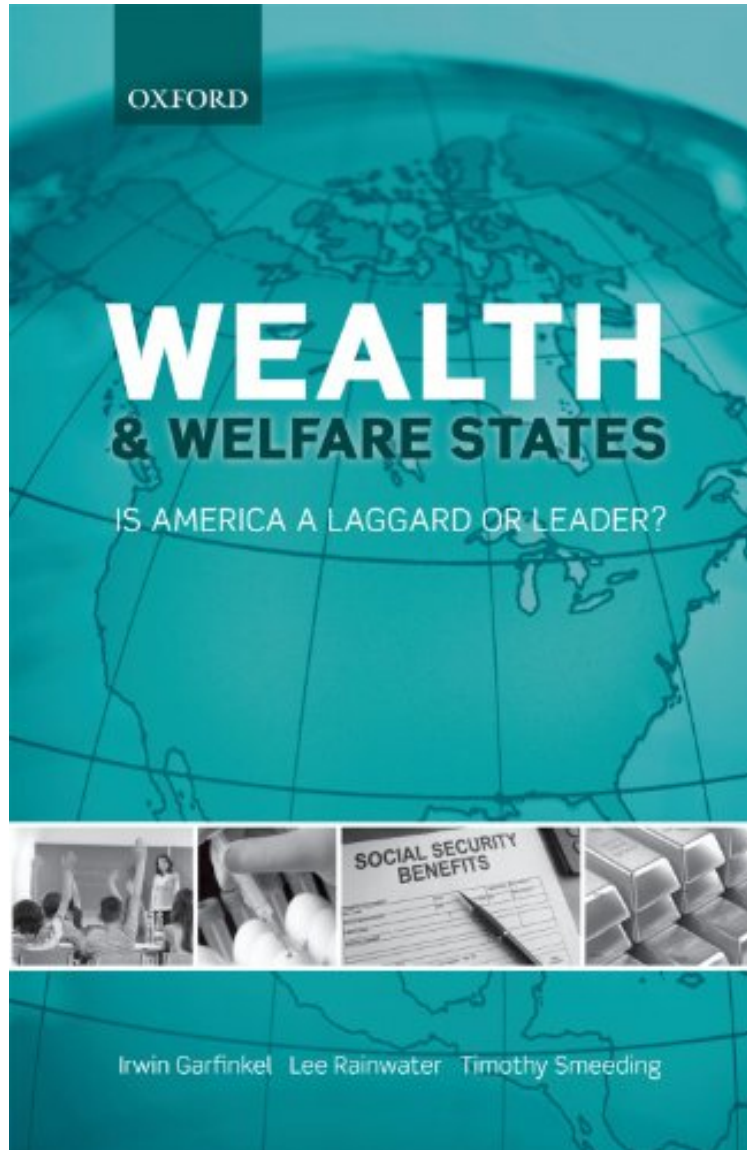


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Wealth and Welfare States: Is America a Laggard or Leader?

Irwin Garfinkel, Lee Rainwater, Timothy Smeeding
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grammar mistakes, obvious bias by the writer, and it frequently raises questions it doesn't answer. If you're looking for a good book to put you to sleep, though, this is the one.

This book explores the role of the welfare state in the overall wealth and wellbeing of nations and in particular looks at the American welfare state in comparison with other developed nations in Europe and elsewhere. It is widely believed that the welfare state undermines productivity and economic growth, that the United States has an unusually small welfare state, and that it is, and always has been, a welfare state laggard. This book shows that all rich nations, including the United States, have large welfare states because the socialized programs that comprise the welfare state—public education and health and social insurance—enhance the productivity of capitalism. In public education, the most productive part of the welfare state, for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the United States was a leader. Though few would argue that public education is not part of the welfare state, most previous cross national analyses of welfare states have omitted education. Including education has profound consequences, undergirding the case for the productivity of welfare state programs and the explanation for why all rich nations have large welfare states, and identifying US welfare state leadership. From 1968 through 2006, the United States swung right politically and lost its lead in education and opportunity, failed to adopt universal health insurance and experienced the most rapid explosion of health care costs and economic inequality in the rich world. The American welfare state faces large challenges. Restoring its historical lead in education is the most important but requires investing large sums in education, beginning with universal pre-school and in complementary programs that aid children's development. The American health insurance system is by far the most costly in the rich world, yet fails to insure one sixth of its population, produces below average results, crowds out useful investments in children, and is the least equitably financed. Achieving universal coverage will increase costs. Only complete government financing is likely to restrain long term costs. In memory of Robert J. Lampman Colleague, Co-author, Friend and Mentor

"Significant...impressive...[an] important and timely new book... Garfinkel, Rainwater, and Smeeding provide a new and fascinating look at the U.S. welfare state in comparative perspective." --Social Service "...Wealth and welfare states challenges longstanding views of the welfare state as a hindrance to capitalism, and of the US welfare state as a particularly anemic example... This work is innovative in the existing comparative welfare state literature through its discussion of public education, as both key to the welfare state's success and an area in which the US is a historic leader." --Journal of Children and Poverty About the Author Irwin Garfinkel is the Mitchell I. Ginsberg Professor of Contemporary Urban Problems and co-director of the Columbia Population Research Center. A social worker and an economist by training and a former director of the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP), he has authored or co-authored over 180 scientific articles and twelve books on poverty, income transfers, program evaluation, single parent families and child support, and the welfare state. His research on child support influenced legislation in Wisconsin and other American states, the US Congress, Great Britain, Australia, and Sweden. He is currently the co-principal investigator of the Fragile Families and Child Well being Study. Lee Rainwater is Professor of Sociology Emeritus at Harvard University and a founder and Research Director emeritus of the Luxembourg Income Study. His books and articles have been in the field of social stratification and social policy. The most recent was *Poor Kids in A Rich Country*. Tim Smeeding is the Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of Public Affairs and Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and director of the Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP). He is the founder and director emeritus of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS), which he began in 1983. Smeeding is also co-editor of Oxford University Press' 2009 *Handbook of Economic Inequality*. His recent work has been on inequality, wealth, and poverty amongst the children of immigrants in a cross-national context. His CV and recent papers can be found at: <http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/facultystaff/smeeding-timothy.html>