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Book Notes

Rossi, Alice S. (Ed.), *Caring and Doing for Others: Social Responsibility in the Domains of Family, Work, and the Community*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001. \$42.00 hardcover.

Sociological analysis has long focused on those institutions that create and enhance social participation and solidarity. This was the central theme in Emile Durkheim's pioneering work and it has been restated many times, particularly in the United States where the importance of community groups has been recognized ever since Alexis de Tocqueville praised the country's pervasive and effective networks of associations. In addition to praising America's commitment to civic life, sociologists have also lamented the decline of civic engagement. The latest example of an alarm call, sounding the decline of civic participation in the United States, is Robert Putnam's work. His writings have captured the public imagination and facilitated an intense discussion among public intellectuals. The role of community associations as bridging the family and the state in all domains of life continues to be a critical issue in current discourse today.

In this engaging book, Rossi stresses the importance of community associations but argues that formal organizational memberships and contributions to these organizations are not the only measures of civic participation. When other measures are considered, widespread evidence of civic involvement is uncovered challenging the widely accepted view that there has been a serious erosion of civic participation in the United States. The author presents a more comprehensive treatment of civic participation by linking it to social responsibility in general. She argues that social responsibility is a multifaceted concept that is more inclusive than membership of formal associations or volunteerism related to formal organizations. It includes normative obligations and provisions of social support, care giving and financial assistance to family members and community organizations as well.

Using survey research and ethnographic interviews, the author shows that the subjective notions of social responsibility in the domains of work, family and community are interrelated and that patterns exist related to demographic characteristics.

Differences in altruistic behavior are found on the bases of education, sex and age. Individuals who are more socially embedded volunteer more than their less embedded counterparts. Individuals with different demographic characteristics also engage in different types of volunteer activities, at different times.

Much of the data used in this study comes from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS). The research methods are sound and fully discussed in the appendix. The editor's introduction is useful because it places the research into historical context by providing a substantial overview of social trends over the last century and how they relate to current ideas about civic participation. This sets the stage for a thought provoking, holistic account of civic participation which will not only inform but challenge widely held views about the alleged decline of people's involvement in social life. Its conceptualization of what civic participation involves and its thorough analysis of empirical data make an important contribution to the literature.

Neil Gilbert, *Transformation of the Welfare State*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. \$29.95 hardcover.

Over the last twenty years, comparative social policy scholarship has become very interested in the question of whether the welfare state has been retrenched, dismantled or reconstructed and if so, to what extent and with what consequences. This debate has generated a number of very different answers which range from an optimistic assessment that the policy changes introduced since the Reagan years have not made much difference, to a pessimistic assessment that the 'Golden Era' of the welfare state is over. Neil Gilbert's new book takes up this question and offers a definitive answer. Reviewing a mind boggling amount of information, he concludes that the welfare state has indeed been transformed. The era of institutional welfare based on notions of social rights and entitlements and is over and has been replaced by what he calls an enabling state which seeks to integrate the poor and needy into the market economy and to provide social services through market mechanisms. In an era of triumphant market capitalism, social policy has been reshaped to conform and compliment the logic and ethic of the market.