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Work and Family: Research Informing Policy edited by Toby L. PARCEL and Daniel B. CORNFIELD, Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1999, 288 pp., ISBN 0-7619-1307-6.

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masculine view of such activity as naïve and gullible?

These are pressing questions, and their answers have implications that extend beyond the workplace. Fletcher's work has provided a valuable, if somewhat utopian, roadmap to a better future.

The book deserves to be read, discussed, and used as a springboard for further exploration. It would be great to see the roadmap become an agenda.

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Work and Family: Research Informing Policy

edited by Toby L. PARCEL and Daniel B. CORNFIELD, Thousand Oaks, Calif.:
Sage Publications, 1999, 288 pp., ISBN 0-7619-1307-6.

Research into the interface between the spheres of work and family life continues to be of crucial importance to Western developed economies. The increasing participation of women in paid work, the decline of the male breadwinner/female homebuilder model that typified the twentieth century, and changes in family structures, have all fuelled debates about the effects of maternal work and, latterly, the tensions involved in attempts by both sexes to balance work and family. The authors focus on two main issues in this volume of readings. The first is that of time, both in terms of the "juggling" of time in families to reconcile conflicting demands, and the proportion of time devoted to these demands over the life course. The second main issue is that of social policy, both public and private, and how policy alleviates or exacerbates pressures on families. The editors have asked each contributor to consider the implications their findings might have for policy-makers, both employers and governments. They feel that sociological research can yield important implications for social policy, as well as inform theory.

The volume is divided into three parts, the first of which traces the historical context and the effects of social policy on work and family. The two chapters offer an interesting contrast between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the United States. The former, a state-socialist society where policy was rigidly centralized, the latter

a democratic society where policy-makers were lobbied by pressure groups and their decisions affected by such things as electoral cycles. The life histories of the German women were crucially affected by state policy to bring about rapid economic development and the availability of childcare was important in facilitating work during family formation. In the U.S., the authors suggest that the strength of public opinion and the continued efforts of interest groups were essential to effect changes in policy that affected work, family and gender. Without them, these issues would have slipped to the bottom of the political agenda.

The second part develops the theme of time and identifies strategies used by families to manage work and family responsibilities. The chapters investigate the extent of choice in working time, the effect of marital status on non-standard work, and the interplay of social policy, gender and economics as factors affecting decisions about returning to work at the family-building stage. The chapter by Jerry Jacobs and Kathleen Gerson on working time questions Hochschild's view that workers prefer work over family time, and that the value of family life is in decline. The authors conclude that most workers want gratifying work experiences but also value their families, and this holds for both sexes. However, it is social-structural trends, over which individuals have little or no control, that are making it more difficult for working parents to succeed in both spheres.

It is thus unfair to blame parents for failure.

The final part develops the work and family theme later in the life course, and starts with the familiar theme of the effects of parental work on children's development. The other chapters focus on the transmission of work and family values, firstly amongst young adults, secondly amongst poor urban black women. The contribution on the links between parental work and children's attainment by Toby Parcel, Rebecca Nickoll and Mikaela Dufur concludes that it does not have a strong effect. More important predictors are maternal ability and children's personal characteristics. Significantly, the chapter treats paternal as well as maternal work roles in an even-handed way, and points towards policy-making that would allow parents of either sex to work flexibly during periods of family-rearing. Similar shifts in discourse are discernible in the U.K., where the concept of the working parent has replaced previous emphasis on the working mother in emanations from government. Policies such as those on parental leave also reflect this shift; though, in reality, women are likely to continue to shoulder much of the burden of reconciling family-building and paid work. The contribution by Joanne Sandberg and Daniel Cornfield reinforces this view, in that traditional gender roles strongly influence return-to-work decisions by leave-takers.

Overall, there appears to be something of an imbalance between the three parts of the book, with only two chapters in the first historical section. The chapters are almost all based on U.S. research, so that the first chapter by Heike Trappe, on the GDR, though very interesting, does not seem to fit. Perhaps a future volume could develop a cross-cultural theme in this area of research, perhaps encompassing contributions from Europe as well as North America. The influence of national context, infrastructure and institutions could be assessed and areas of similarity identified.

The book's objective of informing social policy is commendable, and social scientists are often justified in their complaint that policy-makers ignore academic contributions to knowledge in favour of less robust and sometimes methodologically unsound sources. However, it must equally never be forgotten that what constitutes "social betterment" may also be contested terrain.

The introductory elements and the individual chapters are generally well researched, painstaking in analysis and accessible to academics and non-specialists. Most make useful contributions to theory development on the interface between work and family, and should be compulsory reading for employers and policy-makers alike.

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From Tellers to Sellers: Changing Employment Relations in Banks

edited by Marino REGINI, Jim KITAY, and Martin BAETHGE, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999, 342 pp., ISBN 0-262-18193-2.

This book is part of the extensive MIT-initiated project examining the changing nature of employment relations in advanced economies in a range of industries. Its focus on banking is welcome in that this industry has tended to be relatively marginalized in the manufacturing-centred traditions of industrial relations scholarship. The book

faithfully follows the MIT research agenda in examining the main factors pushing change within employment relations, and in outlining the main contours of these changes, specifically around work organization, skill formation, staffing arrangements, job security, compensation, industrial relations policies and enterprise governance. The bulk