

today's academic literature, that surely provides ample reason for reading the book.

*PETER deLEON is a Professor of Public Policy at the University of Colorado at Denver.*

## REFERENCES

- Ingram, Helen and Steven Ragthed Smith (eds.) (1993), *Public Policies for Democracy* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution).
- Lasch, Christopher (1995), *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: Norton).
- Putnam, Robert D. (1995), "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in the United States," *Political Science and Politics* 28(4), pp. 664–683.
- Sandel, Michael J. (1982), *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Will, George (1996), "The Politics of Soulcraft," *Newsweek*, May 13, p. 83.

## Pamela J. Smock

*Small Change: The Economics of Child Support*, by Andrea H. Beller and John W. Graham. London: Yale University Press, 1993, 338 pp., \$40.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.

Given the low income and poverty that many children experience living with a single parent, it is not surprising that policymakers, social scientists, and the public are focusing on child support reform as a way to ensure the well-being of future generations. Child support receipt certainly has salutary effects on the resident parent's (typically the mother's) income. Further, income from child support appears to have additional positive effects on children's life chances; child support dollars positively influence children's well-being more than income from other sources. In their book *Small Change*, Andrea Beller and John Graham document the determinants, trends, and consequences of child support payments in the United States. They base their analyses on the March and April Current Population Surveys for 1979, 1982, 1984, and 1986. The Current Population Surveys not only provide the authors with an ample number of women eligible for child support, but allow them to examine trends and differentials in child support outcomes for particular population subgroups.

*Small Change* is a model of clarity, thoroughness, and carefully done analyses. It is also extremely well documented and informative, offering readers a wealth of insight and information. For those who want a summary of all that is known about child support, this is not the book to choose. In fact, a strength of this book is that it does not set out to summarize the entire body of literature on child support. Instead the authors' discussion and analyses concentrate on issues their data can address.

After an introductory chapter, Beller and Graham analyze the various stages of child support receipt, acknowledging that, to understand child support payments, one must also understand whether there was a child support award, the amount of the award, whether any child support was received, and—if so—how much. Chapter 2 presents aggregate statistics over time for all of

these outcomes, both for all child support-eligible women and for subgroups (for example, by race and marital status). Chapter 3 sets the stage for much of the rest of the book. This chapter develops the economic theoretical and empirical framework that guides the authors' subsequent individual-level analyses of the determinants of child support outcomes. This is an excellent chapter, walking readers through some basics in economics. The chapter's straightforward discussion makes the material in the following chapters easily accessible to noneconomists.

Chapter 4 goes on to examine the individual-level determinants of child support award rates and amount awarded, and chapter 5 focuses on the determinants of receipt and receipt amount. In both chapters, Beller and Graham use decomposition techniques to account for observed trends and differentials (for example, race, marital status) in child support outcomes. Chapter 6 focuses on a somewhat different issue. Using state-level data providing the year enforcement techniques, child support guidelines, or paternity legislation were implemented, Beller and Graham analyze the effects of the legal environment on child support outcomes. Finally, chapter 7 focuses on some of the consequences of child support payments: economic well-being and children's educational outcomes.

These analyses lead to a large payoff; there are numerous important findings in *Small Change*. Foremost among them, the book makes clear that child support enforcement has been more successful than popular impression. Beller and Graham show, for example, that the apparent stability over time in some aggregate statistics obscures improvements in key domains; there have been notable improvements in some child support outcomes for black and never-married women, improvements masked in aggregate statistics. This theme also emerges in Beller and Graham's discussion of the dramatic 25 percent decrease in the real value of child support payments between 1978 and 1985. They conclude that without changes in laws and private attitudes about child support, the real value of child support payments would have declined even more than 25 percent. Beller and Graham's analyses also reveal continuing problems in child support. A primary one is a decrease in the real value of awards over time, the primary source of the 25 percent decrease in payments. The cause is twofold: Few awards are adjusted for inflation, and the average value of new awards has been rising more slowly than consumer prices.

The weaknesses of this book stem largely from the weaknesses of Beller and Graham's data. To the authors' credit, they are well aware of the limitations of their work. The main one, and one that plagues nearly all child support research, is that the authors rely solely on mothers' characteristics to predict child support outcomes in their individual-level analyses. What is missing is information about the father. Given that the fathers' ability to pay is a crucial component in economic models of child support, it is a problem that there is no information on their current income or employment situation. Beller and Graham do try to proxy this by using race-specific mean wages of year-round, full-time employed men, but it is doubtful that the proxy is especially useful when attempting to explain race-ethnic and marital status differentials in child support outcomes. It is quite likely that some of these fathers are unemployed or out of the labor force and thus not captured in the wages of year-round, full-time workers.

Also the authors' data are not up-to-date (although they do include a brief discussion of results with data from 1990 in their introductory chapter); some

reforms were implemented after the last year of their data. Effects may take time to be evident, and we simply need to know what the trends and differentials are using more recent years. I certainly hope that the authors plan to update this book with data from the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, this is a valuable and important book that should be of great interest, and even indispensable, to policymakers and social scientists interested in child support reform.

*PAMELA J. SMOCK is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan.*

### Rosemary O'Leary

*New Governance for Rural America: Creating Intergovernmental Partnerships*, by Beryl A. Radin, Robert Agranoff, Ann O'M. Bowman, C. Gregory Buntz, J. Steven Ott, Barbara S. Romzek, and Robert H. Wilson. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1996, 242 pp., \$29.95 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

In early 1990, the Bush Administration embarked on a rural development initiative that entailed, in part, the creation of state-level Rural Development Councils (SRDCs) that would establish collaborative relationships with states, local governments, federal agencies and departments, and the private sector. In addition, an interagency National Rural Development Council (NRDC), based in Washington, DC, was created to forge linkages among 60 agencies. *New Governance for Rural America: Creating Intergovernmental Partnerships* provides a valuable analysis of 16 SRDCs and the NRDC from the years 1990 through 1994. It is as thorough as a National Academy of Sciences report, yet contains interesting local details presented clearly and concisely, making this an easily accessible volume for students and scholars of all backgrounds and levels of expertise.

The book was produced by seven scholars—most of whom had never worked together previously. Indeed, the list of authors reads like a “who’s who” of public management, including experts in federalism, organization theory, intergovernmental relations, economic development, environmental policy, and public policy. The fact that seven senior scholars were able to work collaboratively for several years on the research that underlies the book is an accomplishment unto itself. The earliest work was supported by the Ford Foundation through the State Policy Program of the Aspen Institute. Later work was funded by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Aspen Institute. Sources of data included interviews with council participants, analyses of archival materials, and observations at meetings. Multiple perspectives were sought, and multiple “lenses” are presented. The book provides both a bottom-up, grassroots, vantage point as well as a top-down, “big picture,” vantage point.

The book masterfully sets the stage for the reader, emphasizing what we teach our public management students daily: environment matters. Chapter 1 focuses on intergovernmental relationships and behaviors, while chapter 2 focuses on rural development policy issues. Chapter 3 provides pictures of the 16 state councils included in the study, including their demographic, economic, and political backgrounds as well as their council organization. Chapter 4 analyzes the evolution of the initiative and the council concept. Chapter 5