policymakers about the ‘culture of poverty’ during the 1950s and 1960s. The 1970s and early 1980s and the rise of the new right brought the emergence of ‘cycles of deprivation’ theories and, of course, Charles Murray’s influential ‘underclass’. Although concerned primarily with policy and discourse in the UK, at this point the book moves to a focus on the USA, providing a useful comparison and showing how race has been such an important part of the debate on the other side of the Atlantic. The book closes with chapters on New Labour and ‘social exclusion’, and the most recent version of the concept: the coalition Government’s ‘troubled family’. This chronological approach provides detailed discussion of each historical period, looking at both public policy discourse and social research. Unsurprisingly, the two do not often connect: policymakers tend to emphasize behavioural explanations for social problems, while researchers tend to see structural explanations. At times, Welshman argues, policymakers attempt to use research to provide ‘policy based evidence’ to support their arguments (p. 224). While this exploration of the connection between policy and research is thought-provoking, it is the discussion of the evolution of the concept which is most useful.

Welshman’s focus throughout is on policy and research, but the underclass concept affects the lives of real people. From time to time, he provides a glimpse into the lives of those on the receiving end of the discourse through the lens of enlightened social researchers or the testimony of social workers. It is not a major criticism of the book that he does not provide more of this. Welshman’s detailed discussion of the evolution of an idea illustrates strikingly why discourse is so important in framing social policies. For those people caught up in the moralizing net of underclass theory, it is vital that researchers and policy analysts provide critical assessments exposing its inconsistencies and lack of empirical base. Welshman’s book does just that.

Jackie Gulland, University of Edinburgh

Beyond Evidence-Based Policy in Public Health: The Interplay of Ideas
By Katherine Smith

Katherine Smith’s excellent book comes at a time when researchers and policymakers alike are questioning the continued relevance of evidence-based policy. It provides a detailed account of a comprehensive range of issues, which is divided into eight chapters which show how public health policy is influenced by research and other factors. The book can be divided into three sections: Chapters 1 and 2 detail the role of evidence-based policy in public health, before Chapters 3–7 detail the way in which policy is influenced in...
contemporary western societies. The book closes by suggesting that public health advocacy is a potential way forward.

The introductory chapters assess how evidence-based policy has been understood over the past 50 years, including its prominence in the New Labour governments, providing a useful summary of relevant theories. Smith clearly defines the ways in which ideas are central to policy development with reference to the examples of health inequalities and tobacco control. Based on over 100 interviews with policymakers and academics, and analysis of policy documents, it is argued that whilst tobacco control policy has been largely successful, little progress has been made in reducing health inequalities.

To highlight these issues, Smith provides extracts from policy documents throughout the four devolved nations, providing a map of responses to health inequalities as part of Chapter 3. Policy responses are characterized as ‘successful journeys’ (largely tobacco control) or ‘partial journeys’, ‘re-contextualized journeys’, ‘weak journeys’ and ‘non-journeys’. The policy response to health inequalities is largely concentrated in these last four categories, with the exception of the early years. The rationale for these differences is the political will required to secure action: a redistribution of wealth would be necessary to reduce health inequalities, and Smith argues that these policy changes are much more difficult to implement, not resulting in ‘successful journeys’, as policy documents highlight the importance of ideas, but the necessary policy change does not occur.

The book also provides an unusual focus on the role of researchers and research funding, to examine the way in which policy drives the research agenda. Within Chapter 4, the role of academics who were both respected by their peers, but not overly critical of the policy-making regime was seen as crucial to influencing policy, particularly in relation to health inequalities where it was reportedly more difficult to marry political priorities and evidence-based approaches. This theme is contrasted in Chapter 5, where it is suggested that public health researchers should become more politically active in order to create policy change. In order to be most successful in these endeavours, Smith argues that academics should be ‘charismatic’, i.e. outlining an alternative policy agenda, rather than being critical alone.

Chapter 6 critically describes the way in which academics, via research funding streams, are political actors. For example, tailoring of research design and the way in which findings are reported. Accordingly, Smith notes that ideas can be ‘chameleonic’, with multiple meanings, tailored for particular occasions. Within the arena of health inequalities, these are used by academics, but within tobacco control policy, corporations have adopted these tactics in order to have an influence on the public health agenda. The theme of research funding is revisited in Chapter 7, as part of an ‘institutional amnesia’ among governments and policymakers, to which researchers tacitly agree, where policy is reinvented. Smith argues that research funding, and a desire to influence the public health agenda can influence researchers’ participation in this. Accordingly, Smith states that the recycling of ideas is likely to continue for some time. Smith’s book closes by suggesting that public health advocacy is a potential way forward for researchers to influence the policy arena.

To conclude, Smith provides a detailed understanding of the policy-making process in relation to two public health areas. Whilst I work in both
of these areas, I believe that her clear and accessible writing style will make this book suitable for students and researchers who are not familiar with the area.

Aimee Grant, Cardiff University

Social Class in Later Life: Power, Identity and Lifestyle
BY MARVIN FORMOSA AND PAUL HIGGS

Linking later life and social class is no easy feat. Although social class continues to appeal to studies of ageing, the methodological implications of the different conceptions of social class render the connection between these concepts somewhat mercurial. Such difficulties do not deter Formosa and Higgs, who take these problems as their challenge:

We believe that the individual and collective experiences of growing old, as well as the very nature of age relations, differ so significantly by class that there is an urgent need for a unified analysis in which both age and class are taken into account. (p. 7)

What follows is a series of well-crafted chapters that examine different intersections of class and later life in an effort to:

demonstrate that rather than calling for the concept of class to be written off as an artefact of a superseded form of social organization, it is more sensible to perceive it as a social category in need of considerable re-articulation. (p. 9)

And the beginnings of a considerable re-articulation is what this book provides. The premise of this book is simple enough: that the connection between social class and later life has been transformed by the shift from a traditional to a reflexive modernity. In one sense, the authors engage in efforts to understand this transformation. The contributions made by Lopes (Chapter 4) and by Hyde and Rees Jones (Chapter 5) evaluate the possibility of retaining more traditional conceptions of class, while Bottero (Chapter 2) and Rees Jones and Higgs (Chapter 7) examine the conceptual horizons of more cultural concepts of social class. This is also a book that builds on the strengths of the different authors to provide a nuanced account of the fragmented connections between class and ageing. A number of chapters draw on the author’s own empirical evidence (Hyde and Rees-Jones, Chapter 5; Lopes, Chapter 4), others take the opportunity to reflect on a number of studies (Victor, Chapter 8; Hafford-Letchfield, Chapter 9). Storelli and Williamson (Chapter 6) compare developments in pension policy in an international context, while others – Phillipson, Chapter 3; Rees Jones and Higgs, Chapter 7; Higgs and Formosa,