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Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth Century U.S. History. Alice O'Connor.

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issues including risk assessment, the precautionary principle, vulnerable populations, and the impact of war on the environment. Chapter thirteen, addressing risk assessment, is far too short for such a complex topic and offered only a cursory discussion of the intricacies involved in the assignment of risk and the need for public understanding of risk. Chapter fourteen discusses the precautionary principle which states that even in the face of scientific uncertainty, the threat of significant public health risks should be addressed through precautionary action to counter the threat. The chapter thoroughly addresses the complex interplay of ethics, science, values and biases in formulating responses to possible environmental hazards. The discussion of vulnerable populations in chapter fifteen focuses on occupational hazards and the vulnerability of children to toxic exposure. The book concludes with a discussion of the ethical responsibilities of the health care professions to coordinate environmental ethics into their worldview.

The chapters in *Life Support* are written by medical professionals and is focused on human health-based arguments for environmental sustainability. The concise description of the issues and the brevity of the chapters make this text particularly approachable. Health and social service professionals will appreciate the thorough discussion of important health and social justice related environmental topics. The book will also be of value to other professionals interested in a thorough overview of these important environmental health issues.

Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth Century U. S. History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002. paper cover \$22.50.

Although poverty has been a subject of intense academic and public debate in the United States for more than century, it remains an unresolved problem of sizable proportions. This reflects the low priority it has been given on the national policy agenda and the fact that the nature and causes of poverty continue to be viewed from ideological perspectives. Unfortunately, scientifically rigorous research has seldom been used to formulate policies and programs that can effectively address the problem. When anti-poverty policies have been based on research, they

have often been linked to partisan politics and have become highly contentious. Similarly, claims to scientific validity have often been rejected by academic critics who, sometimes with justification, regard particular interpretations as being ideologically motivated.

The publication of a book dedicated to describing and analyzing approximately one hundred years of poverty research in the United States is, therefore, to be welcomed. O'Connor's intention is to trace the way poverty research has evolved from a preoccupation of social reformers at the end of the 19th century to highly technical studies of the demographic characteristics of the poor in the late decades of the 20th century. She shows how poverty research has gradually become less concerned with issues of structural inequality and opportunity and more concerned with behavioral change, work placement and assessments of the effectiveness of policy efforts to 'end welfare as we know it.'

O'Connor is an historian with experience of administering poverty alleviation research and demonstration projects for major foundations. Her historical insights and understanding of the issues is reflected in her insightful analysis of more than a hundred years of evolving social science scholarship into poverty. She has a prodigious knowledge of the field and an impressive ability to summarize a huge corpus of work on the topic. The book is well organized, offering a readable, chronological overview of the subject. It is essential reading for anyone working in the field today. In addition, because poverty is so closely related to issues of social policy and to professional social work practice, it should appeal to policy makers and practitioners as well as academic researchers. The author's ability to summarize major theoretical perspectives in the field is particularly impressive and will be of value to students who will benefit from the way she manages to review and present the most salient issues in what is an exceedingly complex body of scholarly research.

Randy Martin, *Financialization of Daily Life*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002. \$59.50 hardcover, \$19.95 paperback.

A subtle but major shift in economic and cultural life occurred during the latter half of the 20th century. While industrial wage