Ain't No Trust: How Bosses, Boyfriends, and Bureaucrats Fail Low-Income Mothers and Why It Matters. By Judith A. Levine. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013. Pp. xvi+297. $29.95 (paper).

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In *Ain't No Trust*, Judith Levine carefully documents how trust or—or, rather, distrust—plays a central role in low-income mothers' relationships with their welfare caseworkers, their bosses, their child care providers, their boyfriends, and their social networks. Levine argues that without trust, all of these relationships suffer, and so, too, do the women's economic prospects. Levine traces this lack of trust back to broader changes in the economy, arguing that many of the structural changes of the last 30 years have led to this widespread mistrust held by low-income women.

One of the impressive strengths of this book is in the data—its design, collection, and analysis. Levine first started the project as a graduate student, interviewing 26 women on welfare (or recently off of it) in the pre–welfare reform era. A decade later, she completed the project (and conducted the majority of the interviews analyzed and discussed in the book) with an additional 69 women interviewed in the postwelfare reform era. The interviewees were primarily recruited through two different job-training programs. This fact allows Levine to make interesting comparisons between the women interviewed before welfare reform was implemented in 1997, before Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) became Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

One of the most significant findings of the book stems from this research design: Levine argues that the women experienced welfare in the TANF era in very much the same way as those who were on welfare during the AFDC period. Although Levine acknowledges small differences between the two periods, she finds striking similarities in the women's experiences of welfare across the two time periods. While much research has suggested that welfare reform has not been beneficial to single-mother families, Levine's finding that women interact with the welfare institution in very much the same manner as before is novel. In fact, I would have liked to have seen more discussion of this finding and a clearer statement of how this contributes to past research on single-mother households and welfare; these findings appear to sharply contrast with those of Sharon Hays in her study of low-income women in the postreform era (*Flat Broke with Children: Women in the Age of Welfare Reform* [Oxford University Press, 2003]).

Levine's finding about the lack of trust in the relationships central to low-income mothers' lives is most compelling in her chapter about the welfare caseworkers. The mothers' lack of trust in caseworkers leads to what can only be characterized as hostile interactions between the majority of Levine's interview subjects and their caseworkers. This dynamic leads to a lack of communication, a lack of understanding (Levine finds that the majority of her subjects do not understand the welfare rules and, therefore,

may miss out on possible opportunities), and an inconsistent receipt of benefits. Levine suggests that much of this distrust stems from the competing goals of the caseworkers (who must discharge their clients from the welfare rolls as quickly as possible) and of the welfare recipients (who often do not have the means to support themselves off welfare). Levine's contribution here is buttressed by the additional interviews she conducted with caseworkers in the post–welfare reform era that show that the lack of trust is shared by the caseworkers. Surprisingly, despite this shared distrust, the caseworkers genuinely feel as if the welfare reform has harmed clients and that they cannot provide the support the low-income mothers need. This section of the book is vividly written and compelling.

Levine connects this distrust to structural problems, arguing that the lack of trust often stems from structural inequities. For example, the chapter on child care discusses how the stipend for child care plus the low wages the women receive do not provide enough money to pay for adequate child care; mothers rely on multiple family networks or on in-home day care centers willing to settle for inadequate pay. This outcome leads the mothers not to trust the day care options available to them or the people caring for their children. I wondered, however, if the real issue here is the lack of trust the women have in their day care options or the structural problems that leave them with such poor options, that is, the women's inability to pay for quality service means that only poor (and not trustworthy) child care options are available to them.

At times, I thought the book overemphasized "trust" to the detriment of potential insights in other areas. For example, the chapter on employers discusses how low-income mothers quit jobs that they need when they feel they do not receive respect from their bosses; my own research has similarly found that low-income women do not stay in jobs when they are treated poorly or disrespectfully (*For the Family? How Class and Gender Shape Women's Work* [Oxford University Press, 2011]). I was less convinced by Levine's argument that this was an issue of trust than I was by her connection of this issue to changes in the labor market that have made low-wage workers so disposable. Also, the discussion of trust seemed to lead to an undertheorization of gender and race. Race is almost invisible in the book, despite the fact that over two-thirds of the participants are women of color. Similarly, while Levine titles the chapter about low-income mothers' mistrust of men "Gender Distrust," I would have liked to see a more in-depth discussion of gender here or to see Levine compare and contrast her findings to those of Katheryn Edin and Maria Kefalas and their well-known study of single mothers and marriage (*Promises I Can Keep: Why Poor Women Put Motherhood Before Marriage* [University of California Press, 2005]).

Overall, I found this an enjoyable book to read with important insights about the role of trust in low-income mothers' relationships. The first chapter provides an excellent overview of the changes to the welfare system that would be useful to graduate students. I recommend this book to those interested in studying the lives of low-income women and think it

would be a welcome addition to the graduate classroom in classes on poverty and inequality.

The Ethnic Project: Transforming Racial Fiction into Ethnic Factions. By Vilna Bashi Treitler. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii+225.

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We all too infrequently see books that take on the big issues in the study of race and ethnicity. This is not the case with *The Ethnic Project: Transforming Racial Fiction into Ethnic Factions*. Here, author Vilna Bashi Treitler attempts nothing less than a new reading of the racial-ethnic history of the United States. She addresses the relationship between race and ethnicity, one that has never been satisfactorily addressed in American sociology, and links it to a theory of racialization, ethnic assertion, and group incorporation/mobility in the context of a system of stratification in which race interacts with class to produce a durable system of inequality and exploitation. And the focus of the work is the long-discussed question about why some groups have been more successful than others in the U.S. racial hierarchy. Moreover, all this is done with an emphasis upon the social/political construction of race and ethnicity.

At the core of Bashi Treitler's theory is the "ethnic project" (p. 4)—group social mobilization "to foster a perception of themselves as 'different' from the bottom and 'similar' to the top" of the racial hierarchy. Groups undertake "ethnic 'marketing' campaigns" (p. 11) to raise the status of the group by using an invented or reinvented identity to increase their acceptability to the dominant group while at the same time distancing the group—by whatever means necessary—from those beneath them. But what is important about this process for Bashi Treitler is that, while an individual group's stock may improve, the overall racial order remains unchallenged. And in practice, successful or even partially successful ethnic projects are undertaken, as Bashi Treitler quotes Toni Morrison (p. 14), "on the backs of blacks."

While there is more to the ethnic project framework than can be described in this review, the centerpiece of the book is the application of the framework to the experiences of groups. Bashi Treitler begins with what she terms (p. 51) the "first ethnic projects," the successive colonization of Ireland, the conquest of Native Americans, and the enslavement of Africans. What slowly emerged from this, of course, was the U.S. racial order—the creation of "blackness" and "whiteness"—and the centuries of torment and conflict that would follow. And as Bashi Treitler also (properly, in my view) observes, one function of this first ethnic project was to knit together the English-American, white elite and working classes to the benefit of both groups but to the greater benefit of the elite.