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Workplace Flexibility: Realigning 20th-Century Jobs for a 21st-Century Workforce

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not be used much by scholars who are actively working in this area, since the material will be quite familiar.

Repairing the Social Safety Net is a comprehensive description of the U.S. social safety net. Its long view of history, rich data, and in-depth look at institutional issues presented in a clear and organized way make it an excellent resource for teaching in a wide range of disciplines. It will be a useful companion as we navigate our way out of the great recession and take on the policy issues that continue to challenge us.

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Workplace Flexibility: Realigning 20th-Century Jobs for a 21st-Century Workforce. Edited by Kathleen Christensen and Barbara Schneider. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press), 2010. ISBN 0-8014-4860-3, \$65 (cloth).

Based on a 2006 Sloan Foundation-funded conference on Workplace Flexibility in a Global Context, *Workplace Flexibility: Realigning 20th-Century Jobs for a 21st-Century Workforce* highlights the impressive effort of the Sloan Foundation, under Kathleen Christensen, to pinpoint the mismatch between the workplace and a changing workforce and to highlight the national and employer policies necessary to make the global economy livable for American working families. The book begins and ends with summary chapters by the editors, detailing first the mismatch and then summarizing approaches to solutions at the end. In between are 16 chapters written by different authors and divided into four parts: Twenty-First-Century Workers and Family Life; The Misfit between Old Workplaces and a New Workforce; Workplace Flexibility: Voluntary Employer Practices in the United States; and Workplace Flexibility: Practices from Abroad.

The term “flexibility” has a double meaning depending on whether it is viewed from the perspective of the employer or the employee. Employers may seek the flexibility to hire and fire at will, to demand overtime, or to create furloughs, all to optimize the use and costs of their human resources. From the employee point of view—and this book takes that perspective—it means control over the time and timing of work, the when of work and also the where. There is no logical rea-

son why these two perspectives need to conflict and, indeed, this book presents some examples of companies in which the two views constructively come together. At the same time, we know that management practice, supervisory behavior, and workplace culture often stand in the way of this productive convergence.

The book begins with a description of the structural mismatch between a changing family and a non-changing workplace. As the editors explain in the introduction, the traditional family has two jobs—an economic and a domestic one—with two people to do them. In dual-earner couples, however, characterizing the majority of families today, two people are doing three jobs: each partner’s economic job plus the domestic one. Even though this situation is no longer surprising, neither the American workplace as a whole nor the U.S. government has responded adequately; neither has provided the necessary workplace flexibility. Nonetheless, some organizations have responded to this new configuration, and the book includes examples of companies that are providing the flexibilities their employees need, evidently without compromising their economic outcomes.

Using time-use data, Suzanne Bianchi and Vanessa Wight introduce Part One by showing that total hours—both in employment and in domestic work—have increased for families as women have entered the workforce. This increase in employed hours, primarily by women, comes at the expense of time with children, with spouse, and with leisure activities and sleep. All of this creates conflict for families and a desire for more family time. The typical reaction to this conflict is a reduction in women’s employed hours, which puts upward pressure on men’s employment hours. This in turn reinforces the continuing gender divide: women have shorter employed hours than men and spend more time on domestic work. In the next chapter of Part One, we learn that multi-tasking is another response to this time squeeze, and it happens particularly at home and particularly by mothers. This may make them feel more productive, but it also increases stress. A final chapter in this part shows that the family dinner hour seems not to have disappeared as much as people have feared. All of these chapters are based on carefully presented empirical data and document that the dual earner family with children is under great strain.

Part Two emphasizes the misfit between what these families need and what the workplace provides, which continues to depict the current situation. The chapters in this section focus on the adaptations that individuals have made. Phyllis

Moen and Qinlei Huang begin by showing that people in dual career families often deal with this strain by opting out altogether, or by shifting jobs—again, adjustments more often made by women. This chapter is followed by one by Sylvia Hewlett that provides examples of companies whose innovative policies have helped women stay in the workforce. British Telecom (BT), for example, allows employees to arrange their own work schedules whenever possible. In a final chapter in this part, we learn of the less-than-ideal situation for older workers who want or need some, but perhaps not full, involvement in the workforce. Real workplace flexibility would ease all these situations.

Part Three turns to what U.S. employers are doing, both generally as well as specifically for childcare. These chapters provide some possible “best practices.” This section of the book also includes an informative analysis of government policies for federal workers by Christensen, Matthew Weinshenker, and Blake Sisk. Compared to the private sector, it turns out that the federal government was an early adopter of alternative work schedules but a laggard in dealing with an aging workforce. Part Three ends with an important chapter by Joan Williams that analyzes work-family issues from a class perspective and begins to explain why the United States lags behind most European countries in social policy in this area. It serves as a bridge to Part Four, which deals with practices from abroad.

This last part is perhaps the newest and most interesting for an American audience. It begins with two chapters on policies in Europe. Though somewhat familiar, it is nonetheless striking when one realizes how much less time, compared to the United States, Europeans spend at work, and the amount of paid leave for childcare that both mothers and fathers enjoy in many European countries. This part also includes two chapters on Australia, which only recently surpassed the United States in developing any national family policies, and two on Japan. Japan, it turns out, has many more national policies than at least this reader expected. Here, the motivation is not the problems faced by dual-career families, but rather demography: the diminishing birthrate and the aging population. It seems that women interested in careers, a number that is increasing, are likely to give up on marriage and children because of the Japanese work culture, which also affects the increased need for state involvement in care of the elderly.

In this volume, one learns of the importance of flexible work arrangements for easing the work-family dilemma. But the way that jobs will

get realigned to a new workforce is a systemic issue: it involves collective flexibility (not individually arranged flexible work conditions) and is embedded in a larger social context and an ideology about the role of employees—including even their personal lives—in the business enterprise. Reaching this realignment will involve challenging the way work is accomplished and the underlying, often gendered and class-based assumptions that guide current work practices; and such an approach may lead one beyond flexibility, beyond time and timing and the where and when of work. Aspects of this larger picture are alluded to in some chapters of the book as well as in the editors’ introduction and conclusion, but one misses a final coming together of all these different parts.

Nonetheless, this is an important book, and it clearly shows the catalytic influence of the Sloan Foundation in putting flexibility on the national agenda—also evidenced by its involvement in the recent flexibility conference at the White House. Combining careful empirical work with case studies of successful efforts, *Workplace Flexibility* expands our thinking on these issues and represents a step toward this more systemic vision.

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Historical Studies

Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions: Allan Flanders and British Industrial Relations Reform. By John Kelly. London, UK: Routledge, 2010. 246 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-87848-7, \$95.00 (cloth).

The British industrial relations (IR) field was formally launched shortly after World War II, the field’s intellectual center of gravity was at Oxford University, and the two leading Oxford IR academics in the 1950s and 1960s were Hugh Clegg and Allan Flanders. John Kelly’s new book, *Ethical Socialism and the Trade Unions: Allan Flanders and British Industrial Relations Reform*, focuses on the latter part of this duo.

The book is first and foremost an account about Flanders the man; the interplay between his early ideological commitment to a revolutionary form of “ethical socialism” and his parallel views on the transformative social role of trade unions; and the evolution that occurred in his middle and later life toward a more moderate political philosophy of social democracy and