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The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics and Impoverished People in the United States. Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky (Eds.).

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modernism and communitarianism among others. Although the two books share similarities, it seems that Drake's book is better suited for an undergraduate readership while Fitzpatrick's would be more appropriate for graduate students and others who already have an understanding of the issues.

The selection of the topics and their organization of the content in terms of chapters is somewhat arbitrary. For example, Fitzpatrick categorizes the concepts of poverty and human nature as 'key political concepts', and Drake's inclusion of a chapter on policy analysis seems out of place in a book focused primarily on conceptual principles. Nevertheless, the two books cover a large range of issues and will assist students to appreciate the importance of conceptual frameworks in the field. Fitzpatrick's book will be particularly helpful to those students who require a more nuanced analysis of the intricacies of particular concepts. For example, his discussion of globalization transcend the usual condemnatory rhetoric of the popular media and provides a detailed, multifaceted and insight account. The two books are a very helpful addition to the social policy literature. They reveal the extent to which students in Britain are being exposed to theoretical issues. They deserve to be widely used in social policy teaching the United States where theory is still not given as much emphasis as it deserves.

Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky (Eds.), *The New Poverty Studies: The Ethnography of Power, Politics and Impoverished People in the United States*. New York: New York University Press, 2001. \$55.00 hardcover, \$19.50 papercover.

Images of the poor in intellectual and popular discourse have fluctuated over the years. At times, the poor have been viewed as victims who are deserving of government aid and public sympathy. At other times, they have been regarded as undeserving actors responsible for their own condition. The former approach was more common in the 1960s, when the United States rediscovered poverty, largely through Michael Harrington's writings. On the other hand, during the 1980s, scholars portrayed the poor as a socially isolated underclass and attributed the perpetuation of poverty to individual irresponsibility and a social welfare system that promoted and maintained a 'culture of poverty'. Most

recently, the poor have been largely invisible to those in the mainstream of the new high-tech economy. The editors of this volume argue that the poor are not invisible, but rather that they are only allowed to be visible on certain terms. They attempt to expand the notion of the limited visibility of the poor by including the perspective of the poor themselves in accounts of their condition. They also highlight the actions poor people take to change their situation.

This book offers a refreshingly different approach to the academic study of poverty which has been largely concerned with statistical analysis without providing an insightful account of what it means to live in conditions of poverty. These studies also tend to present the poor as helpless subjects without recognizing their ability to engage through deliberate agency with their social environment. The New Poverty Studies presented in this book seeks to overcome this limitation of conventional poverty research by providing an ethnographic account that seeks to understand poverty from the perspective of poor people themselves. It also seeks to understand the actions taken by poor people attempt to respond as best they can to negative social forces and conditions. However, this approach does not fail to focus on the economic and structural factors that contribute to poverty. For example, the chapter on single African American mothers in Harlem, argues that the growing number of women raising children by themselves is the result of political and economic factors such as war, genocide, labor migration and unemployment. The author diverges from conventional discussions of these issues by presenting the transformative work done by poor women in order to adapt to new realities in the political economy and to affect change in their environment. Other chapters address issues such as predatory lending practices, the role of public policy in increasing the vulnerability of poor people, the experience of low wage works in a large city, volunteerism, microenterprises, political action of the poor and structural adjustment.

The book presents an innovative approach to the analysis of poverty. By showing how people seek to address and even challenge the forces responsible for their circumstances, the authors offer useful insights that will inform future research. Hopefully future studies will pay more attention to the argument that poor

should define themselves and that their agency in addressing the challenges of their daily lives should be recognized. The combination of political economic discourse and ethnography makes this book conceptually compelling and understandable to a larger audience. It should be widely read.