



Responsible Citizens

Individuals, Health and Policy under Neoliberalism

B. J. Brown and Sally Baker

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Description

Reveals how rising emphasis on the individual has gone hand in hand with an increase in subtle authoritarianism – particularly within public services – such that a kind of ‘governance through responsibility’ is today being enforced upon the population.

‘Brown and Baker have produced a vital study of the central place of the responsible individual in the contemporary remaking of public services. They brilliantly demonstrate how the idea of responsibility is the link that connects the image of the wisely choosing citizen-consumer, the coercive enforcement of responsible behaviour, and the punitive sanctioning of those who fail to act responsibly. In these austere times, their work illuminates how the championing of responsibility licenses the turn to authoritarian measures.’ —*Professor John Clarke, The Open University*

‘The strength of the book is that it tries to reveal how a new and similar rationality is emerging in individuals and different spheres of society simultaneously.’ —*Per H. Jensen, Journal of Social Policy*

The individual has never been more important in society – in almost every sphere of public and private life, the individual is sovereign. Yet the importance and apparent power assigned to the individual is not all that it seems. As **Responsible Citizens** investigates via its UK-based case studies, this emphasis on the individual has gone hand in hand with a rise in subtle authoritarianism, which has insinuated itself into the government of the population. Whilst present throughout the public services, this authoritarianism is most conspicuous in the health and social welfare sectors, such that a kind of ‘governance through responsibility’ is today enforced upon the population.

In the twenty-first century, individualism has come to pervade the body politic, especially where health and social care are concerned. Clients who may be at their most abject and vulnerable are urged to take responsibility for themselves rather than further burden the health and social care services. In some British healthcare trusts, prosecutions are mounted against clients who have lost their temper or who act inappropriately as a result of their disorientation, under the guise of ‘making them take responsibility for their actions’. Citizens on the street in Britain are likely to have responsibility thrust upon them through mechanisms such as electronic surveillance and the burgeoning new cohorts of community enforcement officers, as well as the police themselves. Thus taking responsibility is never quite as simple as it seems – being responsible demarcates the borderland between autonomy and authority, and often equates to simply ‘doing what you’re told’.

Readership: Advanced undergraduate and postgraduate students in social policy, sociology, social care and healthcare, especially where critical thinking is concerned.

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