These themes are continued into Chapter 5 which is concerned with the transition to adulthood. Chapter 6 presents respondents' explanations of unemployment and attitudes towards the Youth Training Scheme and the Community Programme. More detailed interview material from particular families is provided in Chapter 7 'in order to put a little flesh on the bones' of their discussion. This is followed by a short conclusion.

In summary they conclude that: while unemployment in itself does not cause conflict within the family it does exacerbate tension and conflicts; mothers play a major role in the containment of conflict; and, despite unemployment, young adults continue to 'claim their adulthood'. Perhaps the most interesting conclusions concern the political attitudes and understandings of respondents. A link was established between individualistic interpretations of unemployment and degree of conflict - i.e. where the parent felt that responsibility or blame for unemployment rested with their son or daughter (rather than with governments or other broader social and economic factors), conflict within the home was likely to be more severe. Although the Youth Training Scheme was generally thought of as 'slave labour' and the level of allowance strongly criticised, they were nevertheless thought of as better than nothing at all.

There are a number of criticisms which can be made about both the methodology of this study and the conclusions drawn. The authors note that amongst their primary concerns is

... the effect of long-term unemployment upon family relationships of young people. How does unemployment affect the relationships which exist between young adults and their parents, siblings, their grandparents and their wider network of more distant kin and affines? To what extent does the unemployment of young adults create conflict within families and households? How do families cope with situations of this kind? (p. 5)

Unfortunately, they only partially answer the questions they have set themselves, largely because their sample is not representative of all unemployed youth. A more accurate and thoroughgoing estimation of the effects of unemployment would require the inclusion of young unemployed who no longer live in the family home. Research into the family effects of youth unemployment - financial dependence, financial and emotional support from the parents, attitudes of parents

towards unemployment, the quality of the relationships between parents and youth, family conflict and so on - clearly is valuable. However, it is equally important to study what happens after unemployed youth leave home. Do levels of conflict remain the same? Do family relationships improve? Do parents provide emotional and/or financial support? These are important questions given that a number of British studies have shown that a high proportion of unemployed youth who leave home do so precisely because of family conflict.

Overall Hutson and Jenkins conclude that the issue of unemployment has never been a major political problem because its experience is privatised. They further suggest that

... the young unemployed and their families are getting by. They are taking the strain, refusing to surrender their adulthood, refusing to abandon their future. In homes up and down the country ... [they] are doing the best that they can to cope. It is not easy, relationships suffer, the pressure is not evenly distributed, for some the pressure is too much, but, overall, the line holds. The problem is contained, managed and limited, because there is nothing else that these people can do. (p. 157)

The suggestion that conflict within these families is contained and controlled and that families on the most part are coping (even if only just) is somewhat self-fulfilling given that their sample was restricted to those living at home, where, by definition, conflict has been controlled, even if only temporarily. In short, they have excluded those unemployed and their families who have not 'taken the strain' and who have not (for a variety of reasons) 'contained, managed and limited' the problem of unemployment. Despite social policy designed to push responsibility for unemployment back to the family, the fact that the number of homeless young unemployed has increased indicates that not all unemployment is experienced or 'coped with' in the family home. Consequently, unemployment is not necessarily privatised in the sense that Hutson and Jenkins indicate.

In some respects this study is dated and only partially relevant to current social policy. For example, the Board and Lodgings regulations were introduced in April 1985. Under these regulations young persons under 26 living in board and lodgings and in receipt of supplementary benefit found that they were required to move every two to eight weeks depending on where they were living. New lower limits were also placed on payments. Although this cost-cutting exercise was

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presented as targeting those most in need, it was also hoped that the young unemployed would be 'persuaded' to return home. Unfortunately, Hutson and Jenkins make little mention of its introduction or the effect it had on their respondents. Although they note that some of those interviewed wanted to leave home, readers have no way of knowing whether in fact this legislation in any way 'dissuaded' them from doing so. This omission is somewhat surprising since the very strict tightening of eligibility criteria occurred during the period when they were interviewing.

One might also take issue with some of the assertions made in their discussion of particular topics. While readers may agree with the authors' assertion that long-term unemployment is not a barrier to adult status, they may not agree with their reasons for arriving at this conclusion. For example they suggest that

... adulthood, before it is anything else, is a status legally and administratively defined by the state; it is bound up, in a weaker or stronger sense, with notions of citizenship and full membership of the polity. Jural and political adulthood in modern Britain is not dependent upon employment status. (p. 108)

It has been argued elsewhere, however, that one effect of the Board and Lodgings regulations is the very real political marginalisation of many young adults ie. they cannot stay in any one place long enough to register to vote.¹ Indeed, in 1987 the impact of these regulations on the democratic rights of young people was challenged in the European Court on human rights grounds. Given the authors' selective sample and field of inquiry, clearly this was not an issue. However, it does again highlight the very narrow focus of their research into the effects of youth unemployment.

Similarly, they argue that although social security benefits levels are

... not as symbolically powerful or as economically substantial as a 'proper wage', [they] allow young men and women more independence from their parents than they enjoyed whilst at school. Benefit is a resource of their own, the management of which allows them the opportunity to exhibit - or not - a degree of adult independence and responsibility. Claiming

benefit is, in itself, an adult transaction between the individual and the state. (p. 108)

However, it could equally be argued that these levels of benefit not only prolong financial dependency on the family but, given the stigma and isolation at both the economic and social levels attached to the benefit, also deny a sense or feeling of adulthood on the one hand, and the power that goes with adult status on the other hand.

Most criticisms stem from the fact that the effects of unemployment on young people and their families has been restricted to those living at home and that little reference is made to social policy, in particular, the influence youth policy has had in pushing responsibility for unemployment back on to the family. Nevertheless, there are a number of interesting observations made and the liberal use of quotations from the interview material makes the book quite readable.

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1. Chapman, Tom and Cook, Juliet (1988), Marginality, youth and government policy in the 1980s, *Critical Social Policy*, (8) 1, Issue 22, p. 58.
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Dr Helen Marchant Memorial Scholarship

This scholarship was established in 1988 following donations received from family, friends and colleagues of Dr Helen Marchant, a distinguished teacher and researcher in the Department of Social Work, University of Sydney. The scholarship is to support research in areas to which Dr Marchant was particularly committed:

Social work and social change
Gender and social welfare
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The scholarship could cover research and travel costs but would not cover salary or a living allowance. Any one grant is unlikely to exceed \$1,000.

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Written applications should include details of academic record, relevant work experience, an outline of the research and a proposed budget.

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