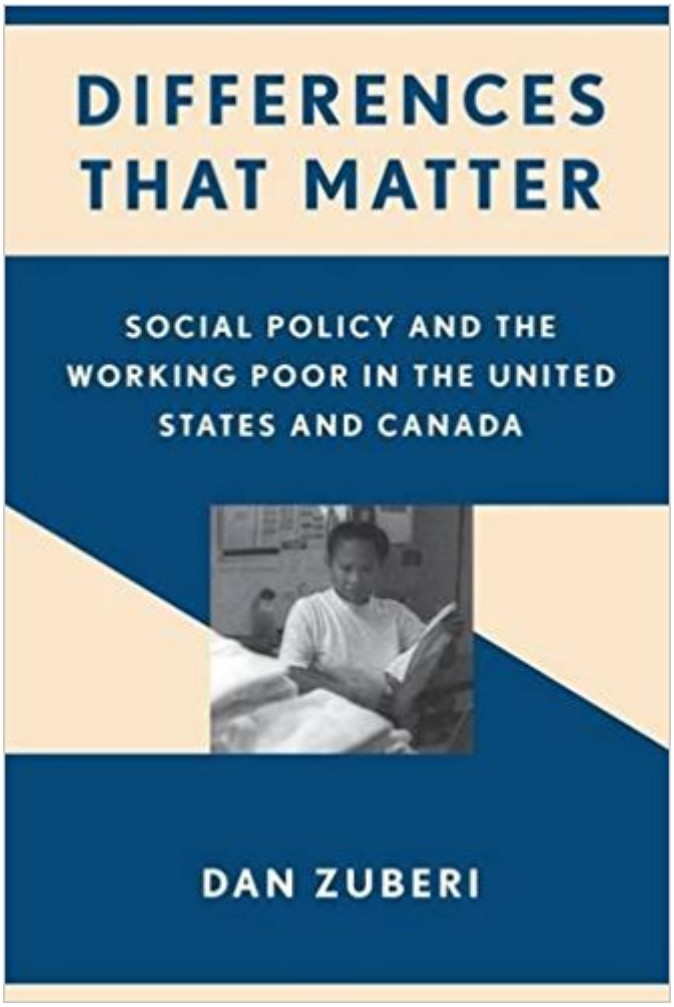
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Differences That Matter: Social Policy And The Working Poor In The United States And Canada



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Synopsis

This book shines a spotlight on the causes and consequences of working poverty, revealing how the lives of low-wage workers are affected by differences in health care, labor, and social welfare policy in the United States and Canada. Dan Zuberi's conclusions are based on survey data, eighteen months of participant observation fieldwork, and in-depth interviews with seventy-seven hotel employees working in parallel jobs on both sides of the border. Two hotel chains, each with one union and one non-union hotel in Seattle and Vancouver, provide a vivid crossnational comparison because they are similar in so many regards, the one major exception being government policy.Zuberi demonstrates how labor, health, social welfare, and public investment policy affect these hotel workers and their families. His book challenges the myth that globalization necessarily means hospitality jobs must be insecure and pay poverty wages and makes clear the critical role played by government policy in the reduction of poverty and creation of economic equality. Zuberi shows exactly where and how the social policies that distinguish the Canadian welfare state from the U.S. version make a difference in protecting Canadian workers from the hardships that burden low-wage workers in the United States. Differences That Matter, which is filled with first-person accounts, ends with policy recommendations and a call for grassroots community organizing.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Dan Zuberi’s superb new book, comparing immigrant hotel workers and policy regimes in the United States and Canada, makes clear that social policy matters immensely in the reduction of working poverty. Differences That Matter is an elegant piece of narrative social science, seamlessly blending interviews, data, policy analysis, and an understanding of politics."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Robert Kuttner, coeditor, The American Prospect"Comparing two so similar and proximate cities as Seattle and Vancouver allows the reader to see the effects of manipulating an independent variable, social policy, on the dependent variables of lifestyle and work satisfaction. Differences That Matter is well written and accessible, speaks to critical issues in labor studies, offers a unique crossnational comparison, and looks at an industry that many people know, but few understand."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Peter Adler, Denver University, coauthor of Paradise Laborers: Hotel Work in the Global Economy"Differences that Matter helps us understand the enormous difference social policies can make in the lives of the working poor. If room attendants in Vancouver fare so much better than those in Seattle, who work harder for less, it is in part because Canadian and American societies have made very different choices concerning where to invest collective resources. Moreover, the degree of insecurity faced by workers is one of the measuring sticks by which we should assess the relative success of societies. Dan Zuberi’s powerful cross-national study will be a lasting contribution to our understanding of the lives of the working class."Ã¢â ¬â ¢MichÃƒÂ©le Lamont, Harvard University, author of The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration"Canada and the United States are as similar as any two societies in the worldÃ¢â ¬â ¢a natural pairing for comparative analysis. This book shows that the small differences in social and economic policy between them have had significant consequences for low-wage workers. Canada’s more generous policies in healthcare, social welfare, labor protections, and stronger unionization ameliorate the impact of growing market inequality on hotel workers in Vancouver compared to hotel workers in Seattle. The message to America: you don’t have to be a European social welfare state to give a better life to low-wage workers."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Richard B. Freeman, Harvard University"Dan Zuberi’s detailed comparative analysis of hotel workers in the United States and Canada pays handsome dividends. By focusing on an industry in which few jobs can be outsourced and which is nevertheless increasingly organized on a global basis, he highlights the factors that matter most in shaping the cruel social realities that face working people in the twenty-first century United States: the systematic dismantling of labor unions and of social safety nets, both of which remain intact in Canada. The crossnational comparison is especially apt since the two countries had similar levels of union density and poverty rates only a few decades ago; their recent divergence offers the closest approximation social scientists can ever get to a natural

experiment in which it is possible to control for key variables. Zuberi exploits this comparison brilliantly, in an accessible narrative that includes the voices of ordinary workers as well as a careful analysis of broader social trends. There's a lot to learn here for anyone concerned about the future of workers and of the labor movement in North America."Ã¢â ¬â ¢Ruth Milkman, Director, UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations

"Dan Zuberi's superb new book, comparing immigrant hotel workers and policy regimes in the United States and Canada, makes clear that social policy matters immensely in the reduction of working poverty. Differences That Matter is an elegant piece of narrative social science, seamlessly blending interviews, data, policy analysis, and an understanding of politics."-Robert Kuttner, coeditor, The American Prospect "Canada and the United States are as similar as any two societies in the world-a natural pairing for comparative analysis. This book shows that the small differences in social and economic policy between them have had significant consequences for low-wage workers. Canada's more generous policies in healthcare, social welfare, labor protections, and stronger unionization ameliorate the impact of growing market inequality on hotel workers in Vancouver compared to hotel workers in Seattle. The message to America: you don't have to be a European social welfare state to give a better life to low-wage workers."-Richard B. Freeman, Harvard University "Dan Zuberi highlights the factors that matter most in shaping the cruel social realities that face working people in the twenty-first century United States: the systematic dismantling of labor unions and of social safety nets, both of which remain intact in Canada. The crossnational comparison is especially apt and Zuberi exploits this comparison brilliantly, in an accessible narrative that includes the voices of ordinary workers as well as a careful analysis of broader social trends."-Ruth Milkman, Director, UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations "Differences That Matter will be a lasting contribution to our understanding of the lives of the working class. The degree of insecurity faced by workers is one of the measuring sticks by which we should assess the relative success of societies. Dan Zuberi helps us understand the enormous difference social policies can make in the lives of the working poor."-MichÃƒÂ¨le Lamont, Harvard University, author of The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration "Differences That Matter is well written and accessible, speaks to critical issues in labor studies, offers a unique crossnational comparison, and looks at an industry that many people know, but few understand."-Peter Adler, Denver University, coauthor of Paradise Laborers: Hotel Work in the Global Economy --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

What a brilliant premise for a book: take pairs of employees doing the exact same job in the exact same hotel chain only 140 miles apart, with the only difference being the country they're in. The author provides in-depth access into the lives and concerns of these working poor families and finds that simple differences in social policy, health care, infrastructure, and transportation between the two countries result in major contrasts to their quality of life. Policy makers and observers of life on both sides of the border would do well to read this accessible, fascinating book.

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