

BOOK REVIEWS

Mining Coal and Undermining Gender: Rhythms of Work and Family in the American West, by Jessica Rolston (Rutgers University Press, 2014). 250 pages, ISBN: 978-0-8135-6367-1, paperback. Also available in cloth, epub, and pdf.

For those of us used to thinking of labor in the abstract as a capital L in a production function, this book gives labor a human face and a gender with many anecdotes from the Wyoming coal mining industry. Dr. Jessica Rolston takes us on an inside look to dispel some of the myths we might have about this traditionally male-dominated industry. She is well placed for this task. When she was growing up, her father worked as a mine mechanic in the Powder River Basin. To help pay for college, she worked a couple of summers in the mines driving haul trucks as part of the internship program for children of employees. She returned again to study gender in the mines for her Ph. D. (conferred in 2009) in Anthropology from the University of Michigan. The book, which was the winner of the 2018 Western Social Science Association Distinguished Book Award, arose out of her Ph. D. thesis.

The book is divided into three sections. The first is an introduction, the second focuses on the timing and rhythm of work in the mines, and the third focuses on issues of gender in the workplace. The first chapter notes the successful integration of women into Wyoming surface mining, where they average about 25 percent of each crew, receive equal pay for equal work, and are generally free from sexual harassment and discrimination. We are introduced to some themes in the literature that carry through to subsequent chapters: kinship in the workplace, constructing and undoing gender in workplace relationships, gender in mining, and women in nontraditional occupations. We learn a bit about open pit mining and the author's history with the industry.

In chapter two, Rolston places the Wyoming industry within two streams of mining history: unionization and corporate responsibility. Wyoming mine labor is not unionized and perceives themselves as part of the middle rather than working class. Corporate appeals and hiring focused on Western ranching ideals of independence, hard work, and perseverance likely contributed to the failure of unionization to take hold. Corporate responsibility also contributes to the atmosphere, with a focus on being better neighbors, listening to employee concerns, safety consciousness, and being in partnership rather than conflict with labor, now characterized as "highly paid and skilled" professionals. With labor in short supply when the pits were opened, Wyoming miners are well-paid and have come to identify their financial success with that of profitable companies.

The two chapters in part 2 focus on time and the rhythm of work in the pits. Chapter 3 details the challenges of 28 day rotating shift work and the workplace relatedness it engenders. Such shifts to keep expensive equipment running as close to 24×7 as possible, are most typically 12 hours long with four nights on, three days off, three days on, one day off, three nights on, three days off, four days on, seven days off. Miners, out of sync with the rest of the world, come to mark time by where they are in the shift rotation, with each block of shifts characterized by different levels of energy or sleepiness. The constant changing of shifts puts stress on sleep and eating patterns, which is not gender-specific. But there are important differences; pregnancy and primary responsibility for the care of small children are especially challenging. Male anatomy also makes pit stops, which can be most anywhere in the pit or in designated portapotties and restrooms, more convenient for men than woman. Menstrual cycles seem to plague men less often as well. With the shared time and space, shared bodily rhythms, shared pranks and prattle, and shared food and drink, the crews become like family.

With chapter 4, we turn to shift work and the miner's non-crew family. Despite the challenges of rotating shifts and disconnection from being out of sync with loved ones, the divorce rate

for shift workers is not higher than national norms and couples espouse normal North America ideals of being best friends, companions, partners, and sharing in raising children with a common thread that most enjoyed outdoor activities. Typically women were more responsible for maintaining the household and caring for children, particularly when the father is the shift worker. Although shift work provided well for a family, it could mean severely limiting family time. However, the examples cited in the text demonstrated conscious efforts to spend time and connect the shift worker with the family and for the family to prepare their children for the job market with gender-neutral skills. The summer internship program also gave children a chance to reconnect and better understand and appreciate the sacrifices of a shift-working parent.

Part three focuses on breaking down gender at work. In chapter 5, Rolston considers how miners think and talk about gender stereotypes such as the valued qualities: tomboys for women and softies for men. Although both of these stereotypes cross more typical male/female stereotypes, both are valued at the mine since they incorporate similar desirable qualities: “hard work, support for others, and platonic emotional intimacy with co-workers of the opposite sex.” Ladies (also girly girls), on the other hand, are not so prized. Nice manicures, fancy clothes or an aversion to dirt are not the best attributes for a coal miner. Women who are too feminine don’t fit in, so too women who are too masculine (bitches) also come under attack. Both men and women are penalized for overzealous swearing or aggressive sexuality. Likewise, male extremes come into criticism. Macho men are too overtly aggressive and self-centered, while sissies are too feminine paying too much attention to their appearance and avoiding work. However, softies may have a rough masculine exterior, but display a softness and caring for their fellow workers that endear them to their colleagues. This preference for “tomboys and softies” over “machos and ladies” show a softening of gender differences and a movement towards gender neutrality in the Wyoming mines.

Chapter 6 continues an exploration of gender. The most important takeaway from this chapter is the importance of relationship status and the context of interactions with gender or sexual connotations. When do such interactions cross the line from teasing and fun to annoying or even harassment? The concept of being a “good hand” is important in this context, as it confers status and defines relationships within the crew family. Being a “good hand” within the crew family is not necessarily gender specific and is highly valued. Indeed the term itself is gender neutral. A good hand has a strong work ethic, which involves the skill to do the job (technical expertise) and is caring enough to do it in a way that does not burden others. Rolston finds little disparity between men and women being good hands, although women are sometimes perceived as more caring and safety conscious and men more technically competent. However, the larger the mine and the larger the crews, the more likely there are crew members designated as lazy and not caring.

Caring can come in the form of humor in the work place including practical and other jokes. Humor can lighten the numbing effects of shift work and strengthen relationships within the crew, but may have sexual or gender connotations. Whether such interactions are considered hostile or friendly typically depends more on the relationship between the individuals than the content. It seems the author found that, for the most part, women found the joking well-intended and reciprocated accordingly. When the line was crossed, men as well as women might retaliate on an offender most likely not regarded as a good hand. Although workplace humor did not seem offensive, and equal pay for equal work seemed to be the norm, women might have to work harder initially to prove their competence as good hands, and some felt gender bias in opportunities to train for operating the more prestigious equipment with better pay rates.

Although mining families appreciate the financial benefits the mines have brought them, the concluding chapter emphasizes the desire for their children to get a college education. Although they may not make as much money as in the mines, they will have a wider range of opportunities, can avoid the detrimental effects of shift work, will not suffer through the inevitable boom and bust cycles of mining, and will have some insulation against the downward trend of coal as well as other blue collar industries.

This book is suitable for a general audience, has a glossary of mining terms, and an index. Those interested in gender in the workplace should find this book an interesting read. As a woman in the traditionally male-dominated discipline of economics, I have always found that common decency has prevailed and gender has generally receded as an issue decade by decade since the 1960s. In a #MeToo era when common decency does not seem as common as I once thought, especially at the top, this book provides hope that common decency can again govern human discourse.

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Extractive Industries: The Management of Resources as a Driver of Sustainable Development, edited by Tony Addison and Alan Roe (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2018). ISBN 978-0-19-881736-9

One would think that by now, after the early successes of Norway, Canada, Australia and the United States, the more recent success of Chile and perhaps Peru, and the recent failures of Nigeria, Venezuela, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zimbabwe, we would know what countries should be doing to achieve maximum benefit from the extraction of natural resources. And, I would argue, we do. But producing good development outcomes from resource extraction appears to be as difficult for most countries now as it ever was. This difficulty may arise from an ever changing policy space, where temporal dynamics make old lessons irrelevant to current challenges. Another possibility is the lack of relevance of past individual country experiences because each and every country case study carries its own idiosyncratic challenges. While these explanations, and others, may have traction, I believe the main cause for disappointment is simply the lack of credible political commitment to good policies. What we need is a “self-help” book so that extractive economy governments who want to do the right thing can actually achieve those goals.

Extractive Industries, a UNU-WIDER product published through Oxford University Press and edited by Tony Addison and Alan Roe, is not that book. The ultimate goal of *Extractive Industries* is to “offer ideas and policy recommendations” for successful resource extraction outcomes. It is not clear to whom these ideas are offered, other than via a single and broad reference to “policy makers” and their “development partners.” To extend my self-help metaphor, the book tells us that going to the gym is good for us, provides data to support that claim, and shows how fit others are who have managed to go to the gym. But there we lie, on the couch, finding excuses not to move.

Extractive Industries contains eight broad and logical sections. The usual topics are discussed within 33 chapters—resource dependence, the resource curse, institutional quality, backward and forward linkages, fiscal management, environmental and community impacts—with corresponding policy guidance and recommendations. What is new, and which the book covers in several chapters, are the increasing power and influence of external stakeholders, and the impact of impending climate action. There is a distinctly non-academic bent to most of the discussion, in part because 20 of the 37 authors are from the private sector. Only two chapters contain any mathematical modeling. There are many authors whose work I have never come across or read, which I found refreshing. Sadly, only three contributors, by my count, are from the multilateral agencies whose business it is to right the resources and development ship on a daily basis. Only two are from the very governments that are, presumably, the target of the chapters.

The editors to their credit have done a tremendous job in synthesizing the analysis in their introductory and concluding chapters. The “Ten Main Messages” in the introductory chapter are messages that most with interests in the resources and development nexus have heard before. In the introductory chapter, which I highly recommend even as a stand-alone piece, editors Addison and

Row usefully frame thinking on extractive economy development outcomes via a two-dimensional grid. The effectiveness of government is one dimension, and the quality of the extractive corporation the other. They admit that for the most part the companies engaged in resource extraction in developing countries are now “enlightened” to the pressing social issues in development. The problem is with government, where states repeatedly fail to formulate and deliver inclusive development strategies. They note that only one out of 87 low and middle income mineral and energy economies has a rating of “good” on this metric by the Natural Resource Governance Institute. That country is Chile.

“Delivering Effective and Inclusive Governance” is, therefore, the 7th message Addison and Row’s list of Ten Main Messages. But how? Only three of the 30 substantive chapters in the book deal with the political economy of resource extraction. Political economy gets at the essence of why well-intending governments do bad. It would have been nice to have much more on this, and specifically to have heard from the political economy academics who are doing path-breaking work in such areas as commitment mechanisms for resource-based economies.

I will not review in detail the outline of the book, as these days any interested reader can access content via an online search. Instead, I will speak broadly as to what I think the book gets wrong, and what it gets right.

I have already noted my desire for more political economy. In what I see as another weakness, there is a theme throughout the book that each country faces its own, unique challenges with respect to resources and development. Broad tendencies or trends, as highlighted in, say, academic empirical work, are of little import. In other words, there is just so much idiosyncrasy in resource and development outcomes that we can learn little from past successes and failures. I reject this argument. Each child in a nation is an individual, each with his or her own abilities and challenges. This does not mean that education and vaccines for all is unwarranted. Knowing that these two programs are good for children has been well established. How can we know what is good for resource-based economies as a whole? Each of us can offer our own opinion, I suppose. I would think that a careful empirical analysis of what has been good, and bad, for nations in the past is likely to lead to superior policy recommendations. And, with the advent of better and better data analysis methods in the past two decades, along with innovative new data sources such as satellite imagery, we have learned a tremendous amount about what generally works and what doesn’t. For instance, growth-led poverty reduction doesn’t seem to happen in resource-based economies in the absence of targeted poverty reduction strategies. Institutional quality is not a determinant of success or failure. Oil and gas booms do not benefit the rural poor, whereas mining booms do. And, for that matter, long-run economic growth in resource-based economies is actually higher than normal, making the slow-growth version of the resource curse a “statistical mirage” in the words of Alex James. None of this literature and its findings can be found here.

More broadly, there is disregard for much of the academic work on this topic (by which I mean peer-reviewed analysis that adheres to the scientific method). Many references in the chapters are to unpublished (and unpublishable?) thought pieces and working papers rather than the published and heavily-cited work coming out of the academic arena. For example, Part III, on “The Academic Literature and the Resource Curse,” does not mention any of the important economic literature on the resource curse published in the past 10 years. Curiously, the section does not even mention Frederik van der Ploeg’s 2011 survey piece on the resource curse in the top-ranked *Journal of Economic Literature*, even though he is one of the authors of a later chapter of the book.

The book contains mostly platitudes: it is better to have enlightened than rogue companies extracting the resource; industrial diversification is critical but hard to achieve; developing economies have great potential to develop their economies further. I also have a tough time with the repeated mention of Botswana as a success story. Botswana has one of the highest income inequalities in the developing world, indicative of the harm that land-based wealth can inflict on a country when a government does not take income redistribution seriously. Botswana should hardly be mentioned

in the same sentence as Chile and Norway, but it is (Chile's income inequality is also problematic, by the way). In fact, the topic of resource-induced income inequality is not the subject of any of the book's chapters, and the term inequality is not found in the index. This is a glaring omission.

The strength of the book is in its presentation of practical observations from other than the academic elites. This may seem to contradict my earlier complaints about the lack of reference to and incorporation of the recent research being conducted by these elites. I stand by that criticism, but would recommend that for too long academics have had a monopoly on this kind of compendium about extractives and development. Here we hear how people in the trenches, working with governments and industry on a day-to-day basis, see the challenges. Of the dozen or so authors that have academic postings, many also have consulting roles with governments or industry. That experience shows in each chapter. As stated in the concluding chapter, the book's strengths lie with "the many different angles, ideas, and policy positions of the contributors." Another advantage includes a writing style that is widely accessible. Because of the book's length it is also able to cover a wide array of topics such as gender, climate change, taxation, and community development. And the book does have several very relevant chapters that address my concerns that we should be focusing our attention on how to do, not what to do. I recommend in particular the thoughtful and original chapters by Evelyn Dietsche on political economy and industrial policy. Bawumia and Halland's chapter on the Ghanaian experience with oil is also informative as it deals not only with what Ghana should have done, but how it might have done it. James Cust's chapter on the role of international norms in influencing governance, and the chapter by Buckley, McCulloch, and Travis on how donor agencies can influence governance reform, are perhaps the most important chapters in the book, as they get at exactly this. The chapters on local content and supply chains, by Olle Östensson, and on community development agreements, by Jim Otto, are also an important contribution to what are perhaps the hottest topics in resource-based development at the moment. Finally, in general there is an appropriate balance between petroleum and mining within most of the book's sections and chapters given that the governance issues being addressed apply to both types of resources.

In their concluding chapter Addison and Roe readily admit that some countries are too far gone for a change in course. They emphasize the opportunities for success in countries with a very long time till resource depletion. I think this is right. We need to be helping Mongolia, Afghanistan, Guyana, Greenland, and others who are embarking on their long-term resource and development programs, rather than the utterly failed Nigeria, or the poster child Norway. And, at the risk of being overly repetitive, that help needs to be with strategies to implement good policies rather than simply outlining what those policies are. That there is far too little of this in the book will in the end limit its effectiveness at achieving its goals. Nevertheless, *Extractive Industries'* chapters contain a wealth of knowledge for those just starting out in the resources and development space, and provides a good dose of balanced realism and practicality that prior editions on the topic have lacked.

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