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Paths to Success: Beating the Odds in American Society. Charles C. Harrington and Susan K. Boardman

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welfare behavior and in understanding the role of motivating factors such as altruism and moral commitment in social welfare. It reveals the simplistic nature of rational choice and exposes its weaknesses. The second part of the book contains case studies which substantiate the arguments in Part I. These studies show that individual responses to risk do not comply with the rational choice model and that its account of how people use the welfare system to cope with risk does not adequately explain their actions.

The important book challenges the underlying assumptions of rational choice theory. The continued trend towards privatization will not solve the problems of risk and trust which are so central to social life today. In addition, it will further weaken the citizenship obligations on which social welfare has historically been based.

Charles C. Harrington and Susan K. Boardman, *Paths to Success: Beating the Odds in American Society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. \$19.95 papercover.

Social scientists have studied social stratification in the United States for decades and a huge literature on the subject is now available. Much of this research has examined overall mobility trends and the impediments to moving up the occupational ladder. However, much of it has been optimistic in tone, suggesting that American society affords many opportunities for people to achieve success.

Criticizing this research for its limited focus, Harrington and Boardman approach the issue of mobility from a different perspective. They pay attention to those individuals who come from very disadvantaged backgrounds but who, nevertheless, have been successful in their careers. Described as 'pathmakers' by the authors, they include people from poor families who did not complete high school but who were rated by an expert panel as having achieved high levels of occupational success. Life history interviews were undertaken with 60 pathmakers and a control group of 40 respondents who came from educated and higher income families. The interviews studied schooling, employment history, family and community factors, health and the psychological characteristics of the respondents. Racial and gender factors were also considered.

The authors conclude that psychological factors play a very important role in overcoming disadvantage. The pathmakers had a strong achievement orientation and an internal locus of control. However, sociological factors such as social support networks and significant role models were also important. The study found that religious activity was a relevant factor in accounting for success as was the influence of school teachers and the support of family members.

This interesting study is exploratory in nature but it sheds important light on why some people from disadvantaged families and communities succeed while others do not. By examining the way the pathmakers, as positive outliers, faced their challenges, the authors have provided valuable information about the role of psychological and sociological factors in social mobility in American society.

Bruce A. Jacobs, *Robbing Drug Dealers: Violence Beyond the Law*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000. \$19.95 paperback.

Fifteen years after the latest War on Drugs, the United States is still reeling with ambivalence about who the good guys and the bad guys are. In the wake of the nation's massive drug policy, concern is still placed on both identifying victims (law abiding citizens) and on the evil perpetrators of drug use and crime (dealers, drugs themselves and criminals). The division between victim and perpetrator is professed to be a clean one easily seen by the public at large and by law enforcement. But what happens when these two roles blend? This is the makings of a moral calamity which is the basis of Jacobs' well-written and thought-provoking book.

Through in-depth interviews with 29 drug robbers in St. Louis, Missouri, who are themselves drug dealers, Jacobs takes us into a world that is little seen by civilians—a world in which victims are not protected by due process but are held to the norms of their criminal environments. By sequencing the process of drug robbery into the four conceptual areas: motivation, target selection, enactment, and managing retaliation, Jacobs reveals the intricacies of each step during which there is constant assessment of benefits (large sums of money) and risks (injury or death) by the drug robber. Despite the sometimes meticulous planning of these