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Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century, By Andrew Urban (2018) New York: New York University Press, 376 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8147-8584-3

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characteristics, workplace stressors are all reviewed as contextual factors leading to employee mistreatment. The review highlights the usefulness of multi-level research designs in separating the objective portion from the individually perceived portion of such contextual factors.

Chapter 8 (Nathan A. Bowling, Kelly A. Camus, and Caitlin E. Blackmore), titled “Conceptualizing and measuring workplace abuse: Implications for the study of abuse’s predictors and consequences,” reviews the predictors and consequences of workplace abuse. The authors’ first point out that most studies have addressed more specific constructs such as abusive supervision, bullying, incivility, interpersonal conflict, interpersonal deviance, mobbing, petty tyranny, or violence. Having defined workplace abuse as a broader construct, the chapter reviews the item content of different measures used either from the perspective of the victim or the perpetrator.

This overview of “Mistreatment in Organizations” points to the numerous concepts, theories and perspectives currently leveraged in research on this topic. Although the last chapter provides some guidance for conceptual clarity, the diversity of theories and perspectives remains a challenge in this area of research. To borrow from occupational stress and well-being research, I would however qualify this not as a hindrance, but as a challenge demand.

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Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century

By Andrew Urban (2018) New York: New York University Press, 376 pages.

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Brokering Servitude explores “how different actors and institutions in the

United States, between 1850 and 1924, brokered the placement of migrants in household positions, and what they hoped to accomplish economically, politically, and socially through these transactions” (p. 6). Andrew Urban, currently Assistant Professor of American Studies and History at Rutgers University, contends that scholars should not simply analyze domestic labour in the context of the home. Rather, they should explore how governments, agencies, missionaries, and other actors influenced the migrations of domestic workers. Furthermore, he also argues that “the idea that the servitude of free laborers and free migrants had to be brokered challenges, on an epistemological level, how we view a past where liberty of contract allegedly triumphed against enslavement, indenture, and other forms of coercion that kept workers in a state of bondage” (p. 27). The volume focuses on several different groups of live-in domestic servants—Irish immigrant women, Chinese immigrant men, and African American women born in the United States. It explores how they navigated the often-fraught power relations of middle class homes and their participation in an intensely contested politics of domestic employment.

Urban begins by analyzing Vere Foster and assisted Irish immigration in the period 1850-1865. Assisted immigration accounted for less than four percent of departures from Ireland. However, that amounted to more than a quarter of a million people, who “deserve attention as cases that demonstrate how the redistribution of unemployed surplus labor was governed and imagined as a resource for white, Anglophone settlements” (p. 29). Foster himself financed the passage of over 1,200 Irish women to the United States. Through his loans to them, he attempted to assert a coercive power and dictate where the women should settle in the United States. Interestingly, despite this coercive power, the women had signifi-

cant leeway in choosing, or not, to abide by his advice. Many disregarded Foster's wishes and made their own choices about where to live. A significant number of households in the United States relied on the help of Irish servants. That said, middle-class homeowners and newly arrived immigrants did not always, to put it mildly, see eye to eye. Servants clashed with employers about their duties, wages, dress, and use of leisure time, among other points. In addition, many people in the United States had a very profoundly negative view of Irish immigrants. Students of nineteenth century political cartoons will recall Thomas Nast's depictions of Irish men as drunken, illiterate, ape-like brutes. Irish women, often caricatured as "Biddy" became "colonial threats to the sovereign domestic rule of their Anglo-American mistresses" (p. 53). Numerous cartoonists depicted muscular ape-like Irish women bullying cowering employers.

Because employers quickly began to dislike Irish servants, they turned to other groups of people, such as African American women, in an effort to find better servants. However, as Urban notes: "the assisted migration of recently freed black women and children during and after the Civil War raised many of the same issues that Foster's work encountered" (p. 63). Many northern households desired African American labour. Government-run camps for freedpeople frequently became sites of labour recruitment. However, employers quickly realized that African Americans, just like the Irish, were not idealized docile and meek servants. Many of the same fights about wages, work, dress, and leisure time, erupted between employers and employees. In addition, some employers resorted to deception and exploitation to keep their workers in their employ. However, some black domestic workers "did not feel obligated to remain in contracts" (p. 89) and sought out better opportunities. Scholars of Reconstruction know that disputes over

contracts occurred frequently in the postbellum South. Some African Americans, after signing a contract, left to work for another employer who offered better wages. White employers constantly accused their competitors of luring away workers. Urban might have offered more sustained analysis of the similarities between women seeking new contracts in the North and men doing so in the South to chart the wide array of responses to this tendency.

After becoming disillusioned with Irish and black domestic workers, employers turned to Chinese men and believed they represented the answer to the servant question. However, the turn to Chinese labour came during an era in which Congress enacted the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, in which nativist sentiment ran strong, and in which riots against Chinese and other Asian immigrants proved common. Some white employers, therefore, supported proposals to restrict the entrance of Chinese laborers. However, the same people "passionately defended their freedom to hire and contract with whomever they chose, regardless of race" (p. 100). People looking for domestic labour behaved, in other words, like other businessmen and employers who protested exclusionary legislation because it hurt their bottom line. Chinese servants did not prove meek and docile either. They "asked plenty of questions about the situations available to them" and "negotiated for better pay and working conditions, and time off" (p. 101). Furthermore, many employers saw the Chinese as distinctly alien—in a way they did not with Irish and African American servants—and some people fretted about Chinese men having access to the bodies of white female employers.

Middle class employers were hardly the only actors who sought to regulate domestic workers. The federal government also plays an important role in this book. With the *1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1891 Immigration Act*, the federal government "entered into the subjective realm

of brokering how immigrant labor was to be consumed for domestic purposes and under what conditions" (p. 137). Importantly, assisted migration programs, despite their strenuous efforts, proved limited in their ability to compel servants to remain in jobs. The same could not be said of the federal government. Immigration officials having the power to "make immigrants' entry contingent on accepting service work changed this dynamic in dramatic ways" (*ibid.*). For example, immigration officials established strict controls over unaccompanied immigrant women's freedom of movement and contract. They justified these regulations by claiming they protected unaccompanied women from white slavery. Fears about white slavery and the international sex trade were legion, but Urban suggests that many officials used white slavery as a smokescreen. Their real goal was to help household employers who were undermined by free market conditions by providing cheap and tractable servants. These practices did not go uncontested. Missionaries and officials from charitable agencies forcefully argued that placing women in jobs prior to their release undermined their economic agency. In order to regulate the entry of Chinese immigrants under domestic service contracts, officials developed an enforcement apparatus and made the employers take out bonds. Nevertheless, many domestic servants abandoned their employers to find better opportunities. Finally, southern black women, whenever possible, resisted being labeled ideal servants and challenged employers who demanded they act submissively.

Brokering Servitude speaks to modern debates about citizenship, guestworkers, and immigration. As the author notes, the federal government "has failed to enact provisions that would give domestic workers equal rights to other laborers" and "has also fallen short in reforming immigration policies—an area of governance that is its sole domain" (p. 260). In sum this book

cuts across disciplinary boundaries and will interest scholars as well as non-academic audiences.

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Frontiers of Labor: Comparative Histories of the United States and Australia

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The task that confronts all of us is to reach an "understanding" of the chaos that is the real world. How are we to make sense of that which happens? What factors, or what scholars describe as parameters, are at work, which explain whatever it is that piques our interest? How can we be confident in the explanations that we develop in trying to explain real world phenomena? Scholars in the physical sciences have developed a very successful technique to overcome such fears: controlled experiments and replication. Parameters are selected and applied in a controlled experiment, which produces a result. This experiment is repeated again and again to determine if the same result will occur. After numerous 'successful' tests, scholars maintain that there is no basis for rejecting propositions so derived. Every time we turn on a light, a controlled experiment, further confirmation is given to the theoretical insights associated with electricity. Our confidence in electricity is such that if the light did not go on, we would say that the light bulb needs to be replaced or the equipment is faulty.

Controlled experiments and replication are not luxuries available to those who work in the social sciences. In seeking to make sense of whatever it is that interests us, we are not even sure what parameters are at work; with most social science scholarship seeking to discover what they may