external mediators, even though the latter may have more subject matter expertise (p. 177). However, later in the volume they quote the U.S. Postal Service's dispute resolution counsel describing disputant surveys that revealed higher success rates, higher satisfaction rates, and stronger perceptions of neutrality for outside mediators than for internal, employee-mediators (p. 247). Managers would like to believe employees find peers more credible mediators, but some research suggests, on the contrary, that employees are skeptical of the impartiality of peers, who typically are subject to control by upper management. These effects may be a function of the overall conflict management system's design. A true integrated conflict management system has both internal and external components, and the way employees view such a system may differ significantly from the way they view either an internal or external system standing alone. As the authors recognize, very few organizations have achieved such a system.

Moreover, the peer mediator who is the union president probably differs from the peer mediator in a non-union firm. The authors have substantially advanced our understanding of the functioning and design of workplace justice systems, but as with all good research, one outcome is a new consciousness of all the research questions that are as yet insufficiently explored. Chief among these is a more systematic inquiry into how workplace conflict management systems vary between union and non-union environments. Public, private, and non-profit employers are taking widely divergent paths toward the common end of improving how they manage conflict. For the most part, the public sector is more heavily unionized and has experimented with voluntary, interest-based processes such as mediation, early neutral assessment, and ombudsperson programs. The authors focus primarily on the private sector, which has placed more emphasis on quasi-adjudicatory rights-based processes, such as non-union employment arbitration. Clearly, an employer could not unilaterally impose a pre-dispute binding arbitration clause on employees represented by a union. The authors' conclusion that external systems take responsibility out of the disputants' hands is certainly true of arbitration systems. It is, however, less true of external mediation using facilitative rather than evaluative models.

The authors point to the decline of private sector unionism, evidence that some companies are adopting these systems for union avoidance, adoption of high performance work systems, and changes in the social contract from collective rights to statutory individual rights as partial explanations for the rise in workplace conflict management systems. They identify unionization as an environmental factor that helps shape the organization's conflict management strategy. However, unionization is a factor that may be different both in kind and in weight from many of the others in their model; it is unique in that it forces upper management to share control over dispute system design. Thus, it systematically incorporates the voice from the trenches. Employee focus groups probably provide very different input from unions, and they lack veto power over design choices. One can reasonably anticipate that systems in union and non-union firms will differ.

Although such questions have yet to be researched, conceptualizing them will be easier with this work as a foundation. The future is unclear for institutionalization of integrated conflict management systems in the workplace. However, the trend toward privatizing systems of justice for employment disputes has achieved critical mass. Lipsky, Seeber, and Fincher have made a major contribution to the field in *Emerging Systems for Managing Workplace Conflict.*

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The Future of the American Labor Movement. By Hoyt Wheeler. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 276 pp. ISBN 0-521-81533-9, $65.00 (cloth); 0-521-89354-2, $23.00 (paper).

What do unions do? This question once meant, "How do unions affect important outcomes, such as wages, worker rights, and economic performance?" As union power in most countries has declined, sterile box-and-arrow causal schemes have given way to more urgent lines of questioning about the daily behavior and concrete experiences of labor activists. Scholars are increasingly asking how workers' organizations and their allies can reverse union decline through new strategic choices and new patterns of behavior. The recent wave of literature on union revitalization has begun to iden-

tify emerging forms of worker activism and to generate hypotheses about the effects of various strategies on the vitality of unions. Hoyt Wheeler's new book, *The Future of the American Labor Movement,* brings fresh descriptions and predictions into the discussion.

According to Wheeler's core thesis, unions are not merely victims of changed circumstances. The labor movement influences the preconditions for its own renewal as it acts on the environment. Wheeler specifies his argument by generating specific and broadly applicable categories of unionism and characteristics of the organizational environment. More realistic and complex than standard left/right conservative/socialist dichotomies, his categories of unionism include reformist unionism, social democratic unionism, cooperationist unionism, militant radical unionism, and pure and simple unionism. He also identifies "enabling conditions," characteristics of the labor movement's environment that strengthen worker organization, including the centrality of employment in the self-perception of workers, strong worker solidarity (intensive and extensive), a perception by workers that their interests are distinct from those of other groups, a favorable return to collective action (with benefits exceeding costs), tolerably low employer opposition, and low or absent government opposition. He then makes a complex set of assertions about the effects of the various forms of unionism on the enabling conditions.

Wheeler does not intend to imply that any one kind of unionism is superior or preferable to another. To the contrary, he argues for diversity, both in terms of outlook (the most important dimension defining his categories of unionism) and in terms of function (the labor movement is a tense, interdependent mishmash of union officials, volunteer activists, union democracy advocates, labor studies and IR academics, even financiers advising unions on pension and worker buyout strategies). Wheeler bends over backwards to develop a fair and balanced assessment, in which every approach has advantages and disadvantages.

Wheeler presents a wide range of empirical material using a plainspoken, nearly jargon-free voice. He is especially interested in forms of worker organization or advocacy other than official collective bargaining, including the open assemblies of the Knights of Labor, the community-legal coalition of the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment, networks of local unionists trying to influence regional economic development, strategic uses of worker pension funds, worker ownership, forms of service provision, and union engagement with "social Europe." The former president of the North American union of steel workers, Lynn Williams, writes in his introduction, "I don't think there is anything happening, or in the contemplation stage, that is not given consideration" by Wheeler. Williams is right: this book works well as a catalogue of possibilities for practitioners and academics to thumb through for a sense of what is out there.

Like much of the recent literature on union strategies, Wheeler's book manages to escape from the intellectual straitjacket imposed on recent public policy debates, such as the contemporary German discussion over whether or not to weaken collective bargaining institutions, or the older U.S. debate over whether or not to legalize employer-dominated labor organizations. It follows from the book's analysis that policy-makers do not really face a choice between the status quo, supported by stubborn, entrenched union leaders, and painful, but necessary, reforms advocated by business groups to increase flexibility and affluence. In *The Future of the American Labor Movement,* unions are not simply obsessed with defending their own legal protections; the daily work of trade unionists is changing; transformed unions yield social goods unimagined by the dominant policy discourse; and the standard reasons policy-makers give for weakening unions—especially the allegedly conservative self-interested behavior of union officials—are not grounded in a realistic assessment of what unions do. This book helps to move the reader beyond the superficial notions about the behavior of unions found in mainstream public discourse, and in doing so it supplies reasons to believe that the labor movement, broadly defined, can move forward.

But not proof. Wheeler does not succeed in harnessing his empirical material—presented as lists and narrations—to develop and demonstrate his argument. His categories serve to arrange information, but they do not bring life to his stories. The stories, in turn, do not seem to support his argument, especially his assertions in the first chapter about how unions could reverse their decline. Some sections, such the plea for labor law reform and the review of recent management literature, seem completely outside the orbit of the book's argument. Wheeler's wide range of intrinsically interesting stories, his transparent methodology, and the book's comprehensive index, however, compensate for the disjointedness. This is

the kind of book to flip through, not to read from cover to cover.

Although difficult to follow, *The Future of the American Labor Movement* will help scholars and practitioners who seek a wide-angle lens on the labor movement and a comprehensive menu of options for action. This book might be thought of as a guidebook to today's labor movement, with narrative fragments and nuggets of insight that raise more questions than they answer.

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Helping Working Families: The Earned Income Tax Credit. By Saul D. Hoffman and Laurence S. Seidman. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Upjohn Institute, 2003. 245 pp. ISBN 0-88099-254-9, $36.00 (cloth); 0-88099-253-0, $18.00 (paper).

In *Helping Working Families,* Saul Hoffman and Laurence Seidman update their 1992 book on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the largest comtemporary program aimed at assisting working poor families in the United States. Like their earlier book, this one speaks to a variety of audiences, providing technical details about the program, intuitive explanations of the important policy issues, and a summary of our current state of knowledge. No doubt it will quickly be considered an indispensable source of information for anyone interested in the EITC.

The principal strength of this book, as of its predecessor, is its comprehensiveness. In general, the authors' approach is to verbally explain conceptual arguments within the chapters and to provide very specialized details in an Appendix. By separating verbal descriptions of the program and the policy issues related to it from more technical information, the authors have done a good job of keeping the discussion accessible to a wide range of audiences, while providing the kind of detail specialists would like to see.

After introducing the program and recounting its history, the authors turn to consideration of major research topics related to the EITC, treating each distinct area of research in a separate chapter. The first of these chapters begins with the most basic fact regarding the EITC, that it takes the form of a rebate through the tax system. Individuals with low incomes have their taxes reduced under formulas that vary based on family structure and marital status. Since the EITC is deliberately aimed at those with relatively low incomes and its benefit varies with household structure, one would expect it to be fairly effective in assisting working poor families. Hoffman and Seidman review evidence regarding the target effectiveness of the EITC in relation to other policy alternatives such as the minimum wage. They conclude that the EITC delivers the majority of its benefits to poor or near-poor families and is much more effective than the minimum wage in this respect.

Beyond the benefit incidence of the program, perhaps the most interesting analytical issues regarding the EITC relate to its impact on individual behaviors. Under the EITC rules, at low levels of income, taxes are reduced and benefits are phased in for recipients. The benefits then plateau at their maximum. At an upper income threshold, the tax benefits are reduced over a phase-out range. Because the program alters the effective tax rates faced by recipients over these three programmatic ranges (phase in, plateau, and phase out), it would be expected to alter their work decisions. These complex issues are discussed at a verbal level, the appropriate tax rate information is summarized in useful tables for those interested, and appendices contain graphical utility maximization analyses. In addition, the book provides a critical summary of the available evidence on the magnitude of the impact of the EITC on work behavior of eligible individuals.

A decade ago, the benefit incidence of the program and the behavioral issues related to labor supply were the primary areas of research regarding the EITC. At that time, the program was relatively small, and most thought its reach was fairly limited. As the benefits and number of families affected by the EITC have expanded, researchers have become concerned that it may also affect behaviors other than individual labor supply.

Benefit formulas of the EITC vary with family structure, and it can be shown that these rules result in marriage penalties similar to those induced in the standard federal income tax system. The EITC also interacts with other programs such as the Child Tax Credit, which further complicates the impact of the program on labor markets. Finally, the EITC raises effi-