Book Review/Compte rendu

Stefan Svalfors, ed., *The Political Sociology of the Welfare State: Institutions, Social Cleavages, and Orientations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007, 312 pp. $US 55.00 hardcover (978-0-8047-5435-4)

Much of the analysis in this edited book is based on survey data from 2002 and 2003 (and some even earlier) but its analysis is highly relevant in the current state of economic turmoil and its consequences for welfare states. It provides a comparative analysis of political attitudes, values, aspirations, and identities of citizens in advanced industrial societies including several of those most frequently discussed in comparative analysis of welfare state regimes. The analysis is systematically comparative and highlights feedback effects of institutions and public policies on attitudes and political citizenship. In the "Introduction," Stefan Svalfors outlines a conceptual framework relating to orientations, social cleavages, and political institutions that unites the six subsequent empirical chapters. The data are drawn mainly from the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) (two waves) and the European Social Survey (ESS) of 2002. While some of the empirical chapters include comparisons, over time, the "main aim is not to chart change, but to analyze variations and mechanisms behind the formation of orientations and their consequences" (p. 8).

The empirical analysis of three chapters is exclusively concerned with European countries. Staffan Kumlin uses ESS data to analyze the implications of performance dissatisfaction in 16 European welfare states. Dissatisfaction has a weak negative effect on support for government intervention and incumbent governments, it is conditioned by political and welfare state institutions and the effect is strongest in social democratic welfare states. In contrast, dissatisfaction has a strong universal negative impact on political trust, leading Kumlin to conclude, "it is the legitimacy of the democracies of Western Europe — rather than its welfare states or its incumbent governments — that will really suffer from increasing welfare state dissatisfaction" (p. 112). Maria Pettersson also uses ESS data in her comparative analysis of the relationship between public service dissatisfaction and political action in 14 European countries. At this level she finds no regime patterns in political action, defined as action taken by citizens outside particular welfare

state institutions to influence political outcomes. But in a comparison of health care and schooling within Sweden she finds political action is more likely in the former. She links this to the lesser availability of voice opportunities within the public health sector than within the educational sector: institutional design matters for political action. Maria Oskarson focuses on social risk, dissatisfaction, and political alienation in six European countries (Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Norway, and Sweden). Political alienation refers to "the combination of low political interest and low political trust" (p. 128). She demonstrates a strong relationship between social risk position and political alienation in all countries with the strongest relationship in Sweden. She speculates that the reason for the latter is that, in the context of high expectations, retrenchment may give rise to greater disappointment amongst the most risk exposed and push them towards political alienation.

The other three chapters draw on data from the ISSP and broaden the comparative focus. Svalfors is concerned with class and attitudes to market inequality in Sweden, Germany, Britain, and the United States. He demonstrates that class differences in such attitudes are greater in the first two countries (the coordinated market economies), than in Britain and the US, and argues that the link between class and attitudes is affected not only by actual class differences but by their political articulation. Jonas Edlund also demonstrates that class matters. He questions the arguments of much established welfare state analysis relating to class conflict and institutional feedback effects in Liberal and Social Democratic welfare regimes. Based on analysis of data from the 1996 ISSP on the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, and Norway he demonstrates that redistributive preferences were more clearly linked to class and class identity in Norway and Sweden than in the liberal welfare states. In the social democratic countries institutional characteristics enhanced the relationship between class identity and attitudes towards redistribution. Acknowledging that his analysis is limited to a specific period and only six countries, he concludes that it demonstrates the value of empirically examining the relationship of the economic and social dimensions of class. Hjerm's analysis of collective identity in a changing political landscape focuses on national sentiment and patriotism in Britain, Germany, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and Hungary in contrast to Australia, Canada, and the US. The data are drawn from the ISSP 1995 and 2003. While concluding that national sentiments were extremely stable over time, he points to a potential strain on the welfare state posed by increasing heterogeneity concluding that the "larger and more visible these [immigrant] groups become, the less likely it is that

citizens will sustain an encompassing welfare state, a welfare state that supports non-nationals" (p. 250).

Svalfors' useful concluding remarks on the contribution of the analysis are preceded by comments on the past and future of political sociology which might well have come in the "Introduction," such as "[we] hope to show in this book that is now both possible and desirable to take steps beyond the 'welfare regime' approach and ask both broader and more specific questions about the relations between cleavages, institutions and orientations in a comparative perspective" (p. 265). This kind of analysis is possible because of data sources such as ISSP and ESS and the developments in statistical approaches. Despite this, comparative analysis of social attitudes is notoriously fraught with methodological and data problems. These are recognized in Svalfors' Introduction and are well handled throughout this book. The limitations of the ISSP, associated with its relatively loose cross-national structure, are guarded against by the use of data from countries with long-established participation and assured data quality credentials. Other limitations of this data set result in variation in the choice of countries in different chapters (e.g., only Hjerm's analysis of collective identity includes the Czech Republic and Hungary). The variation in issues covered in different waves means that Edlund's analysis of class conflict and institutional feedbacks is based on the 1996 wave. Despite these data limitations this collection provides strong support for well-designed and executed comparative analysis directed to addressing significant theoretically driven questions. Informed by institutional theory, it is a conceptually and statistically sophisticated contribution to welfare state analysis, which demonstrates very clearly the value of a comparative analysis of the feedback effects of institutions and public policies.

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