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## *Making Men into Fathers. Men Masculinities, and the Social Policies of Fatherhood.* Barbara Hobson (Ed.).

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## Book Notes

Hobson, B. (Ed.), *Making Men into Fathers: Men, Masculinities, and the Social Policies of Fatherhood* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. \$60.00 hardcover, \$22.00 papercover.

In the last fifty years, the idea of fatherhood in the Western World's has undergone a major transformation. This is because the number of men entering into committed marriage-relationships has declined, as marked by the rise of rates in divorce and cohabitation outside of marriage. The number of men who actually father children has also declined. Additionally, men who biologically father children are much more likely to become absentee fathers, denoting not just non-custodial fatherhood, but in many cases, a complete withdrawal from the father-child relationship. Where fathers were once a key parenting partner, mothers have become the provider, protector, and proctor. Further complicating the fatherhood picture, men often times end up fathering non-biological children when they engage with women who have children from previous relationships.

At the same time that fatherhood has undergone profound changes, welfare policy has experienced change. In most Western countries, it is the state, rather than fathers who are ultimately responsible for provision of income security when parents are unable to fulfil this responsibility. The rise of the welfare state is directly related to the decline of fatherhood. However, this newly formed state-child role is manifested differently in different countries. While much academic attention has focused on children and their mothers as the recipients of state welfare policy, fathers have received scant attention, with the exception of child support policy in the United States.

To what extent should the state be involved in the father-child relationship? How can the state positively impact this relationship? To what end should the state involve itself? These questions are discussed in this interesting book. The book treats fatherhood as a gendered institution, just as feminist theoreticians have defined motherhood. From this perspective, the book examines both the politics of masculinity and the role fathers play in

social policy. It also examines their role as targets of social policy. The various chapters discuss transnational fatherhood issues and policies centered on the obligations and rights of fathers. The book also provides a comparative analysis of state policies affecting fatherhood. It offers an interesting discussion of policies in the United States that compel work in exchange for welfare and thereby almost completely excluding consideration of parental capacity to care for children. These policies are compared to social democratic welfare approaches in Sweden and the Netherlands, where paternal-child relationships are defined as both cash-and-care focused.

This book is a 'must-read' for social policy scholars and their students and for policy makers who are focused on the issues of child welfare, family issues and anti-poverty studies. It provides important insights into social policy in Europe, North America and other Western nations. By discussing contrasting definitions and the historical formation of the role of fatherhood, the causation of abdication of the paternal role, and state response to fallout caused by this abdication, it covers a large terrain. Perhaps the only weakness is a lack of focus on other societies outside the Western World, where fatherhood takes on different meanings and faces different challenges. Nevertheless, this is an interesting and informative book which provides effective insights into men, masculinity, and paternal-child relationships in the Western societies.

Peter Moss and Pat Petrie, *From Children's Services to Children's Spaces: Public Policy, Children and Childhood*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002. \$25.95 papercover.

There has been a spate of new literature on children's rights, childhood sociology and changing childhood conditions. Writing in this genre, Moss and Petrie offer a critical analysis of the political, economic, and historic factors that have produced modern notions of childhood in many English-speaking countries. Further, they make a unique contribution by explaining just how we've arrived at the often fragmented, insufficiently staffed, yet highly regulated institutions that shape the lives of children today. In addition to the usual calls for increased intergovernmental