BOOK REVIEWS


Over the past two decades or so, the employment crisis has become a more and more familiar and important theme in debates about the politics and economics of contemporary Western societies. There has been little convergence, however. Views continue to reach from apocalyptic scenarios about the end of the ‘work society’ to the view that we face only minor troubles requiring nothing more than higher labour flexibility, in the opinion of some observers, or more efficient labour market policies, in the opinion of others. This lack of agreement – not uncommon in the social sciences in general – conceals the fact that most analyses share a key background point of departure, the assumption that before the recent crisis there was a situation of normalcy characterised by the generalisation of wage labour under conditions of full employment and at a wage level that allowed workers to support a family.

What is striking about this image is that it mostly remains just such a background assumption, often implicit and rarely explicated, largely unquestioned and certainly unexamined. This collection of analyses edited by Noel Whiteside, Bristol-based historian of social policy, and Robert Salais, economist of the French school of the economics of conventions, aims not least at ending this situation. Adopting a comparative, Franco-British perspective, it focuses on the period during which the so-called full employment model was created, from the aftermath of the First World War to the aftermath of the Second, and it asks the crucial questions. What exactly was the full employment model of the (latterly, so-called) Keynesian welfare state? How far did it really rely on a standardisation of salaried work situations? How did it operate in terms of labour market policies and in terms of governance of the economy? Which areas of economic life (‘worlds of production’, in Salais’ terminology) lent themselves to the political organisation of labour markets, and which others remained recalcitrant? How did the forms of state involvement change in the course of economic modernisation?

The work of historical reconstruction here draws on an earlier research movement, to which both editors have also contributed, namely an inquiry into the very conceptual bases of twentieth century institutions. Sustained research has demonstrated that the inventions of ‘the social’, of ‘the social question’ and of the very term ‘unemployment’ during the second half of the nineteenth century were not inevitable functional responses to crises of capitalism, but politico-intellectual creations that were struggled about and that indeed came in a variety of ways in different countries and socio-economic settings. This book, fifth in the Routledge Studies in the European Economy Series, extends this perspective by investigating the actual institution-building around questions of work, employment and governance of the economy between the 1920s and the 1950s.

The analyses show that, while there was indeed a rather commonly conceived need to ‘modernise’ the economy in Britain and France, not least in the light of the apparently superior organisation of production in the U.S., the precise ways and means as well as the overall direction of such modernisation were highly contested and a great variety of different avenues were taken. The first set of contributions deals with different forms of state involvement, covering nationalisation and other forms of public control, the ‘politics of industrial efficiency’ and
training measures. Another set of articles focuses on changes in industrial relations and labour law to identify if and how a standardisation of employment conditions came about and what part the state played in this development. It is demonstrated that in many respects the actual changes fell far short of the currently prevailing image of the conventionalisation of work. And – of similar importance – some forms of, and reasons for, resistance to such standardisation, both from an employers’ and from a workers’ and unions’ point of view, employ arguments that have currently come back into use when the limits of the mass production model became obvious both in terms of flexibility and quality of production and in terms of the imagery of society and work that goes with it.

In comparative perspective, the book identifies the seeds of the relatively pronounced postwar coherence of French politico-economic organisation after the second world war as well as the reasons for the persistently lacking coherence in Britain. However, from its contemporary point of view, it does not derive any superiority or inferiority from such observations. A highly competent corps of administrators and engineers in rather closely interlocking organisations of state-led production may indeed have led important sectors of the French economy into a position from which it is difficult to adapt to new circumstances.

The book as a whole argues against any conceptual opposition of state and market. There has been no state in the West over the past two centuries that has fully aimed at suppressing markets; they have always – and in a variety of ways – aimed at organising them. And on the other hand, there has been – and there can be – no market that does not rely on some rules that it cannot itself set. Britain and France should not be compared along lines of ‘weaknesses’ or ‘strengths’ of the state towards the economy. The point here is rather that there are always both a plurality of worlds of production and a variety of forms of state. The question of economic governance then refers to the competent drawing on the available productive resources to develop a coherent overall economic identity. In this sense, the book also aims at a transformation of a research agenda – beyond the specific comparative-historical contribution it makes.

*Governance, Industry and Labour Markets in Britain and France* provides essential elements for a rethinking of the mid-twentieth century experiences with ‘economic modernisation’, the legacy of which still influences the current possibilities of domestic economic policy making. It almost begs to be extended cross-nationally, to include other West European countries as well as the U.S., and temporally, to move towards similar analyses of the alleged heyday of Keynesian interventionism and the first signs of its demise during the 1960s and 1970s.

PETER WAGNER

*University of Warwick*


There has been considerable recent discussion about the implications of the growing numbers of female managers for understanding the contemporary gendering of managerial hierarchies. However, much of this research focuses on women rather than on both women and men, and tends also to concentrate on managerial attitudes and the impact of gender on ‘management style’, so tending to encourage gender essentialism. Wajcman’s book offers a rich empirical account of the gendering of contemporary British management which criticises essentialist arguments about gendered management styles, while also upholding the need to
recognise the persistence of male hegemony in management cultures. Her theoretical framework draws on Pateman's arguments about the 'sexual contract' in which men are defined as independent, free wage earners, able to devote themselves to their work, while women are defined as dependents. Women therefore have to show themselves as capable of being managers despite being women, while men face no such obstacle. Wajcman's basic argument is that this gendering of work cultures remains constant despite organisational restructuring of recent years.

Wajcman's empirical research is extremely impressive. Her analysis is based on a survey of 324 male and female senior managers working for five leading private sector companies. The survey analysis was based on a response rate of 74 per cent (remarkably high for a postal survey). This material was supplemented by 20 in-depth interviews with women and men in one high-tech case study company (‘Chip’). Wajcman skilfully marshals her evidence to explore the ambivalence of gendered management cultures. At one level her respondents endorse the idea that men and women have different styles of managing. Sixty-nine per cent of women and 41 per cent of men claimed that there were differences in male and female management style, with many of the images associated with female styles of management (more open, less status-driven, less goal-oriented) being seen positively. Furthermore, her survey indicated general support for the idea of women managers, with 97 per cent of men and 99 per cent of women agreeing that ‘women managers have positive skills’. However, the actual practice of management, which is based around concerns over cost reduction, continues to be associated with male management styles. Indeed, the recent restructuring and down-sizing of management has actually tended to enhance ‘macho’ management cultures, even if ‘soft’ female management styles are regarded as a ‘nice idea’.

This argument, that a rhetoric that approves of female managerial virtues is at odds with the stark reality of management cultures, is developed with considerable insight in the book. The case study company, ‘Chip’ offers a particularly interesting lesson here. While it claims to be go-ahead and open, with no traditional status barriers to promotion (and even demonstrates cases of female secretaries being promoted into management), its dependence on informal methods of organisation helped the perpetuation of the ‘old boy’ patronage culture which hinders women's prospects. The reliance on informal methods also meant that those with the confidence and contacts associated with cultural capital were better able to shine and earn promotion. The much vaunted informality of new management cultures thereby allows privileged men to find ways of defending their position, even while the informality of hierarchy appears to fade.

Developing her arguments about the continued significance of the ‘sexual contract’ in defining the nature of managerial work, Wajcman argues that those women who do manage to succeed in this male managerial environment have to do so by doing additional ‘work’, including the extra efforts to negotiate office environments by resisting attempts to sexualise them or to define them as ‘mothers’. They also need to do their own domestic servicing, since unlike men they cannot rely on a subordinate wife. They do more housework than men (even those male managers whose partners are full-time employees do only half as many hours of household work as female managers whose partners are also full-time employees). Whereas two-thirds of male managers live with children, only one third of female managers do. Women managers are more likely to live on their own and to buy in the services of paid domestic workers. Many of these patterns are already well documented; none the less Wajcman's analysis is deft and sure.

Wajcman's book is a major statement which should be compulsory reading for anyone naive enough to think that the age of gendered hierarchies is over. The
strength of the book lies in its ability to recognise that there have been significant changes while also showing that the long-standing power of the sexual contract has not been fundamentallycalled into question. However, there are some areas where more might have been said. Wajcman’s interesting remarks about the importance of cultural capital in allowing men and women to do well in the new management cultures could have been developed. She also does not speculate on whether gender relations are somewhat different in public sector management compared to the private sector which she reports here. At times Wajcman seems more comfortable reporting her in-depth interview material rather than her survey data, which given the impressive response rate of the latter is a shame (her survey analyses do not go beyond descriptive tables and figures). None the less, this readable and engaging book will prove invaluable both for researchers as well as those teaching undergraduates.

MIKE SAVAGE

University of Manchester


Brian Towers has written a bold book. It aims to persuade as well as to inform, and to do so through the vehicle of a grand comparison of industrial relations in the United States and the U.K. It is a bold attempt since Towers risks offending the collected academe on both sides of the Atlantic, and it merits congratulations on these grounds alone. Too often British pragmatism and short-sightedness has denied texts authored on this side of the water the perspective and readiness to generalise that emerges so much more naturally in global capitalism’s twentieth century epicentre.

Towers, without entirely neglecting British detail and traditional caution, has drawn a big picture and made a substantial and forthright argument. His analysis is that workers in both countries are experiencing similar ‘downward pressure on workers’ living standards, employment conditions, and traditional rights’ (1). At the same time they are increasingly being deprived of the representation at work that – all things being equal – they would wish to have. This is the ‘representation gap’ of the title and, Towers argues, it is one that should be filled by public policy measures. This conclusion is based largely on an argument with which I fully concur, namely that society is a better place where there is a degree of economic democracy, but it is also supported by a secondary argument which I find doubtful, that on the whole trade union representation is associated with ‘economic efficiency’ (254).

Any international comparison is fraught with difficulty, but the renewed interest in the issues of globalisation and convergence (and more mercenarily, perhaps, the reduction in the costs of air travel) has made ‘bilateral industrial relations studies . . . common’. None the less, Towers acknowledges the ‘extreme rarity’ (4) of comparative studies of the employment institutions and regulations of two countries which employ such hugely different numbers of people – currently 125 million in the U.S. compared to 26 million in the U.K. – and whose only obvious similarity is their language. Taking up this challenge certainly shows courage. Towers does so, he argues, because of the host of ‘similarities’ (seven are listed in detail) in the employment contexts and political chronologies of the two countries in recent years. But this is an unnecessary rationalisation. The comparison can surely be justified more simply in terms of the intrinsic interest of an analysis of
the responses of two major Western capitalist economies to changes in the world political economy by an experienced observer like Towers. The issue then is whether the result of the comparison succeeds in opening up newer or more interesting ways of considering these responses than if each country had been considered separately. Now as the organiser of an upcoming Keele conference on Radical Trade Unionism in North America, Ireland and Britain I have at this stage to admit a vested interest in considering U.S.–U.K. comparisons illuminating, but on balance Towers’ study succeeds in any case. By contrasting the industrial relations experiences of the U.S. and U.K. over the last century Towers avoids structural determinism and highlights the key roles of politics, public policy and the law in shaping outcomes. In particular Chapter 6, ‘Change and Reform in the British Workplace’, provides an absolutely superb analysis of postwar British industrial relations in just thirty pages.

Towers is weaker when it comes to the equivalent U.S. experience, where the traditional historiography he relies on still exaggerates the shop-floor ‘strength’ of the post-Wagner Act unionisation process. Its institutional bias means he does not fully grasp the implications of the anti-radical legalistic process by which post-Second World War ‘unionised’ industrial relations was consolidated. Later, he rightly criticises the 1980s Kochan ‘transformation’ thesis, joining Dunlop in arguing that non-union industrial relations was always the dominant U.S. model. But part of the difficulty American unions have always faced in mobilising politically was not just that they were a minority, but that they were often an outside, manipulating clique. Towers does not account for the illegitimate child of American business unionism controlling large parts of America’s biggest trade union, the Teamsters, and hundreds of other union locals for over forty years. As significant an omission is a deeper treatment of American management. It takes two to do the industrial relations tango, and although Towers contrasts the unitarism of many American employers with the more laid-back pluralism of their British counterparts, this key difference is nowhere fully explored.

The sanitising of both ‘the U.S. unions’ (which appear stronger and cleaner in the 1940s and 1950s than they actually ever were), and ‘the U.S. employers’ (who don’t appear as deeply and intelligently anti-union as they were and are) helps Towers argue the similarity of the U.S. and U.K. experiences. Of course there are strong parallels in union decline and loss of representation, and Towers’ comparison does make an excellent job of bringing together the evidence. But although the global hegemony of U.S. managerial culture today augurs ill for industrial democracy, it remains important to insist the U.K. trade union experience is still significantly different from that of the U.S., and in several ways more ‘European’ than ‘American’.

STEVE JEFFERYS  
Centre for Industrial Relations, Keele University


This is a thoroughly researched and competently written book. It benefits significantly from the complementary talents and qualities of a trio of highly qualified and experienced researchers. Those of us who have attended previous Institute of Small Business Affairs (ISBA) conferences were allowed tantalising glimpses of what promised to become the most authoritative statement on the topic of quality in smaller firms. The book’s publication in Routledge’s prestigious Research
Monograph Series fulfills this promise and, in the process, adds a significant and conclusive verdict on the effect that quality issues can have upon the survival and growth of firms operating in the small business sector of the British economy.

In this volume the authors combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to research a difficult but very pertinent topic. To date, the vast majority of studies on quality have invariably focused upon larger organisations. Quality issues in smaller firms were either ignored or expressly excluded from such research. Considering the numerical dominance of small firms in the British economy such neglect is increasingly difficult to justify. With this volume the authors manage, through a carefully structured approach, to redress the balance and highlight the importance of quality-related strategies to the survival and growth of smaller firms.

The reader is introduced to quality management in smaller firms in the comprehensive first chapter, which is aimed at a wide and varied readership. It outlines the possible costs, benefits and problems related to quality management in this type of business. It concludes that the path to higher quality products/services in the small business sector is a difficult one to follow, mainly due to owner/managers’ lack of pertinent skills and/or experience. As a result, it appears that small business owner/managers have been less enthusiastic about formal quality standards than their counterparts in larger organisations. The second chapter sets out to explore, define and conceptualise the notion of quality. It introduces a number of alternative approaches – both formal and informal – to quality implementation in smaller firms. Chapter 3 details the research sample and methodology upon which this impressive volume is based.

The quantitative aspect of the book is outlined in Chapter 4. It summarises the results of a telephone survey of 150 small business owners each employing between one and 50 individuals. Interestingly, given the enormous media attention, the vast majority of respondents were aware of industry-wide quality standards. The implementation/registration incidence among respondents showed a positive relationship between firm size and the use of formal quality strategies. In this sample, only 2.2 per cent of firms employing fewer than five individuals have implemented quality strategies as compared to 30 per cent of small firms with a payroll in excess of 20 employees. It appears that motivational factors and owners’ perception of needs and paybacks relating to quality strategies were more important than cost considerations alone. Similarly, customer pressures exerted an influence on the owners’ willingness to adopt quality-related strategies.

Chapter 5 deals with the implementation methods adopted by owner-managers in relation to their quality strategies. In this chapter the authors introduce qualitative data obtained from ten in-depth case studies, to enrich and complement their quantitative results. Just under 90 per cent of all owner-managers interviewed were found to operate informal methods of quality control. By approaching this function with an open mind, owners of small firms set out to deal rationally with the requirements of formalised quality standards. In this way they achieved a cost-effective, customised solution aimed at firm-specific quality needs. Typically, two types of responses were encountered: proactive and reactive. Proactive quality practices were designed to affect the quality of goods or services before and/or during production. In contrast, reactive quality practices assessed the quality of goods or services after production. Although small business owner-managers usually employed both types of practice, their emphasis on one or the other varied across economic sectors. Only a minority of owner/managers used complex informal methods of quality control. These were mainly bureaucratic strategies instituted and controlled by owners without external supervision or validation.

In Chapter 6 the authors review the type and extent of formal methods of quality control in small firms. In this sample, fewer than 5 per cent of all firms
operated formal, second or third party controlled quality strategies. However, a further 9 per cent of firms were in the process of implementing such methods. The evidence presented in this chapter shows that the use of second party controlled methods was very limited. Quality controls implemented by large or main suppliers/customers ranked very low with owner-managers. The overriding trend in formal quality strategies in small firms appears to favour third party control, which offers both uniformity and consistency in related methods and procedures. Although respondents reported several types of third party controlled schemes, the most popular was BS5750/ISO9000 (including sector-specific variations). Not surprisingly, formal quality control methods proved to be considerably more expensive than their informal equivalent. It should be noted, however, that the success of second or third party controlled quality strategies in small firms is not easy to measure. Consequently, owner-managers might find it difficult to justify their investment in terms of cost and effort in relation to measurable outcomes.

The concluding part (Chapter 7) draws together the main findings of this extensive volume. Like most of the previous chapters it could be read individually or in conjunction with other sections of the book. Overall, it is difficult to do justice to this excellent book within the limitations of a short review. For those readers who are involved in quality control issues it would make compulsory reading. Similarly, for those interested in small businesses this book offers an insight into how to research, disseminate and present a wealth of pertinent data without becoming unduly tedious or boring. I only wish that most of the other books published in this growing field of expertise were as informative and captivating as this volume.

HARRY MATLAY

University of Central England, Birmingham


My first, and only previous, encounter with Rolf Lynton’s work was reading his and Jerry Scott’s Three Studies in Management (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1951) in the late 1950s. At that time it was one of a relatively limited number of books which provided research-based, though not in any sense fully ‘sociological’, accounts of the organisation and management of British industry. The ‘three studies’ made by these two members of the Field Research Unit of the recently formed British Institute of Management included a study of colliery management in the recently formed National Coal Board; this forms the core of the second chapter of the present work. The NCB hierarchy refused to allow publication of the parts of their report which showed how colliery managers’ problems were exacerbated by the interventions of superior managers and specialists from various levels in the complex hierarchy created to run the nationalised industry, and the chapter reproduces some of Scott and Lynton’s previously unpublished conclusions.

Lynton had come to Britain from Berlin before the Second World War as a refugee, and after leaving school worked in a wartime factory while studying part-time for a degree. Routledge & Kegan Paul published his comprehensive literature-based review of payment by results, Incentives and Management in British Industry in 1949, and while with the BIM he also studied industrial conflict in London docks (discussed in Chapter 1). By the late 1950s he was working in Sri Lanka setting up and directing the Aloka International Training Centre for community leaders; between leaving the BIM and going there he had worked for
the European Youth Campaign in Paris and participated in the Human Relations Training Programme at Harvard. He went from the Aloka Centre to act as consultant to the Small Industries Extension Training Institute established by the Indian Government in the early 1960s; from there to the United States to complete a doctorate, and to direct the Carolina Population Center and School of Public Health of the University of North Carolina; and in the 1980s to Indonesia as consultant on a programme to decentralise the services of the Ministry of Health to that country’s various provinces. Most recently he has divided his time and work, as ‘consultant, semi-retired’, between the U.S.A. and India, in both of which countries he has homes.

This book provides a reflective account of this very rich and varied professional life. It describes how particular pieces of work – research, consultancy, training, administration – came about, includes extracts from accounts of that work written at the time, and reflects on what can be learnt from that experience and how the projects might be undertaken differently with the benefit of such hindsight. The possibility of providing a very detailed account of this sort is greatly assisted by the author’s almost life-long practice of keeping extremely full notes of his activities and interactions, something which many of us may contemplate but few, I suspect, sustain, because – as Lynton admits – it is demanding in time and effort, and can be intimidating to students, colleagues and others.

The central themes of the book are the problems and difficulties, but also the achievements, of applying social science, and there is much to learn from Lynton’s wise and insightful reflections on his own experiences. Much of his work was clearly successful and effective, even after allowance is made for the reservations he now has about it. Anyone with a practical or theoretical interest in putting social science into action would find much of value in the book, both in the attempts to extrapolate from and conceptualise particular experience, and in the more personal accounts of the problems inherent in the roles he played. He describes, for example, how his own thinking was forced to move from a focus largely on interpersonal relations to one concerned with institution building, with social systems, and with the relations between organisations or institutions and their environments. A major problem in various settings was establishing the innovative ‘sub-system’, the pioneering institution, but then ensuring that it had the appropriate linkages with the wider system it had been set up to change. ‘Change agents’ in such settings need support, and one of the most interesting sections in the book (Chapter 4) describes his relations with close colleagues.

Towards the end of his account (284–5) Lynton suggests that few social scientists are working on issues related to what he terms the ‘transcendent challenges’ of the modern world: ‘realizing human potential’, ‘bringing lasting peace’, ‘living in harmony with nature’, ‘economic “justice”’, ‘women’s empowerment’ and ‘inclusion’. He also points out (296) that most of the recent changes in society at large – the shift to smaller and planned families, the higher awareness of environmental threats, habits of self-care in matters of nutrition, exercise and maintaining one’s health, drives to enhance the position of women, disadvantaged minorities, and the handicapped – have not been due to the activities of ‘change agents’. Nor have social science professionals had much influence on ‘containing the spread of fundamentalism and ethnic strife’, the increase of violence, and ‘the ready recourse to war for managing conflicts’. Some would derive from such pessimistic judgements the impossibility of ever applying social science. This is certainly not Lynton’s view and his book can and should contribute much to better ‘actual practice’ in the future.

RICHARD K. BROWN

University of Durham

One of the remarkable features of British social science over the last two decades is just how little research has been carried out into the most serious problem of the labour market in these years – the return of mass unemployment. This collection of essays, drawn from conferences of the Regional Studies Association, is thus very much to be welcomed; it brings together a number of thoughtful, empirically based, contributions from geographers. They address a range of central questions about unemployment – in particular, the extent to which it is voluntary or constrained, the changing nature of spatial inequalities and the thorny issue of how it is to be measured.

An opening essay by Martin draws out the distinctiveness of the European pattern of unemployment compared to that of the U.S. Since the 1980s, European unemployment rates have been much higher, a much larger proportion of the unemployed are long-term unemployed, labour mobility is relatively low and regional unemployment differentials are higher and remarkable persistent across time. This raises the question of whether the greater severity of the problem in Europe is attributable to the existence of structural characteristics of the labour market that generate much higher levels of inflexibility and therefore lead to a higher ‘natural rate of unemployment’. Might it be that the institutionalised strength of trade unions contributes to lower levels of wage flexibility, while a more generous welfare system encourages a high level of voluntary unemployment? Martin concludes on a sceptical note about the relevance of such factors. He is well-supported in this by a hard-hitting contribution by Ross MacKay focussing on the British case. There is no evidence that increased wage inequalities reduce unemployment, and the fact that high unemployment areas also show higher levels of involuntary separation suggests that arguments premised on ‘choice’ have little bearing on real experience. While such criticisms are persuasive, they leave unresolved the mystery of the specificity of the ‘European’ pattern.

A closer look shows that the experience of the European countries has in fact been far from homogeneous. While regional inequalities in unemployment have increased since the 1980s in Belgium, Greece, Italy and Spain, they remained stable in Sweden, West Germany and France. Most strikingly they actually declined in the U.K. However, Green, Gregg and Wandsworth show that this decline in regional inequalities did not imply a decline in spatial inequality. Over the same period, inequalities increased sharply within regions, in particular reflecting the deteriorating position of Britain’s large cities. We are offered little in the way of a systematic discussion of the mechanisms underlying the link between unemployment risk and urban size. However, Lawless and Smith develop a very plausible argument about the stigmatic effects of living on declining urban estates in York and Sheffield, while Danson and Mooney, in their study of Glasgow, show just how tenacious can be the disadvantage of local city residents even in the context of a major programme of urban ‘regeneration’.

Several contributors raise the issue of the adequacy of existing measures of unemployment. Most tellingly, Beatty and Fothergill point out that the massive decline of coal-mining employment was accompanied by stable or even falling unemployment in the coal fields. The explanation for this paradox was not the tendency of coal miners to migrate, but rather for them to be classified out of the workforce as sick, disabled or early retired. The authors advocate the need for a new measure of ‘real unemployment’ which would capture not only overt but hidden unemployment, by adding to the count working-age non-activity, which is
higher than that prevailing in the South East. This approach is recommended for male hidden unemployment, but clearly it would be difficult to generalise to the numerically much bigger issue of female non-activity. Research on attitudes to employment has shown that there is a substantial difference in employment commitment and gender norms between non-active and unemployed women and, further, that women’s attitudes to employment differ substantially between European countries. There can be no easy way of distinguishing a ‘normal’ from a ‘deviant’ share of female non-activity.

The many interesting chapters in this book have been wrapped together under the unifying cloak of ‘social exclusion’. as Lawless points out in the conclusion, this is a very slippery concept and it has to be said that the collection does precious little to clarify it. Some (such as Perrons and Harkness et al) appear to regard the term as referring to any type of inequality. But then there is clearly a problem of conceptual redundancy. Green gets closer to the heart of the matter when she develops a range of indicators of social segregation. The distinctive character of the concept of social exclusion surely lies in the way it points to a relatively extreme situation involving the rupture of social relationships: the breakdown of the household ties and the social networks that provide a link with the wider community. The future research agenda implied by this book requires a much more thorough investigation of the relationship between the spatial concentration of disadvantage and the structure of social networks.

DUNCAN GALLIE

Professor of Sociology, University of Oxford


This book brings together in one volume Hakim’s recent work on the Samples of Anonymised Records (SARs) of the 1991 Census. Thus among other things, it provides a very useful guide to the potential of this major data source as far as the analysis of the labour market is concerned. As Hakim argues, the sheer size of the data set enables linkages to be made between a number of topics that are more usually addressed as single issues – for example, the consequences of the extension of full-time education, the growth of women’s employment and part-time employment, the increase in self-employment and homeworking, and so on. The volume includes a number of interesting annexes describing SARs data, including a major table giving a detailed breakdown of occupational sex composition at the three-digit level.

Hakim develops a number of useful criticisms of current approaches and measures within labour market analysis. For example, as she argues, the use of single number indices of occupational segregation have described a very static picture of occupational segregation, a finding which unhelpfully masks the very real changes that have taken place in the sex composition of the labour force. She argues instead that a three-fold classification of occupations should be employed: predominantly ‘male’ occupations, predominantly ‘female’ occupations, and mixed or ‘integrated’ occupations including proportional numbers of men and women. Applying this three-fold classification to the SARs demonstrates that mixed occupations tend to be more often higher-level occupations than either ‘male’ or ‘female’ occupations, as well as being on the increase. Another example of the inadequacy of existing criteria relates to the expansion of part-time work among students. This generates multiple labour market statuses, leading to the distortion of labour market statistics using conventional measures. Hakim also
provides an interesting commentary on the range of definitions of ‘part-time’ work cross-nationally. She argues that part-time workers are a ‘new and qualitatively different’ element of the labour force, for whom employment is not a central feature of their lives.

It is difficult to provide an adequate summary of what are often very detailed arguments. However, it may be stated with confidence that this book will be of considerable value to anyone who is interested in current labour market trends. Hakim is correct in her emphasis that concepts and measures designed for the analysis of a labour market dominated by male full-time employment are increasingly inadequate for the analysis of the current situation of labour market change. What is much more contentious, however, is Hakim’s explanation and interpretation of these trends and changes.

The central theme informing Hakim’s analysis of labour market trends is the increasing importance of individual choice. As is well-known, she has already argued that the concentration of women into segregated ‘female’ occupations reflects the ‘choices’ made by different types of women, rather than structural constraints deriving from masculine exclusionary practices, the presence or absence of childcare provision, differences in opportunity structures, or whatever. Hakim justifies this explanatory emphasis on choice, in the case of the U.K., by the relatively low level of statutory regulation of the labour market. Thus Britain is represented as an ‘ideal strategic case study’, in which ‘change and innovation can happen more easily’. Hakim recognises – just – that the labour market in Britain is not regulated by statute law alone. But no further attention is given to the effects of custom and practice, or the impact of institutions including types of welfare provision, pension policy, etc. – to say nothing of the impact of government policies designed to re-regulate the labour market by, for instance, removing trade union protections or developing incentives for particular types of employment. Rather, individual choice explains all. Thus, for example, we are told that: ‘Among men, the propensity to choose self-employment increases quickly so that 20% of men are self-employed from 35 onwards (215), a statement that leaves out of account the systematic ageism of ‘delayering’ and redundancy.

It is well established that the more aggregate the level of social classification, the greater the likelihood that the impact of details of considerable significance will be passed over. It is difficult to see what can be done to avoid this, but it does mean that due caution should be exercised in moving from aggregate level data to the identification of individual motivations. The identification of ‘integrated’ (or mixed) occupations, as Hakim argues, does reveal change in the structuring of the labour market by sex in a way that, at an aggregate level, single number indices do not. However, a closer inspection of many of these integrated occupations reveals extensive sex segregation within them – for example, by speciality within medicine. It is well known that the finer the level of classification of an occupation, then the more likely sex segregation is to be in evidence – but this does not mean that this fact is insignificant. To be sure, some of this ‘ground level’ segregation will be a consequence of factors such as workplace size and is not therefore theoretically significant. Of far more importance, however, are the structural constraints within an occupation that funnel women (and men) into particular niches within it. This ‘integrated’ occupations may be highly segregated.

In short, Hakim’s approach leaves out of account a plethora of institutions and practices regulating occupations and labour market practices at the ‘meso’ level and lays a disproportionate emphasis on individual ‘choice’. This argument may be illustrated by the example of Hakim’s case study of pharmacy. Throughout the book, pharmacy is represented as an occupation characterised by relatively unconstrained choice, in which the suitably qualified can choose to work full-time
or part-time, as employees or as self-employed. Thus individual choice is held to explain patterns of sex segregation within pharmacy, rather than any structural characteristic of the occupation. However, the very ‘choice’ of pharmacy as an occupation by women and ethnic minorities reflects certain of its structural features. Up until relatively recently the widespread barriers facing women in other professions – notably medicine – made them more likely to go into pharmacy. Pharmacy training is relatively short (only two years when my father qualified) and the material returns are swift, making it an attractive proposition for families with restricted resources to invest in training. The profession is largely entrepreneurial, rather than collegial, thus individual success depends less on sponsorship and the ‘old boy network’ than, say, medicine or law. Hakim notes that ‘... virtually all male pharmacists work long full-time hours whereas only half of female pharmacists do this. Given the substantial freedom of choice that exists within the profession, these patterns of work clearly reflect personal choices’ (228). In fact, the long full-time hours of male pharmacists reflect the statutory regulation of pharmacy opening hours, together with the ‘rota’ system whereby extended opening hours are worked by individual pharmacies in rotation. The long hours worked by the owners of retail pharmacies have made this occupational option even less attractive to women.

These arguments are not presented in order to make the case that pharmacists – or any other people – do not make choices, or that these choices are not reflected in aggregate patterns of labour market behaviour. Rather, I would wish to argue that our understanding of labour market change must incorporate an analysis of the institutions structuring the labour market, as well as patterns of ‘choice’, together with a recognition that these institutions extend well beyond the boundaries of statute law and are deeply woven into the very fabric of our society.

ROSEMARY CROMPTON


In both the U.S. and the U.K. jobless economic development is leading to a ‘jobs gap’ situation, where neither the quantity nor the quality of jobs is being created through economic development. Due to economic and institutional changes organisations are being granted increased licence to ‘manage’ employment, with major implications for the workings of internal and external labour markets, the demand of ‘skill’, the geography of work, the transparency of career ladders and the existence of training systems. This edited collection examines all of these issues by exploring and documenting ‘local “laboratories” of job innovation’ (2). The aim of the book is to provide the basis for a ‘job-centred economic development’ agenda. Arising from a ‘Jobs for the Future’ conference held in Washington D.C. in March 1997, it represents ‘a conversation about a set of emergent practices’ (10), which it is hoped will ‘contribute to our understanding of the larger issues related to job gaps, income inequality, welfare change, and education reform’ (12). It is of course vital that these issues be carefully considered. The types of policies introduced will determine the kind of society with which we begin the next millennium.

The book’s thirteen chapters are organised into four parts: ‘background’, ‘techniques’, ‘examples’ and ‘issues’. The choice of structure reflects the policy orientation of the book, although the richness of the empirical material should not obscure from the reader the theoretical implications of the case-studies. In
Chapter 1, Robert P. Giloth sets out a context for the collection. He considers a range of issues relating to the employment conditions of contemporary America, though a similar story can be told about conditions in other countries (for example see Crompton et al. 1996; Thompson et al. 1998). Part I provides an excellent background discussion. Harrison and Weiss (Chapter 2) explore the collapse of job security that has accompanied the demise of the internal (and transparent) career track. This frightening exposé reveals the depth of change in the organisation of work. The authors then consider what this means for training. It is argued that while mainstream U.S. training policies, such as those introduced under the 1994 School to Work Opportunities Act, may eventually come good it is also time for a change. The authors point to citizen-neighbourhood-college-employer networks as one innovative initiative that should be supported. Mueller and Schwartz (Chapter 3) consider the particular difficulties of trying to connect low-income communities with employment, exploring the strategies that are currently in place. They draw upon a growing literature that criticises traditional U.S. economic development models (Urban Development Action Grants, Community Development Block Grants etc.) but note that there remains a failure to deal with the difficulties of how to ‘measure’ job creation and attribute it to particular policies. They then move on to examine policies that target people rather than places. Ultimately they contend that studies fail to consider whether employment moves low-income residents out of poverty, arguing that there needs to be greater co-ordination across policies, with some prior agreement about the goals of initiatives. In the final chapter of the first section Dresser and Rogers return to the first chapter of the book to set out the harsh realities of the new employment (dis)order. They then focus on three ‘sectoral strategies’ (71) in Wisconsin. The authors argue for the creation of regional labour market boards, comprising representatives from the public, private and community sectors, who would co-ordinate and direct training and workforce development. These general bodies could then channel monies through ‘Sectoral Consortium Representatives’ (81).

Parts II and III focus on the techniques and tools required for job-centred economic development and review some local examples of schemes that have moved low-income community residents into employment. Bosworth (Chapter 5) argues that more consideration must be given to the demand side of the labour market. The author argues for a quantitative analysis of the regional economy, to establish which sectors and organisations are shaping its performance. Clark and Kays (Chapter 6) continue in this vein and seek to provide a framework for studying the life cycle of an employment project. Labour market profiling is argued to be a useful technique for aiding low-income people to find work. Combined these chapters should make practitioners re-think their approaches to monitoring job-creation schemes. Dawson (Chapter 7), Harrison (Chapter 8) and Nittoli and Giloth (Chapter 9) outline projects which have successfully brought back into employment those previously excluded from the labour market. Covering a range of work, the chapters reflect the diversity of unorthodox responses to changing local labour markets. Harrison teases out some general implications from project work with STRIVE, an ‘employment preparation programme’ formed in East Harlem, New York in 1984 that focuses on ‘attitudinal training and development’ (148). The author argues that it is essential to keep in contact with participants, as often most will lose their first job. Instead of viewing this negatively, however, STRIVE consider it to be an integral part of the learning experience.

Section IV explores some of the issues around the practice of job-centred economic development. Dewar (Chapter 10) reviews three examples of community initiatives in which groups have sought to involve themselves in the local
labour market. The message is clear: make ‘more effective use of residents’ (181) and ‘start inside, not outside’ (192). Clavel and Westmont (Chapter 11) present a historical geography of work in Maine and map the shift in state policy from a ‘jobs’ to a ‘good jobs’ agenda. The new coalition that formed was more inclusive than other, more traditional development institutions in the area, and successfully campaigned for better workplace conditions. Lastly, Lautsch and Osterman (Chapter 12) use the example of Project QUEST to study why training tends not to improve labour market outcomes. The authors argue that this initiative, based in San Antonio, had a reciprocal relationship with the local labour market. QUEST altered the institutional configuration of the market, which shaped the experiences of the clients of the project, which then affected the success of the initiative. This chapter attempts to link community projects into organisations and the broader economy, and in doing so reiterates some of the key points made by Harrison and Weiss in Chapter 2.

In the Conclusion Robert P. Giloth (Chapter 13) reflects on the preceding chapters. Though he notes the current U.S. policy vogue for ‘quick fixes’ and ‘overnight institutional redesign’ for the most part he is optimistic, arguing that ‘the real issue, regardless of changes in welfare and workforce laws, is how to enable people to move into good jobs and careers they can sustain over time’ (246). But a brief word of caution. Put bluntly, if a policy is not part of the solution then it must be part of the problem. No set of policies are ever neutral, either by design or in practice. Labour market reform, in whatever guise, is very much on the agenda in the U.K. now. While this collection provides some interesting, and at times inspiring stories of real success from the U.S., long-term solutions may require that macro issues be grappled with first.

References


KEVIN G. WARD  International Centre for Labour Studies, University of Manchester

Asef Bayat, Street Politics: Poor People’s Movements in Iran, New York: Colombia University Press, 1997, $47.50, paper $17.50, xxiii + 232 pp.

It is rare for a reviewer of academic books to be sent a volume that has to be read from cover to cover. Street Politics is indeed such a book, I simply could not put it down. Written by an insider who was raised in the poorer slum districts of Tehran, it gives a rare insight into the politics of the street and its formation, functioning and malfunctioning at the edges of urban economic activity and politics in Iran. Using the self-denigrating, humorous language of the poor to describe and illustrate their lives, the volume offers an illuminating intellectual insight which is explained clearly and accessibly, conveying the very feel and the many smells and sounds of life on the margins with its uneven, unpaved, narrow, streets teeming with families in search of a livelihood. Ingenuity, strength, diverse talents as well as a philosophical acceptance of the destiny allocated to them shape the solutions that the marginalised peoples, hashyieh neshinan, choose at different historical times.
This volume helps to unravel several misconceptions about the role of marginalised peoples in revolutions in general and their interaction with the revolutionary religious establishment in Iran in particular. This study demonstrates that it would be fallacious to generalise about the marginalised. It would be impossible to understand their politics without clear contextualisation of their action within the historical time and place in which it occurs. Bayat argues convincingly that these are peoples who are driven by the forces of necessity and constrained by their position, which is neither marginal nor integrated so far as the Iranian state and its politics are concerned. Though a necessary part of the process of development and needed for the survival of the cities (24) they are excluded from its advantages and have no institutional means of demanding and gaining rights. For them revolutionary action is a process of ‘quiet encroachment’ (8). Using vivid case studies of the actions taken by the dispossessed to claim housing and a space in the street in which to work, Bayat demonstrates that, though disenfranchised and marginal to the revolutionary process, the poor could organise spontaneously to take advantage of the political turmoil. What they did was to stand their ground where street vending was concerned, occupying the houses of the deserters and taking over vacant apartment buildings, many of them yet to be completed.

The choice made by the dispossessed mostaazefin in Iran was neither dictated by nor even condoned by the revolutionary religious establishment. In fact their encroachment on the apartment buildings and villas was seen as unacceptable and resisted all the way. But the Islamic Revolution had altered the forms and activities of the slum dwellers (60). In the wake of the massive post-revolutionary de-industrialisation they had lost their jobs and their meagre means of livelihoods. They formed their own local councils, dedicated to providing them with the bare necessities during and after the revolution. The revolutionary breakdown of the previous institutions was what Bayat calls the ‘moment of madness’, ‘the time of role playing, of making a difference, of being counted, of taking revenge, of seizing the moment . . .’ (61). It propelled the dispossessed to take possession of what they needed: they moved in and squatted empty buildings.

However, their actions were never condoned by the revolutionary establishment which, despite the discourse of the revolution about the dispossessed, sought to protect possessions and stop the illegal occupation of land and property by the landless. The squatters faced repeated attacks by the guards. Despite valiant resistance, often by women forming human chains to protect their new-found homes, eventually, over a six years period, most had to leave the buildings they had occupied. Nor were they allowed to live and work in peace in their shacks and makeshift dwellings in the slums. Time and again they faced destruction. During the summer of 1992, for example, an estimated 2,000 unlawful homes and businesses were bulldozed by the guards (105).

Bayat argues convincingly that though not the backbone of the revolutionary movement, the slum dwellers rapidly learned to access the discourse of revolution to place their demands before the policy makers. Using the crevices between formal and revolutionary organs they made themselves heard. (For an interesting comparison see Shirin Rai’s contribution to Women, Globalization and Fragmentation in the Developing World, edited by Afshar and Barrientos and published by Macmillan in 1998.) If the revolution was about empowering the poor, then there had to be those who would at least be willing to provide piped water or basic sanitation for the slum dwellers. To make the point the slum dwellers used both public demonstrations and ‘public nagging’. Although their resistance supports Foucault’s view that power is diffused and ‘circulates’, Bayat shows that in the long run the state is not only able to control but also it coerces, coordinates and plans to the detriment of the poor’s ‘encroachment’. But so long as the needs of the
dispossessed are ignored, of necessity they continue their long-term though somewhat disorganised and opportunistic resistance.

This book is a must for all who are interested in unemployment problems and in development studies. I found myself competing with my own students to read and use the material in this volume as a teaching and learning resource. It is a most invaluable contribution to the literature.

HALEH AFSHAR

Department of Politics, University of York


This book isn’t the first collection by contemporary feminists to address sexual harassment as something variously constructed. Nor is it the first to offer analyses of those constructions, and suggestions for feminist reconstructions, with reference to a variety of contexts: schools, campuses, workplaces, institutions and the street. Some new subjects – medical women, gay men and secretaries – provide fresh interest; on the latter, Helen Mott and Susan Condor’s essay is especially insightful. There are useful connections to research in non-sociological frameworks, such as, in psychology, Kathleen V. Cairns’ essay on how women’s silent response to sexual harassment is formed in conjunction with an uncertain sense of self. Another example is in the essay in literary history by Linda Mahood and Barbara Littlewood comparing recent media reports of campus harassment and Victorian melodrama, seeing both as genres which require victims and villains. However, nowhere in the book is the case and work of Jane Gallop mentioned, let alone its uncomfortable implications discussed; neither do any of the contributors working on educational contexts engage with Diane Purkiss’s provocative model of teaching as sexualised. The focus on culturally specific contexts opens up some new territory, but unconsciously suggests that this is inexhaustible terrain; other relevant areas might include sexual harassment as it pervades public transport, sports, prisons, the armed services, tourism and so on ad infinitum. Geographically, with one exception, the world analysed is British and North American, the exception being Barbara Bagilhole’s short piece on India (which limits itself to describing Eve-teasing as one of a depressing array of violences against women.)

Debates about sexual harassment should lead to debates about sexualities. Debbie Epstein’s essay argues for the term ‘hetero/sexist’ harassment, to denote the harassment of lesbians, gays and disabled people, who are seen as not having a heterosexuality, and examines boys’ harassment of other boys as effeminate. Interestingly, there is no discussion of pornography, which used to be perceived as a major stimulus to misogynist thought and harassment action, and a visual link between them. Alison Thomas observes that television sanctions a model of masculinity which indulgently represents ‘Men Behaving Badly’ as harmless and humorous prats, but for all its commitment to cultural complexity, the book overall relies on conventional, even conservative, locations. Beyond intellectual points of omission, I don’t want to criticise fellow feminists for what they have left undone, because that’s stupid – and ungrateful – but it does point to a major problem. Feminism’s failures used to be attributed to the incomprehensibility of academic feminists, whose seduction by ‘jargon’ betrayed their sisters beyond the ivory tower, but this book is perfectly comprehensible, indeed lucid. The problem is rather one which faces most feminists today: what to do about feminism’s lessening appeal to women? Where feminism has succeeded in changing how
people think and act, it is either erased through absorption or attacked as coercive: feminists are perceived as at best unauthorised or strident, at worst as feminazis. The contributors note and regret the failure of anti-harassment policies in practice, either because women see their risks as greater than their rewards or because heterosexism is so entrenched, but they have less to offer on the larger political question of feminism’s appeal to women. Carrie Herbert advocates education – we must talk to young women and girls about their oppression – but this old rallying cry is now I think sadly alien, at least by itself. The more open-minded and challenging essays acknowledge that feminism is between a rock and a cliff right now – and perhaps political fluctuations will settle with millenial dust. In the meantime, contributors variously invoke the template that sex is power while partly, and only implicitly, overlaying it with a new understanding that gender is powerful. This overlap is important to understanding sexual harassment, because that conventionally involves both actions and language (touching-up, innuendo, whistle, cat-calls etcetera). But it is also at this interface where feminism is vulnerable. Take another place where sex and gender meet: girl power. The Spice Girls advocate, and to little girls perfectly embody, a free form of femininity. As a response to sexual harassment they reportedly recommend a counter-challenge: to say to a harassers, get your dick out then. When I discussed this with some students, one said that the trouble is that in London a guy probably would get his dick out. None of these students wanted to identify herself as a feminist: encouraged to be like the lads and rewarded for being laddettes, young women don’t see feminism as much of a help.

On the issue of sex, gender and power the editors hedge their bets: after a lengthy overview, they divide the book into two. The first part, ‘Refusing the label, declining to protest’ documents primarily issues of naming and definition; the second, ‘sexual harassment as power’, treats sexual harassment less as a discursive minefield and more as a life-world manifestation of patriarchy. This allows them to construct the harassed as both personally defiant and collectively overpowered. Alison Thomas’s welcome essay on masculinities shows how psychology represents harassers as individually deviant and sociology represents them as culturally endorsed. But current constructions of masculinity seem newly contradictory: men are tough, swaggering, beautiful (in football kit); men are also impotent, useless, redundant. In this curious climate of too much and not enough, sexual harassment functions increasingly to reassure men of their masculinity – an activity presented as ‘just a joke’ precisely to conceal the key needs it serves. Indirectly, this book makes a valuable contribution to exposing the ironies of sexual harassment, even as it confirms the subject’s seriousness.

CLARE BRANT


The European Compendium provides details on 25 case studies from 15 countries of the European Union. The compilation of the Compendium forms one of the follow-up measures to the Joint Declaration on the Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia and Promotion of Equal Treatment at the workplace signed in Florence in October 1995 by the European Social Partners. One of its aims is to ‘help policymakers, social partners and practitioners to learn
from previous experiences and envisage future actions’ (vii). The Compendium’s many examples of good practice across a range of different contexts and organisations show the great variety of approaches which can be adopted to combat discrimination and create greater employment opportunities for immigrants and ethnic minorities. While John Wrench stresses the importance of considering each of the case studies within its own national context, this does not preclude the examples providing inspiration in similar, or even different, contexts.

The case studies were carried out by researchers in each country and compiled for this Compendium by John Wrench. Much of it is devoted to summaries of each of the case studies, organised into sections on private sector companies, public sector and service provision, trade union organisations and agreements, codes of conduct and national initiatives. Each of the case study descriptions gives interesting and potentially useful information on the background to the policy, the actual policy and a discussion of the main findings. The case studies cover a range of policy areas including recruitment and selection; work allocation and promotion; training and development; dismissal and redundancy; dealing with discrimination; and respect for cultural and religious difference. The examples also cover documented formal policies as well as informal or ad hoc measures; indeed in some cases ‘good practice co-exists with bad practice within the same organisation’ (95). It is this variety which makes the Compendium an informative academic study and a useful resource for policy makers.

The context for the study is carefully established by John Wrench in the first chapter. This indicates the problems the Compendium poses for creating a genuinely comparative study, one which lapses into neither ‘cultural relativism’ nor ‘cultural imperialism’ (14–16). Wrench suggests that the case studies can best be used to establish two types of generalisation about the success of measures to combat racism, unconditional and conditional. The former, it is suggested, can hold across all types of context, while the latter measures are effective in combating discrimination only within particular national contexts. Thus it is hoped that the Compendium avoids cultural imperialism and insensitivity to national differences. However, the conclusion could be accused of not explicitly drawing on this idea of two levels of generalisation. Other issues raised in the discussion of the context for the studies indicate the different levels of ethnic monitoring or record-keeping, the varying legal status of immigrant or ethnic minority groups and different legal measures against discrimination that exist in member states.

In his conclusion Wrench stresses that due to the different national contexts involved many of the measures have been taken for reasons other than creating greater equality of opportunity. This is perhaps a timely finding in the light of the increasing levels of criticism and frustration at the apparent inability of many equal opportunities policies to achieve any great change. Indeed, the case studies illustrate how often real change is achieved at organisational or local level through the dedication of concerned individuals rather than national campaigns.

The case studies also illustrate how a variety of approaches is necessary in different national contexts. For instance, although approaches which aim to change attitudes have become unfashionable and are frequently viewed as ineffective in countries with more established immigrant populations, they may be very valuable in other contexts. Particularly important is training to provide cultural information and increase cultural sensitivity in areas of service provision, which may be a major barrier for newer immigrant groups in some countries. Many of the case studies recognise the need to go beyond creating an even playing field by introducing forms of positive action. This does remain, in most contexts, a controversial approach to creating greater equality. It is only in the minority of case studies that a wide range of measures to combat discrimination are adopted, thus highlighting
the value of the Compendium in providing documentation on approaches that can be used in combination rather than in isolation.

Two of the other conclusions that can be drawn from the case studies are also worthy of note here. Firstly, many of the case studies recognise the business advantages that the policies can have, for instance in terms of attracting ethnic minority clients, improving an organisation’s market image, valuing the diversity of existing employees or assisting human resource management strategies by providing detailed monitoring data. Another very significant finding is that of a North-South difference between member states. Southern European states often face greater problems in relation to undocumented immigrants and the greater vulnerability of immigrant groups in employment. Perhaps it is justified, therefore, that in these states activities seem to focus on tackling inequality outside of organisations, whereas the Northern European approaches tend to tackle issues within the organisation.

Overall the Compendium should achieve its aim of generating a broader exchange of experiences among member states of the European Union and help to facilitate new initiatives to combat racism and xenophobia. Policy makers should be able to use the Compendium to help promote greater equality of treatment within the workplace. Alongside these very practical issues the Compendium clearly illustrates the complications involved in comparative research within the European Union and offers a useful methodological approach to help overcome these difficulties.

PAUL TAYLOR


This book discusses the relationship between office ladies and salaried men as a crucial constituent of the organisation in Japan. In Japan the expression ‘office ladies’ (OLs) denotes female office workers engaged in simple, routine, clerical jobs. (Conversely, ‘salaried men’ is a term implying male, white-collar workers in more managerial roles.) Ironically the expression ‘OL’ was originally chosen by women themselves, as a replacement for the then popular term ‘business girls’ (BGs), in response to a readers’ poll undertaken by a weekly women’s magazine. More recently, however, the use of the term is not as popular as it once was, owing to the fact that it is now seen to convey discriminatory connotations.

As of 1995 as many as one-third of all women employed in the Japanese labour market held clerical positions, which testifies to the important place OLs occupy in the female labour market. What the author illuminates is how and why men who have all the formal authority in the employment system are still challenged by women’s informal power. She argues that the macro-level power relations are not necessarily reproduced in gender interaction at the micro-level and may even be reversed.

The author is a Japanese sociologist who undertook the research on which the book is based for her Ph.D dissertation at the University of Chicago. She had had previous experience of working with OLs, although she had never been an OL herself. Her perspectives draw heavily from theoretical perspectives on women in work developed by sociologists like Rosabeth Moss Kanter and others.

For the first part of her research, the author wanted to learn about OLs’ lives by actually doing what they do rather than just asking questions about it. She spent
six months in participant observation in a large bank in Tokyo, followed by
interviews with more than a hundred current and former clerical workers, salaried
men and their wives.

Since OLs generally start work in their early twenties and retire before they are
thirty, the author was worried that her own rather mature age and relative over-
qualification for an OL position would hamper the research. Ironically, the gener-
ally accepted sex-stereotyping of OLs led people to ignore these factors and so she
was able to obtain a position as an OL with relative ease.

In Chapter 1, women's disadvantaged position in the Japanese economy is
examined through statistical data. In Chapter 2 it looks at the reasons why women
lack solidarity and do not resist their low status, especially the company policies
that create complex lines of division among the women. Overt emphasis on early
retirement for OLs also weakens their solidarity.

Much of the book documents the strategies women use to resist male authority
and women's desperate lack of formal authority. In Chapter 3, the author deals
with the question of gossip. The gossip deployed by OLs can be a threat to men as
it can damage a man's reputation as a competent manager. OLs use it as a form of
retaliation. Many OLs understand that men and women have unequal rights in the
organisation and think that responsibilities and attitudes should reflect this dis-
crepancy. Managers/salaried men who are arrogant, those who remain indifferent
to the needs and complaints of OLs, those who do not provide generous treats and
those who demonstrate little aptitude for business, are paid back for their faults.
Thus, they are criticised in OLs' gossip, through which OLs can review and
comment on male behaviour.

Because these women do not compete with men for promotion, there are few
sanctions the organisation can bring to bear against them. For example, on
Valentine's Day, it is customary that OLs jointly buy chocolate to give to all the
men in their departments. Also, men are sometimes given 'farewell' flowers from
OLs in their former department once they arrive at their new one. As women give
gifts primarily to men they like, both men and women gauge a man's popularity
among women by the number of chocolates and bouquets he receives. A man
without a present tends to find it difficult to reproach OLs for their decision not to
give a gift, because the message is disguised and no one can identify who is
responsible for it. The author represents chocolates and farewell flowers as anonym-
ous gifts given for ambiguous reasons. Moreover, the gifts are highly symbolic;
their primary significance being in the act of receiving them rather than the gift
itself.

In Chapter 5, instances of more overt resistance by OLs are presented. OLs can
refuse to take the initiative to help a man, they can decline to do him favours, they
can refuse to work for him, they can inform the personnel department of his
disagreeable behaviour, and they can shut him out of news of what is going on.
The reason why OLs are able to express such strong attitudes openly is because
they take advantage of the discrimination against themselves.

In her text the author considers the limits and implications of these acts of
resistance. Many men are concerned about how they are regarded by women and
fear that a bad reputation will make it hard to gain office ladies' cooperation. How-
ever, men are unable to take action against OLs because OLs again disguise their
defiance. Most OLs are excluded from the benefits of the internal labour market
that men enjoy. Lacking incentive to care about their performance or the im-
pression they leave on their bosses, they remain largely indifferent to organisational
hierarchy. The author argues that what enables OLs to take subversive actions is
their accommodation of company policies that set separate career paths for men
and women.
What counter-strategies are available to men? Many men curry favour with women and lavish gifts on them, because discriminatory company policies limiting the prospect of promotion for women ironically deprive them of other effective means of controlling women. When OLs have little to lose to begin with, inducement may be one of the few remaining methods for men to influence women.

Most Japanese readers would not deny what this study describes, much of which forms taken-for-granted aspects of office life. The author’s explanation is that, lacking any formal methods to escape from the limitations of their situation, OLs take actions to resist the discriminatory system, either consciously or unconsciously. Whether these informal aspects of power relations will persist is unclear. Although the Japanese Equal Opportunity Law (EOL) is supposed to be amended and strengthened in 1999, competitive cost cutting by employers tends to lead employers to outsource clerical work and perpetuate non-standardised conditions of work, so OLs’ future will remain as disadvantageous as ever.

Researchers on gender, work and employment will find this book of interest. Students who have a concern for women’s status in Japanese employment or an interest in participant observation methods will also find it of value.

SONOKO MORITA
Shoin Junior College, Kashiba City