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Sherri Broder. Reviewed by Leslie Leighninger.**

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research in the field and in showing that what is believed to be contemporaneous can actually be traced back to a much earlier time.

M. K. Lee

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Sherri Broder, *Tramps, Unfit Mothers and Neglected Children: Negotiating the Family in Late Nineteenth Century Philadelphia*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. \$39.95 hardcover.

Sherri Broder's detailed analysis of the relationships between working class families and social reformers in late nineteenth century Philadelphia adds to a growing body of case studies that examine the interactions between poor people and social reformers, social workers, and other professional 'helpers'. Most of these studies draw on social agency case records. Close scrutiny of these records offers vivid pictures of the daily lives of the poor, the attitudes and goals of social workers and reformers responding to problems of poverty, and the strategies used by those receiving assistance in order to move beyond the role of passive recipient and to shape that assistance to meet their particular needs. Broder's book also fits within the larger context of scholarship exploring relationships between gender, poverty, and social policy.

While previous studies have focused largely on poor women, Broder broadens the scope to the entire family. She examines the views of different groups, including the poor themselves, regarding 'appropriate family life' and the causes of poverty in impoverished working class communities in Philadelphia. Her aim is to give an overview of the "wide range of gender and family issues debated in the late Victorian era" and to show that these debates included families themselves, as well as charity, child welfare, and labor reformers. Broder explores the multifaceted definitions of the good mother and the inadequate one, the unemployed father and the tramp, and the dutiful and exploited child. Using the case records of the Pennsylvania Society to Protect Children from Cruelty (SPCC), she describes the range of attitudes toward illegitimate mothers; prostitutes; men who left their families 'to

tramp'; the reliance on children's begging and street work, such as shining shoes and sweeping sidewalks, to add to the family income; and working women's use of baby farms. Her goal is to present the competing narratives of working class life presented by social reformers, labor activists, and the poor themselves.

Broder notes that upper and middle class reformers focused on the 'unnatural' family life of the poor as the major source of urban social problems, while labor activists blamed such problems on structural flaws in American society. These flaws included the transformed relationship between labor and capital in the late nineteenth century and the subsequent exploitation of working men and women through low wages and long working hours. Laboring people themselves had complex perceptions of what constituted adequacy and respectability in family relations, as well as the effect of these relationships on poverty. Poor people did not reject middle and upper class notions of respectability, but adapted these to their own situations. Where social reformers felt that working outside the home demeaned women, and that men who left their families were unproductive 'tramps', people in poor communities understood that work outside the home might be the only alternative for a woman with a sick or low-waged husband, and that so-called tramps might be unemployed men who had left family and community in search of work. At the same time, the poor monitored the boundaries of illicit behavior, such as physical neglect or cruelty to children. In these situations, neighbors would often call on the SPCC to intervene.

Broder's book is an important attempt to describe the interaction of various points of view—those of social reformers, social workers, labor activists, and the poor—in shaping ideas about family, work, and gender in America's Gilded Age. Her focus on families, rather than just on the roles and problems of poor women, puts discussions of poverty, its causes, and its effects into a broader, more useful context. However, although she speaks of a multi-level debate between social reformers, labor activists, and poor families, Broder does not spend much time on the contribution of labor leaders to the discussion. The study focuses largely on the competing discourses of social reformers, social workers, and the poor. The dense and detailed style of Broder's writing can also be a disadvantage. While one can empathize with the urge

to include all the meaty descriptions from the SPCC records, the amount of detail sometimes obscures the book's major themes. The detour to the topics of infanticide and abandonment in the chapter on baby farming does not seem to serve a purpose, for example, other than the chance to share more material from the records. The relationship of infanticide and child abandonment to baby farming is not clearly explained. On the whole, however, this is a useful addition to our understanding both of the nature and effects of poverty, particularly through the eyes of the poor, as well as a fascinating discussion of expectations regarding gender roles and family relations in the late nineteenth century.

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David R. Roediger, *Colored White: Transcending the Racial Past*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002. \$29.95 hardcover.

One of the minor revolutions in multicultural or human diversity studies has been the recent development of what has been termed 'critical white studies'. The manifold agenda of this recent area of inquiry includes 'de-centering' whiteness, from its powerful location in society, and placing it squarely under the social science microscope the way we would (and have) any other ethnic and racial minority groups in the United States. In fact, the title of Roediger's book reminds us that to continue rising above the trappings of our racial past, we must begin by fully recognizing that white is a color after all (despite what is implied by the term 'people of color'), and one overly linked to power, privilege, and the racial divide in so many ways, both subtle and complex, far beyond the obvious.

Indeed, Roediger's breadth of knowledge on this topic is staggering, ranging from fascinating nuances of American history to the many strands of current pop culture including rock music, movies, hip-hop magazines and television. His writing proceeds at a dizzying pace, in several directions that readers could not possibly anticipate. Chapter 1 launches Roediger's project by debunking the many scholarly and popular writers who insist that the concept of race is increasingly antiquated