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Safety in Numbers: Nurse-to-Patient Ratios and the Future of Health Care.

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(p. 25). Micki Magee urges that faculty unite both in the pursuit of collective bargaining and in efforts to reinvigorate tenure and academic freedom (p. 109). Unfortunately, only Cary Nelson's essay even alludes to non-economic professional advances many graduate employee unions have achieved. The lack of consideration of graduate employee professional gains may reflect both the decision of GSOC/UAW to accept an atypically narrow scope of bargaining to gain its first contract and the volume's focus on the recognition strike rather than bargaining. Because critics and opponents of academic bargaining argue that unionization will simply hasten corporatization, however, proponents would do well to discuss how academic bargaining, for graduate assistants as for faculty, can be a means not only to resist corporatization but also to renew academic and professional standards.

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Economic and Social Security and Standard Working Conditions

Safety in Numbers: Nurse-to-Patient Ratios and the Future of Health Care. By Suzanne Gordon, John Buchanan, and Tanya Bretherton. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press), 2008. 288 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-4683-2, \$26.00 (cloth).

Like other volumes in the ILR Press series *The Culture and Politics of Health Care Work*, this book aims to shed light on the often "invisible" work associated with care of the sick and disabled and particularly with the work of registered nurses. The book's more specific purpose is to describe the complex historical events and rationale leading to the legal mandate of nurse-to-patient ratios in acute care hospitals in two settings, California in the United States and Victoria in Australia. The book's publication comes in the midst of one of the longest-lasting national shortages of registered nurses in the United States, notwithstanding improvements in some localities and regions, including some areas of California. Typically, it is in times of nurse shortages that people become interested in understanding the work and work life of registered nurses. *Safety in Numbers* describes the decisions made to address the shortage—not only the policy details, but the reasoning and politics

that went into them—in two different settings.

The book has three main sections. The first two explore the events and decision-making processes leading to the implementation of ratios in, respectively, California and Victoria. The concluding section reflects on the arguments for and against these policies, the policies' outcomes, and alternatives to nurse-to-patient ratios as a remedy for nurse shortages. The book is very well written and extremely readable. It can benefit a wide-ranging audience, from lay people to medical, nursing, and health administrators, health economists, and other health care professionals.

The book's first section offers a comprehensive overview of the various reasons the ratio law was passed in California, the major actors in the often contentious debates there, the legal and political maneuvering done to prevent implementation of the law, and the reaction to the law once its implementation became inevitable. It is apparent that the authors are supportive of nurse-to-patient ratios in California and that this opinion colors some of their rhetoric, but the facts are accurate and the conclusions drawn can be substantiated by events. A touch of Hollywood-style drama tends to surround many high-profile developments in California, and the nurse ratio issue is no exception. The book provides an account of the response to the issue by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger when he came to office in a special election after the recall of the previous governor, Grey Davis. Governor Schwarzenegger, portrayed as "the terminator" by much of the public and by this author as well, tried to block implementation of the ratios at the behest of the hospital industry; notoriously, in one speech delivered in southern California, he called nurses a "special interest" group and vowed to "kick their butt." His actions set off a series of events pitting him against the California Nurses Association that ultimately forced him to back down.

Section 2 provides a detailed history of the nurse work intensification in Victoria, Australia. While Victoria's experience markedly contrasts with California's in some ways, in others—particularly with respect to the strategies pursued—the two states were similar. Thus, for example, distinctive characteristics of the political landscape, health care funding, and the relationship between trade unions and the hospital industry in Victoria resulted in a broader definition of the problem of nurse overwork, legislatively provided funding for additional staff, recognition that hospitals with different missions needed different ratios, and acknowledgement that the specific ratios must be re-evaluated at intervals to update them in response to changing conditions. At the same

time, just as in California, hospital employers were resistant to changes in workload management and offered no viable alternatives, nurses were dissatisfied with the work environment, and the question of whether the ratio could legitimately be used to define the maximum staffing level rather than the minimum remained unresolved.

Section 3 discusses what is known and not known about how nurse-to-patient ratios affect patients, nurses, and hospitals. The authors review studies evaluating the relationship between nurse staffing/ratios and patient or nurse outcomes, and discuss the various arguments against ratios and proposed alternatives to them. Three of their conclusions are of particular interest: collective action is important; ratios must be constantly recalibrated to fit the reality of the changing workplace; and ratios alone are not enough to create either a satisfactory work environment or a safe patient environment.

Safety in Numbers succeeds in explaining much of the often arcane world of nurse staffing in a way that is entertaining and understandable to a general audience. It should be helpful to both researchers and practitioners whose work brings them into contact with hospitals, nurses, or the care and treatment of the sick and disabled.

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International and Comparative Industrial Relations

Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns. Edited by Kate Bronfenbrenner. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press (an imprint of Cornell University Press), 2007. 280 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-7391-3, \$22.50 (paper).

Most academics accept that globalization is politically contested. It seems obvious to most people who think seriously about labor and globalization that trade unions and civil society respond to new kinds of injustice by making demands on multinational corporations and nation states. While this is the premise of most literature on international and comparative industrial relations, few writers focus on the concrete realities of injustice and the difficult struggles for change, and most assume that unions are weak and unsuccessful in these struggles. Kate Bronfenbrenner's new book

makes the argument that unions and their allies can actually win these struggles if they have the right strategies.

The book contains papers from a 2006 conference involving academics and trade unionists from around the world, including many key figures from the American labor movement. The purpose of the conference, Bronfenbrenner writes, was to make unions more effective at campaigning against multinationals, in particular, by strengthening the research function, and ultimately, to "shift the balance of power between capital and labor" (p. 221). She argues that, through their presence, the 560 attendees "demonstrated that there is a strategic front uniting against the combined power of the neoliberal state and transnational corporations" (p. 2). The book's ten chapters, whittled down from nearly 100 paper proposals, examine various aspects of international campaigning. Most are high-quality case studies, fine representatives of the burgeoning international literature on union revitalization.

One of the book's central points is that campaigns should take place at many scales, or levels, such as the workplace, the community, the nation-state, and the corporate network. The two pieces that make this point most directly are those by Tom Juravich and by Amanda Tattersall. Juravich provides an excellent overview of the past three decades of corporate campaigning developed by some of the sharpest minds in the U.S. trade union movement, and explains in some detail the state-of-the-art corporate research techniques. Tattersall describes the international campaigns of the U.S. Service Employees International Union, using an interpretive framework that reflects an intensive engagement with economic geography. These two researchers touch in different ways on the spatial complexity of union strategies and the need for activities at different levels to interact with and complement one another. In other words, union strategies should be simultaneously bottom-up and top-down and should knit different elements together in constantly changing ways.

Most of these papers deal with cooperation between unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This point is central to the papers on workers' struggles in the global south, including the pieces by Peter Wad, Ashwini Sukthanakar, Kevin Kolben, and Darryn Snell. Wad's piece examines a campaign in which union-sponsored NGOs in Denmark supported a decades-long struggle for union recognition in a Malaysian factory. Sukthanakar and Kolben discuss the campaigns of Indian unions, together with NGOs in the global north and south, in one case, facilitated by the World Social Forum. Snell's article