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BOOK REVIEW

SCOTT BOGGESS, and MARY CORCORAN with STEPHEN P JENKINS
Cycles of Disadvantage?
Institute of Policy Studies, Wellington, 1999, 187pp.

"Cycles of Disadvantage?", commissioned by the Strategic Analysis Unit in the New Zealand treasury, consists of two parts. The majority of the volume is taken up by a paper by Scott Boggess and Mary Corcoran. In this paper the authors review and evaluate research undertaken in the USA which has focused on life cycle poverty and poverty between generations. This is then commented on by Stephen Jenkins who examines research on poverty in the United Kingdom and its applicability to the New Zealand context.

The work is one of a series of titles published as part of the Income Distribution and Social Policy Programme at the Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University whose research aims to "enhance the quality of policy advice at the disposal of the New Zealand government'.

The question of intergenerational poverty has been a recurring theme within the literature on poverty as Boggess and Corcoran say:

> If poverty were sufficiently intergenerational, this would violate norms about fairness and equal opportunity, i.e., that young adults' economic destinations should not be predetermined by their social origins (p3),

In the first five chapters of this book the authors summarise trends in inequality and poverty generally and in child poverty in the United States and then go on to review the contradictory debates about poverty and existence of inter-generational inequality. Later research on the persistence of poverty and the degree of intergenerational mobility has led to the development of five theoretical models of the intergenerational transmission of economic disadvantage. The summary and policy implications of these models (economic resources, family structure, correlated disadvantages, welfare culture and social isolation) and the key determinants of intergenerational inequality - parental poverty, family structure, parental welfare use and state welfare benefits, neighbourhood disadvantages and labour market conditions - are reviewed and discussed in chapters six to eleven. In the final chapter Boggess and Corcoran summarise the findings and discuss the policy implications of their conclusion that although the average picture indicates that there is mobility in and out of poverty and that child poverty does not necessarily lead to adult poverty, for subgroups, such as African-American children the picture is quite different.

The second short part in this collection is written by Stephen Jenkins who is concerned with reviewing the applicability of Boggess and Corcoran's findings to other countries. He discusses research undertaken in the United Kingdom and makes some observations on how the US and UK research might be applied to New Zealand context. Although there is a lack of longitudiona/ data on poverty in New Zealand, Jenkins concludes that much of the findings should have some applicability to this country.

Mary Corcoran from the University of Michigan who has extensive experience of researching intergenerational poverty and Scott Boggess from Georgetown who has a PhD in economics have combined to produce this extensive review of the research. With over fifty pages of tables relating to up-to-date longitudinal research and almost twenty pages of references, it is a clearly written and interesting volume which will be particularly useful for scholars and researchers interested in the field of poverty and social policy.

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