not obviously the most effective way of improving workers rights and working conditions. The paper by James Atleson suggests that with increasing world economic integration, improving labor conditions by linking worker rights to human rights may be difficult absent international coordination of collective representation institutions. Other papers accord little attention to issues of implementation and enforcement. One alternative to assertions of rights is economic growth, an option of particular importance for securing rights in less developed countries. While there is a clear connection between economic growth and improvements in workers' rights and labor conditions around the world, the papers in this book do not consider whether policies to accelerate growth may produce more rapid and powerful improvements in labor conditions than policies to assert rights.

Related to this general point is the question of why labor rights guaranteed by domestic law are more difficult to deliver in some industrialized countries than in others. This question seems central to the book's frequent emphasis on freedom of association at the workplace, for the degree of employer resistance to union organizing encountered in the United States is rarely found in other developed countries. The focus on U.S. labor law prevents a comparative exploration of why the incentives to resist freedom of association vary among industrialized countries. The book leaves unanswered the question: How will assertions of rights alter these incentives?

The discourse in these papers reflects the legal backgrounds of many of the contributors. The papers are generally normative and even adversarial, and they reflect distrust of unregulated labor market behavior as a reliable method for improving workers' rights. Most disconcerting to a social scientist is the lack of appreciation for the role of choice in labor markets. The extent to which bargaining power is unequal in labor markets (an article of faith for several contributors) in fact depends on the extent to which employees and employers have alternatives. Policy proposals derived from observing coal miners in West Virginia may poorly fit the needs of programmers in Silicon Valley. Proposals to reduce choice (for example, by requiring some form of collective representative for all workers) effectively diminish opportunities for individuals who can get a better deal negotiating individually. Even effective enforcement of freedom of association rights does not guarantee a significant reversal of the decline in union membership.

Overall, this book provides as clear an introduction to the arguments for linking human rights to worker rights as one is likely to find. It also forces thought on what evidence would be necessary to accept the human rights approach as the most effective method for improving labor conditions.

Robert J. Flanagan

Professor
Graduate School of Business
Stanford University

Economic and Social Security and Substandard Working Conditions

It's About Time: Couples and Careers. Edited by Phyllis Moen. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press), 2003. xi, 431 pp. ISBN 0-8014-4080-7, $45.00 (cloth); 0-8014-8837-0, $19.95 (paper).

It's About Time applies the life course perspective to a comprehensive set of topics in the "work and family" area. The chapters are unified by a focus on middle-class, married couples. An individual's work and family decisions over the life course, it is argued, cannot be understood without also examining the link to a spouse's decisions.

Although this book's chapters, like those of any edited volume, vary in quality, their coherence as a collection is exceptional—no doubt owing to the strong editorial hand of Phyllis Moen, a recognized authority on the life course perspective. Thematically, the chapters emphasize the "choice versus constraint" nature of work and family decision-making and the adaptive strategies couples use to manage work and family life. Moen and other authors in the volume assert that families have changed extensively while work settings have changed little, resulting in a "cultural lag" or "mismatch" between what working families need to meet their care-giving responsibilities and what work organizations demand of workers.

The data featured in all the chapters come from a multi-method study of working couples in upstate New York. A unique feature of the data collection is the sampling frame, based in seven different organizational settings in order to study variation in organizational contexts. In each of the seven organizations, the researchers

conducted employee focus groups and interviewed human resources personnel about "work-life" policies and practices. They then contacted a sample of workers they had identified as belonging to two-parent families, and invited them to return a postcard if they wished to participate. This pool of employees was interviewed by telephone, and a subsample was interviewed in-depth. Spouses were also interviewed. In total, about 1,200 employees and close to 1,000 employee-spouse pairs participated in the study.

The study's design is both its strength and its weakness. The organizational base of the survey, the interviews with both husbands and wives, and the combination of focus groups, in-depth interviews, and telephone surveys are ambitious and unique. However, the restriction of the sample to an area of upstate New York where organizations were downsizing, the focus on middle-class, married couples, and the element of self-selection (with respondents opting into the survey by returning a postcard) make the sample nonrandom and the findings of uncertain generalizability. Response rates are not given, and the self-selection introduces an unknown degree of bias.

A strength of the volume is its comprehensive set of topics. The chapters cover not only standard topics in the field, such as work hours, work preferences, and parenting, but also commuting, technology, and the "spillover" of work to family life and vice versa, topics much less often included in work and family volumes. One chapter (Chapter 10, by Robert Orrange, Francille Firebaugh, and Ramona Heck) focuses on household management, a subject much discussed in the work and family literature but seldom addressed with empirical evidence. There is even a chapter on religious involvement of working families (Chapter 13, "Sunday Morning Rush Hour," by Heather Hofmeister and Penny Edgell).

The analyses, with a few exceptions, are constrained by the cross-sectional nature of the data collection. The authors tend to ignore the hazards of assessing cause and effect with cross-sectional data. Nonetheless, a number of noteworthy findings emerge. For example, the vast majority of workers in this study say they would prefer to work less—a striking pattern even if the representativeness of these workers is uncertain, given their relative affluence. Interestingly, as has been found in time diary research, the negative correlation between a worker's employment hours and leisure hours is not very high, suggesting that increased work hours lead to other adjustments (for example, a shedding of housework).

In Chapter 6, "Career Clocks: Forked Roads," Sonya Williams and Shin-Kap Han attempt to describe the total life course. The authors show that despite increased gender equality in the labor market, the most common couple type continues to be a husband who has a stable career and a wife whose work life is less stable because she makes adjustments to accommodate family demands. Chapter 7, on spillover (by Patricia Roehling, Phyllis Moen, and Rosemary Batt), suggests that most workers view family-to-work spillover as mainly a positive phenomenon—that is, they see family life as, overall, enhancing work performance—but work-to-family spillover as harmful. In Chapter 9, Phyllis Moen, Ronit Waismel-Manor, and Stephen Sweet examine feelings of "success" in work and family. They find evidence of a somewhat symmetrical trade-off between husband and wife: a husband's work success typically is associated with a reduced feeling of success in work for the wife, and a wife's family success typically comes at the cost of lower feelings of family success for the husband.

The discussion of life "turning points" (Chapter 11, by Elaine Wethington, Joy Pixley, and Allison Kavey) makes an interesting distinction between (a) observable life events (stressors, chronic conditions) as turning points in the life course and (b) autobiographical memory perspectives on turning points (meanings ascribed to events, stories about when and why things changed). This chapter, more than most, includes analysis that seems appropriate to the cross-sectional nature of the data. It is also the only chapter that compares its findings to findings from a national sample with similar questions.

The last section of the book, on organizational contexts, taps what is unique about this data collection and includes some of the best chapters in the volume. For example, Chapter 16, by Robert Hutchens and Emma Dentinger, explores workers' interest in and use of reduced work hours in the years leading up to retirement. The authors use data from both the telephone interviews with workers and the organizational interviews with human resources personnel about organizational policies. The proportion of workers who move to less than full-time hours prior to retirement varies by organizational setting but in general is quite low. Interestingly, much more common are "retire-rehire" practices, whereby a worker retires but is subsequently rehired, usually on a part-time

basis. In Chapter 19, Monique Valcour and Rosemary Batt, drawing on the focus groups, find evidence that although workers cite increased "flexibility" more often than anything else when asked what they would most like to have, actually having flexible work schedules is not a significant predictor of workers' reports of work-family conflict, feelings of control over their work, or (for women) the inclination to quit. And David Strang and Mary C. Still, in Chapter 18, analyze topics of increasing interest in the policy arena: employee perceptions about the availability of work-life programs, workers' use of such programs, and organizations' official policies and programs.

This is not a book most people will read cover to cover, but some of its chapters will likely serve as a useful starting point for researchers approaching work and family issues that are new to them. Particularly valuable, in that sense, will be the chapters on topics that are only beginning to be researched in the field.

Suzanne M. Bianchi
Professor of Sociology and Director
Maryland Population Research
Center (MPRC)
University of Maryland

Working in a 24/7 Economy: Challenges for American Families. By Harriet B. Presser. New York: Russell Sage Foundation 2003. xiii, 267 pp. ISBN 0-87154-670-1, $39.95 (cloth).

Every so often you spot a study without which we would have been left in a state of profound ignorance regarding an important aspect of our society. Harriet Presser's *Working in a 24/7 Economy* is just such a study. For over two decades, Presser has been researching shiftwork, including its prevalence, the reasons for it, and its effects on families. In this book she puts the entire story together.

The first substantive chapter looks at data on shiftwork from the 1997 Current Population Survey (CPS). The survey indicated that around 80% of all employees had a fixed day schedule, meaning most work was performed during daytime hours. The remaining 20% of employees performed shiftwork, though a partially overlapping group of 32% of employees worked weekends. When these facts are considered in tandem with information on part-time jobs, the conclusion is that only 54.4% of all employed Americans worked a full-time, day-time, five-day week in 1997.

When asked about the main reason for performing shiftwork, most respondents (62.6%) cited employer or job demands. Even among mothers of children under the age of five, only 35.3% gave "better child care arrangements" as their reason for shiftwork. Hence the title of the book is on target: it is the 24/7 economy rather than changing family structures that is mainly responsible for shiftwork.

This chapter also includes an analysis of the occupations in which shiftwork was prevalent, and includes Bureau of Labor Statistics figures suggesting that employment in many of these occupations will be expanding in the near future. Shiftwork might therefore be expected to intensify.

The second major chapter describes the relationship between family structure and nonstandard hours. Among dual-earner couples, nonstandard hours in 1997 were more characteristic where children, and particularly young children, were present. Toss in low family income, which also drives shiftwork, and it turns out that in a striking 68.3% of dual-earner couples with family income below $50,000 per year and a child under the age of five, at least one member of the couple was performing shiftwork or was working on weekends. Relatedly, 46% of single mothers of young children were either doing shiftwork or working weekends.

The following chapter uses the National Survey of Families and Households data from the late 1980s (Wave I) and the early 1990s (Wave II) to get at issues of family functioning. The now familiar finding that single-earner couples report stronger marriages than dual-earner couples is confirmed by this examination. One twist Presser provides, however, is her finding that nonstandard hours or workdays reduced marital quality among those surveyed; indeed, for couples with both members working during the day, marital quality was fairly similar to that for single-earner couples. Shiftwork was also related to an elevated incidence of divorce, although this result is sensitive to both the gender of the shift worker and the specific type of shiftwork.

Using the same data set, in the next chapter Presser examines the effect of shiftwork on husbands' contribution to home production. Previous research has already found evidence that husbands are likely to perform more housework when they are highly educated, when their wives hold egalitarian attitudes, and when husband and wife are both employed as profession-