

Social Capital and Welfare Reform

Organizations, Congregations, and Communities

Jo Anne Schneider

IN THIS GROUNDBREAKING study, Jo Anne Schneider considers the reasons behind the limited success of most welfare reform initiatives and offers evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of welfare policy.

Schneider draws on her rich and nuanced ethnographic studies of Philadelphia, Milwaukee, and Kenosha, Wisconsin to clarify the role of social capital for both individuals and institutions. She shows that the social relationships and patterns of trust that enable people to gain access to resources like government services, organization funding, and jobs are crucial in helping families achieve their goals. Schneider examines the complex ways in which social capital functions in conjunction with economic, human, and cultural capital, and explores social capital dynamics among government, nonprofits, and congregations that together provide the welfare support system.

Social Capital and Welfare Reform is compulsory reading for researchers and students in social work, sociology, anthropology, public policy, education, community psychology, social psychiatry, and non-profit and public administration as well as policy makers interested in welfare reform, poverty, and nonprofits.

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“In this insightful synthesis of a decade of field research, Jo Anne Schneider offers a profoundly new take on what makes welfare reform fail or succeed. Elaborating the concepts of social and cultural capital, she shows how they operate on the ground and are the keys to real opportunity for poor people.”

—Heidi Hartmann, president, Institute for Women’s Policy Research

“Jo Anne Schneider tells us what really happened with welfare reform. She brings to life the struggles of both the women on welfare and the organizations trying to provide services. She reveals how and why welfare reform was far from the success conveyed by abstract statistics. An excellent book for anyone concerned with not only welfare, but also poverty.”—Alex Stepick, director, Immigration & Ethnicity Institute, and professor of anthropology and sociology, Florida International University

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