

Rebecca M. Blank, Sheldon H. Danziger, and Robert F. Schoeni, Editors.....**Working and Poor. How Economic and Policy Changes are Affecting Low –Wage Workers.** 2006, In this National Poverty Center Series on Poverty and Public Policy book many different factors that have impacted workers in the United States are highlighted. Wages have tended to result in a widening wage inequality among all those adults 18-54 years of age. The authors also point out that employment rates are also important and if one looks at both of these areas the long range trend shows that less skilled men have seen declines in both of these areas since 1979. The authors also note that family composition including changes in living arrangements as well as changes in our welfare system has impacted the poor. The authors also note that the recent immigrants to this country have tended to be more low skilled workers than in generations past. This could be attributed to an increase in illegal immigration. The authors also write that low skilled workers begin their career earning low wages but with job retention/longevity are able to see increases to their wages. They found that it is the actual work experience that matters most in advancing wage growth over time and thus helping move people out of poverty. The authors also report on how the unemployment rate impacts the poor greater than persons in higher economic strata and that single mothers and racial minorities are more impacted than other groups. Research finds that private cash transfers (loans from friends and family) and sharing of living arrangements can support those living in poverty. The authors also reviewed the literature and did independent analysis about how tax policies impact the low income worker and found that taxes paid by low income workers with children have actually declines in the last twenty-five years. The EITC has contributed to this decline. Further, the proportion of non -income taxes paid has risen during this same time period. In another chapter in the book the authors write that in order to help persons not rely on welfare and decrease levels of poverty, a focus should be to help the underemployed/unemployed overcome their employment barriers. The authors explore how child support can help support the poor. There is a definite association between the economic status of a non-resident father and his actual child support payments to the resident mother/child. More divorced mothers have child support orders than never married mothers. Further, studies do not show that fathers become impoverished as a result of having to pay child support. Overall the authors find that child support payments do not tend to be stable. The final two areas explored in the book were unemployment insurance and health insurance. The authors found that UI benefits vary and that many states have had to borrow from the federal government to support their insurance system. Further, UI is designed to be a short term program, yet in tough economic times (recessions) there is an increased need for benefit extensions. Likewise, health insurance has seen some shifts. Prior to welfare reform, more poor were recipients of public health care coverage. As people moved off of welfare, many persons began to obtain private health insurance. Still data shows that many persons do not have any type of health insurance. Even all those who are eligible to Medicaid are not actually applying for the benefits. The authors suggest that changes in the minimum wage, expansion of SCHIP and EITC, improvement of the child support and unemployment systems could help expand those who work by supplementing earnings so that they can improve their economic well-being.