

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Caring and Doing for Others: Social Responsibility in the Domains of Family, Work, and Community* by Alice S. Rossi

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of negative social conditions; it instills fear, inflicts physical and economic damage, and so on. As a result of conflict and violence, Africa has 30 percent of the world's refugee population and millions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), as Mupedziswa documents so well.

One theme that runs through many of the contributions is the impact of colonialism on traditional African societies with the transitions from extended family obligations to rationalization of modern urban institutions, from imposition of colonial languages to reassertion of indigenous vernaculars, from rural poverty to urban anomie, from traditional patriarchy to struggles for gender equity, from ethnic particularism to nation-building, and so on. I highly recommend this book to graduate students, academics, policymakers, and practitioners.

INTIMATE
RELATIONSHIPS,
FAMILY, AND LIFE
COURSE

Caring and Doing for Others: Social Responsibility in the Domains of Family, Work, and Community, edited by **Alice S. Rossi**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 559 pp. \$42.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-226-72872-2.

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This important book should help to quell alarmist voices who claim a retreat from civic and familial obligations among Americans. More important, taken together, the chapters offer an admirably clear and detailed empirical portrait of how ties of social responsibility are embedded in and balanced among domains of family, work, and community. Indeed, it could as easily be reviewed under the heading of "community," since a major goal of editor Rossi and the other contributors is to complement more privatized or theoretical conceptions of care in current

research. Typically, these have dealt with family accommodations to paid care, occupational groups such as nurses and teachers, and ethical, often feminist premises for building a more caring society. To this growing body of care research, Rossi and colleagues add an explicitly structural analysis of how the assumption of social responsibility is shaped by intergenerational family socialization, education, life-course timetables, and the context of the workplace.

A major strength of the book is its ability to sharpen our understanding, both of the particular trade-offs Americans are compelled to make between these domains, and of the trade-offs' collective negative impact on our capacity to sustain a wider web of community and political organizations. For this reader, a leitmotif in many chapters is the dilemma of the contemporary family: facing new pressures in a contingent or global labor market, even as the erosion of community (i.e., place-based) institutions and welfare benefits increases families' vulnerability to these pressures. Though the study was conducted prior to the Clinton-era cutbacks in welfare provision and makes scant reference to social policy, *Caring and Doing for Others* speaks to this and other current policy debates.

Although the authors share a commitment to multidisciplinary research, the book reflects a strong psychological and developmental emphasis: 11 of the 20 authors have training in psychology, 4 in sociology, and 1 in anthropology (the others have backgrounds in economics and public health).

Caring and Doing is one product of a larger research network and initiative, funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The survey of more than 3000 adults between the ages of 25 and 74 focuses on successful midlife development in the United States. In addition to a nationally representative sample, the 1995 study also draws on semistructured qualitative interviews with subsamples in order to explore regional, ethnic, and age differences. Despite their topical emphases, all of the chapters are based on these data and address the same overarching questions.

The authors ask: What kinds of investments do people make—of time, money, direct care, and emotional concern—in the major domains of their lives? They are inclusive and inductive in how they define and

relate caring domains. For example, they reject a narrow (nuclear) conception of family and find that, despite higher divorce and lower marriage rates than in the past, intergenerational and extended kin contacts are frequent, close, and reciprocal (save for financial support, which mostly flows from older to younger members). Electronic communication and flexible work arrangements allow middle class families to maintain dense ties, despite geographic distance and intense work demands.

Similarly, rather than seeing family and community concerns in zero-sum terms, the authors discover that, for many, family care is central to community care; this is especially true (as Katherine Newman shows in Ch. 5) in the least advantaged inner city communities, in which "private acts—caring for the elderly, raising children, monitoring public behavior on the streets around their homes, visiting with a child's teacher—take on a larger resonance as examples of commitment to the community" (p. 162). Such findings are timely and hopeful correctives to persistent attributions of blame leveled at women workers—especially poor ones of color—for problems of "urban youth." But since the advent in 1996 of work mandates for poor mothers, some conclude that informal caring networks are being frayed, without the compensating presence of wages or benefits adequate for parents to purchase basic goods and services. Inasmuch as other contributors (Hughes, Ch. 6) find a threshold effect, in which perceptions of immediate danger depress community obligations and contributions, one has a right to be deeply distressed about the prospects for America's poorest neighborhoods. This is but one example of how the arguments in *Caring and Doing for Others* speak to broader historical and policy debates.

Among the most impressive and provocative sections (Ch. 7) in the book is Rossi's nearly 100-page inquiry into "Developmental Roots of Adult Social Responsibility." Though acknowledging the difficulty of tracing the sources and trajectories of parental influence using retrospective data, Rossi crafts a clear and persuasive analysis of how family size, parental discipline and affection, education, religiosity, and job characteristics influence generativity among adults, that is, our capacity to move beyond our immediate circle and

sustain supportive roles in larger communities. Rossi finds powerful patterns of family inheritance: parental generativity, along with religiosity, emerge as among the strongest predictors; indeed, religiosity is both a strong and enduring spur to community involvement while most others peak in midlife and then decline. For Rossi, these findings are most surprising and lead her to poignant reflection (pp. 305–13) on the exclusion and implications of religiosity in her sociological tradition.

One disappointment in the book is that the authors did not more fully exploit the life-course perspective in drawing the strands of the argument together. Specifically, while many chapters document age differences, there is little if any attention to age cohorts, either as bases for subjective identification, or as reflections and engines of social change. Several findings suggest the usefulness of this perspective (associated most closely with Matilda W. Riley). Two of these stand out: First, in discussing the effects of work stress on family life, Rossi reports (p. 456) that it is young, well educated, affluent men who have the most strongly negative impact scores! How are we to fathom such anxiety among these, most privileged, workers? Are they are under pressure from spouses insisting on equitable marriage? Or perhaps, as suggested by correspondingly low scores on job commitment, we see a rejection of the intensification of work and consumption among a new generation entering work careers. Older workers and retirees, with fewer resources, express greater levels of job commitment and well-being, reflecting, it would seem, distinctively different expectations regarding work and family. A second issue ripe for cohort analysis is the tendency for obligations and acts of social responsibility to decline in late life. The same Matilda Riley has for years written of "structural lag," that is, the failure of our social roles and institutions to accommodate the fast growing ranks of healthy, able adults who too often face idleness in their postwork years. Granting that authors may not have been able to incorporate such questions in the survey, failing to comment on these intriguing cohort differences invites reification of age differences, or worse, support for wrong-headed views of generational equity or conflict as a source of discontent.

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Besides, Rossi's remarkable achievement in this book gives the lie to any notion that generativity should or must diminish later in life. In addition to editing the book skillfully, she wrote more than half the text, including an introductory chapter that provides a masterful overview not only of *Caring and Doing for Others*, but also of what is known and should be asked about civil society and social responsibility in the contemporary United States. In a memoir (1990: 302), Rossi noted a "hard-earned insight . . . how much work there is in loving, and how much love there is in working." In this book, Rossi and colleagues shed light on the first part of this couplet—by showing the importance of intimate relations for the sustenance of community. I await their study of how we might foster more love in the workplace.

Reference

- Rossi, Alice S. 1990. "Seasons of a Woman's Life." Pp. 301–32 in *Authors of Their Own Lives*, edited by Bennett M. Berger. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Men as Caregivers: Theory, Research, and Service Implications, edited by **Betty J. Kramer** and **Edward H. Thompson, Jr.** New York: Springer Publishing, 2002. 394 pp. \$56.95 cloth. ISBN: 0-8261-1472-5.

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Traditionally, men and women have occupied different roles as caregivers. Men's contributions to caregiving have generally been considered only in financial terms, whereas women's contributions have included the provision of hands-on daily assistance and socio-emotional support in times of illness or stress. Although caregiving encompasses a wide arena of activities and qualities, it is nearly always defined as a feminine role. Often overlooked in the literature and research on caregiving are the varied roles that men fulfill beyond the financial one. This edited collection of works on men as caregivers brings to light the experiences and struggles of men who care for the ill, whether wives, parents, children, or gay partners.

This volume is divided into four parts: an introduction to the topic of men as care-

givers; a section on theoretical and methodological issues in studying caregiving men; a collection of empirical research articles on men in caregiving roles; and suggestions for services and interventions for caregiving men and their families. Collectively, these segments address the varied roles, experiences, and physical, emotional, socio-cultural, and mental health consequences of caregiving for men, as well as provide recommendations for how best to address and meet the needs of men in the caregiver role.

Kramer and Thompson write that the goals of the book are to dispute the myths about men as caregivers, explore the experiences of men as caregivers, and raise new questions for future study. This is accomplished by integrating research that addresses men as caregivers in a variety of roles. Rather than focusing primarily on one family role, male caregivers are considered in several roles, including husbands caring for wives, fathers caring for adult children, sons caring for elderly parents, and gay men caring for partners with AIDS. The volume also draws attention to the different ways in which men care for loved ones, including assistance with activities of daily living, seeking out information on illness and medical treatments or resources, and decision-making. In addition to examining how and why men take on the role of caregiver, the last section of the book, "Services and Interventions," considers why resources for caregivers have traditionally been underutilized by men. Religious and spiritual, therapeutic, and support group services are all discussed as services commonly used by female caregivers with suggestions on how service providers may make these and other services more attractive and applicable to male caregivers.

A common theme present throughout the chapters is that of gender socialization and its influence on caregiving. Assumptions about gender and care not only color men's feelings about taking on and performing a caregiving role, but they color the way researchers and others think about men in caregiving roles. The fact that much of the experience of caregiving men has been neglected by researchers contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes, gendered assumptions, and perhaps, reluctance by some men to fulfill the caregiving role for family or friends.