The first half of the book describes five factors that influence implementation of social welfare policy in Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and Kenosha. In these three cities, organizations and individuals using the public assistance system encounter local policies that tailor federal regulations to fit state and local philosophies and conditions. Wisconsin uses a geographically based, hierarchical model focusing on work to make public assistance users more similar to the working-class populations in each city. Pennsylvania’s program offers more options and mixed messages, also working more closely with local providers to develop policy strategies.

Policy encounters nearly identical organizational types, implementation systems, labor markets, and worker types in all three cities. Organizations fall into the categories of citywide institutions, community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations because they are oriented toward different constituencies. Citywide institutions connect to people and institutions concerned with a given social problem; community-based organizations look toward their mission-defined community; and faith-based organizations focus on the founding religious body for resources and direction. Each draws on social capital from those constituencies.

Organizations function within four interlocking systems: the official welfare system, the ancillary services system, the community-based system, and the faith-community system. Social capital networks within each system influence policy implementation in each locality. Although organizations need to connect with other institutions offering complementary services in that city, relationships crossing systems of organizations are often idiosyncratic.

The labor market in the three communities presents challenges to government policies and organizations attempting to move families out of long-term poverty. The bifurcated labor market offers plentiful jobs but fewer opportunities that pay family-supporting wages with benefits. As a result, welfare case-loads have fallen, but many families remain in poverty.

Families rely on their social capital to navigate social service systems and the labor market. Examination of worker types indicates that, although
human capital makes a difference, often the determining factor in individual career trajectories is a family’s social capital resources.

Taken together, these chapters show individuals and institutions negotiating systems based on global economic systems, regional cultural cues, and state and national policies. However, each family must access systems through particularistic social capital mechanisms. Resources include family, friends, community, social service organizations, churches, and government. Organizations function in the same kind of localized social capital systems.

People and institutions access social capital in specific contexts. Part II begins with a careful look at the role of several relevant environments on social capital development and use in light of welfare reform. I use the case examples introduced earlier in book, as well as a few new ones, to examine social capital in each context. The appendixes provide a quick reference to the case examples. Appendix B lists all the organizations and churches profiled in the book. Appendix C provides information on the key individuals and families.

Chapter 9 examines the ways families use social service organizations to meet their needs. How do families conceptualize social service agencies as potential resources, and how do individual connections to organizations influence the role of these institutions for families? How does an organization create social and cultural capital for its participants? Do organizations create closed or bridging social capital, and, if so, why, and how does this process work?

Chapter 10 places organizations in the context of their social capital resources to examine the impact of welfare reform on different organizations, focusing on two aspects of organization behavior. First, it looks outward at the way that organizations use their social capital to gain funding and other needed resources. The relationship of each organization to the interlocking service-delivery systems become particularly important in understanding this process. Second, it looks at mission focus and management structures as they influence the way that specific organizations carry out welfare programs. What role does an organization’s social and cultural capital play in its ability to carry out its mission and program goals?

Chapter 11 asks the same questions of faith communities. Through an examination of activities within congregations and the communities they create, the chapter describes how social and cultural capital and community develop in congregations. Looking at the issue of faith-based social welfare provision, this chapter discusses important differences between church congregations and nonprofit organizations as entities offering formal programs.

The final two chapters explore the interactions of various organizations in implementing social welfare policy in these three cities. Chapter 12 focuses on service delivery as well as the interaction among congregations, nonprofits, and government. This chapter examines the flow of individuals among these insti-
tutions and the role of individual social and cultural capital in expanding community. Chapter 13, on advocacy and social change, considers the role of social and cultural capital in the development and success of advocacy coalitions.

The concluding chapter brings together common themes throughout the book to propose a social welfare system that reflects the importance of social capital in welfare reform.