Great Plains Sociologist

Volume 11 Article 6

1998

Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEWS

Rural Health and Aging Research: Theory, Methods, and Practical Applications by Wilbert M. Gesler, Donna J. Rabiner, and Gordon H. DeFriese eds. Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing, 1998. 259 pp. $46.00 cloth.

Diane Kayongo-Male
South Dakota State University

The editors of this work have provided another one of a number of the high quality volumes devoted to research on aging that have been published in the last decade or so. Contributors include some of the top gerontological researchers such as Charles F. Longino and Glen H. Elder (a sociologist who has dealt with the long-term impact of the Great Depression on the coping strategies of older women). All but three of the contributors are connected with medical centers and schools of medicine and only two of the twenty-six are sociology professors. The book arose out of collaboration among colleagues in the North Carolina Rural Aging Program, an interdisciplinary research effort started in 1990 that was funded through the National Institutes of Aging. Each chapter is basically a report from a different team. The reports are organized around five points: (1) how a selected research technique/approach can help solve problems faced by rural elderly, (2) a review of literature, (3) assessment of the technique, (4) how the technique was utilized by the team, and (5) the practical relevance of the technique.

The book is relatively successful at achieving its dual aims of, first, making the diverse methodologies used understandable to professionals and lay persons who are not familiar with disciplinary-bound research jargon and, second, providing new

insights to experienced researchers on rural health and aging. Underlying the stated aims of the book are three general orientations: an emphasis on health concerns, focus on rural areas, and blending of pure research with application. This work is most successful at illustrating how effective multi-disciplinary team research can be conducted and how the information gathered can be used to improve planning and services for the elderly. There are also in this book many excellent examples of university-community collaboration. In terms of accountability to their communities, public universities would benefit tremendously from the types of research approaches undertaken as part of the program.

There are in this work numerous references to existing health and other data sets as well as insights into the pitfalls and benefits of using these data sets. The chapter authors cover both private and governmental data sources, including the National Center for Health Statistics, university data, and medical and service provider records. Although heavily biased toward use of secondary data, there is one chapter devoted to qualitative methodology and mention in other chapters of qualitative techniques such as focus groups. In general, this book can be described as an eclectic mix moving from work involving research methods to research topics. It is very different from theoretically grounded and coordinated research program such as the "status expectations states'" research program of Joseph Berger or the more recent work of Cecilia Ridgeway. The chapters on migration research, a macro-micro model for care giving to the elderly, the Northampton-Halifax university-community health program and its evaluation would be of greatest interest to sociologists. Many of the other chapters would also be useful to medical sociologists interested in rural elderly health problems and access to services.

Several of the implied promises of this work were left unfulfilled. Although the editors suggest that a meta-analysis is needed because of widespread discrepancies in the findings of

previous studies, there are no specific solutions offered for this problem other than that more interdisciplinary research should be conducted. Interdisciplinary research would provide for data triangulation, but it does not necessarily reduce inconsistent findings and often creates theoretical complications. The editors second promise was to provide a "theoretical background" for each particular research approach discussed throughout the work. What was provided was a brief review of previous research, but certainly in the majority of chapters not a theoretical background or justification for the use of specific methodologies. This work, in fact, reflects a general problem in much of gerontological research, that is, a weak or non-existent theoretical grounding. Much of this theoretical weakness seems to stem from the interdisciplinary nature of gerontological research.

For those who are interested in aging research, a number of other works should be consulted. Thomas Coles et al.'s *Voices, and Visions of Aging: Toward a Critical Gerontology* (1993) offers valuable insight on theory, epistemology, and method rooted in a Frankfurt School critique of traditional gerontological methodologies. Christine Fry and Jennie Keith's *New Methods for Old Age Research:Strategies for Studying Diversity* (1986) covers cross-cultural issues, network methodologies, and historical demographic methods. And, M. Powell Lawton and A. Regula Herzog's *Special Research Methods for Gerontology* (1989) devotes lengthy discussion to longitudinal research techniques covering both general research design and statistical analysis. The present book might be best used either as a handbook for researchers or supplementary text for graduate sociology methods courses, particularly, those in evaluation research. It would serve as a good supplementary text for a medical sociology course. Those who will benefit most from this book are those who intend on developing research programs for the on-going study of aging.

Cutting into the Meatpacking Line: Workers and Change in the Rural Midwest by Deborah Fink. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 235 pp. $45.00 cloth, $17.95 paper.

Geoffrey Grant
South Dakota State University

Deborah Fink, a cultural anthropologist, went to work for four months in 1992 as a laborer at the IBP pork kill and processing plant in Perry, Iowa, so that she could experience the life of rural working-class wage earners. Her observations about her experience focus especially on wage earning women and minorities. The work sites of these workers are typically not accessible, and these workers have little free time for socializing. Fink, as an employee of IBP, entered a world foreign to most middle-class Americans, and especially far removed from the personal experience of most academicians.

Fink covers both the global social and economic forces that impact meatpacking as well as rural family and community life. She documents the decline of the dominant meatpackers of the 1920-70s era, such as Armour, Oscar Meyer, Hormel, and Morrell, and the growth of the "new" meatpackers, like IBP, ConAgra, and Cargill. The transition from the traditional to contemporary companies, Fink explains, resulted from new meat marketing strategies, shifting economic conditions, and changing relationships between producer and processor. With the decline of the old guard companies, meatpacking was decentralized into small rural communities like Perry and wages were cut, working

conditions allowed to deteriorate, and unions were eliminated or dominated. Many of the macro changes in meatpacking took place during the 1980s. These changes have been documented in other works, but *Cutting Into the Meatpacking Line* adds personal experience and observation unavailable elsewhere. Data sources for this work include the insight of Fink as a participant observer, 125 interviews gleaned from those in the meatpacking community, and oral histories gathered from the State of Iowa Oral History Project. The personal level accounts provided in this book act as an important compliment to macro-social perspective reported in this work and others.

The book provides an overview of the meat packing industry. At the outset, Fink describes her experiences at IBP of getting a job, being trained, and working in a number of positions. She then traces the history of meatpacking in Perry examining the rise and fall of the community and the situation of individual workers in the plant. Fink turns next to describe the impact of gender in the meatpacking industry. Some have suggested that the entrance of women into the workforce resulted in a decline in wages and working conditions, a view Fink debunks. Fink also deals with the way race impacts local culture, plant policy, unions, and everyday life. About one-half of the IBP workers were from minority groups. The older, more established workers who held most of the best jobs were European Americans, while the newer workers, who labored at more physically punishing jobs, were African American, Latin American, or Asian American. Fink provides several personal histories of minority workers that reveal both the hard times that they experienced and the insidious ways in which blatant racism affected them. Fink also deals with social class as it relates to packing house work.

Fink provides an epilogue to her work in which she furnishes follow-ups on the lives of people at IBP. She reports that many of the those she worked with went on to have their lives

unravel as personal tragedy haunted them. Several were convicted of felony crimes and ended up in the Iowa State Prison, and yet still others fell prey to a number of different problems. "Annie," who drove an old car in need of a front-end alignment that she could not afford, crashed into a gravel pit where she drowned. "Pete," an ex-convict who had been in prison for murdering his former wife, was returned to prison for attempting to murder his girl friend. "Susan" stabbed her boyfriend in the heart and was charged with aggravated assault. The boyfriend was gravely wounded but survived. Susan disappeared. "Roberto" left IBP for a series of jobs, none of which lasted long or were satisfying. The only workers who fared well were those who had gained the better jobs and were holdovers from the era of the strong meat packing unions. The newer workers, mostly women and minorities, seemingly have not had, and may never have, the opportunity to attain comfortable jobs and livable wages.

The lives of the workers that Fink examines are far from the idyllic rural farm life that has been idealized in myth and legend. The reality of the IBP workers was a world of sexism, racism, powerlessness, and degradation. Even Fink found that the knowledge and insight about life that she brought to IBP were no insulator from the cruelness of working class life. Fink had to find a "mentor" in the plant, a male fork lift driver, before other workers would come to her aid to make her job survivable. Her work life as a woman, like the women in the plant that she writes about, was difficult, far from "liberated."

Readers will find this book easily readable, even captivating. They may feel a little like witnesses to an accident who can see the worst developing, and then find themselves unable to look away. Exploitation of workers certainly existed at IBP and seemed to spill over into their individual lives. How Fink continued to work there is surprising given the physical strains, sexism, racism, and dehumanizing atmosphere of the plant.

Packing plant work is often dirty and dangerous, but even worse it is oppressive to the spirit. Perhaps the strength of this book comes from the interweaving of macro and micro levels of analysis. Readers are presented with a "cold," large scale, structural analysis of the social forces that changed both the rural environment and packing industry. This analysis is made much more real through showing how the larger forces impacted the lives of the plant workers.

This book is not a text nor could it be used as one, but it might well serve as an excellent supplementary reader to courses in industrial sociology, sociology of work, or social stratification. It might also be used in an introductory class to provide basic insights into social class, work, gender, and race relations. Freshman college students should easily be able to read this book. The author makes no assumptions about the abilities of her readers. Little jargon or technical language is used. She lays out the information in a straight forward, understandable manor. This book makes a contribution to understanding rural wage earners. Readers will find it intriguing.

Born Hutterite. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Black Hat Productions, 1997. 52 mins. $150.00 purchase, $35.00 rent.

Jerome R. Rosonke
Northern State University

More than 50,000 Hutterites live in over 300 communal colonies in western Canada, Montana, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota. There are also a few colonies located in New York, England, Germany, and Japan. Their communal lifestyle is rooted in ideas taken from the Christian Bible where a sharing of earthly goods is advocated in Acts II. The Hutterites

originated when a group of Protestant fundamentalist Anabaptists split off under the leadership of Jacob Hutter (hutter means "hat maker") in 1528. Religiously they are akin to the Mennonites and Amish. They practice the most modern farming technology, yet wear conservative, mostly black clothing. When a colony grows to about 150 persons, they begin the process of splitting so that the colony remains a workable size. Many Hutterites were in the Ukraine area of Russia when they lost their religious exemption to military conscription in the late nineteenth century. They moved from there to South Dakota in 1874. Still later, war efforts and conscription in the United States led the Hutterites to flee to Canada, leaving only one colony in South Dakota. The Hutterites established a reputation for being good farmers who paid their bills. When the Great Depression hit, they were asked to come back to the United States. Still today about 65 percent of all Hutterites live in Canada. The greatest number of Hutterites in the United States today live in colonies in South Dakota.

This video is not so much about Hutterites and their culture or religion as it is about why some Hutterites have left their colonies. It mainly tells the story of two persons: Sam Hofer and Mary Wipf. Hofer stated that he started "questioning things" long before he left the Hutterites at the age of 21 in 1893. Hofer suggested that much of life in a Hutterite colony was about discipline (e.g., kids have to stand in school, adults have to stand in church) rather than individual thoughtfulness. Like all colony members, Hofer completed an eighth grade education. He could have completed more education through correspondence courses, but was discouraged from doing so because the utility of education was discounted. With an eighth grade education, there were few outside jobs available beyond the colony, so Hofer became a farm laborer. Later, he wrote Hutterite cook books, and a book of fiction about living in a colony (also titled *Born Hutterite*). Hofer noted that the publication of his fictional work resulted in persons

leaving obscene messages on his answering machine. He also commented that colony members are divided on his book's merit. Some see it as damaging to the Hutterites, while others do not. Hofer apparently needed more freedom than the Hutterites could offer.

Wipf did not question her life as a Hutterite until her marriage to a colony member who turned out to be an alcoholic. She stated that her husband believed that he needed alcohol to tolerate life in the colony, but she wondered if this were paradise why did her husband need to drink. Wipf commented that due to her husband's drinking everything that went wrong in the colony was blamed on their family. Her husband's alcoholism and the treatment of the colony members eventually drove her into depression. She tried to get help from colony members. They told her that if she believed in Christ she would have strength. Wipf found this help inadequate. She sought further assistance from a psychiatrist who diagnosed her as suffering from depression. Her situation eventually led her to leave the colony. She took her children, had her husband committed for alcoholism, and then obtained a divorce. Wipf became a licensed practical nurse and worked in a nursing home. Life proved difficult beyond the colony. Her parents wanted her to return. Her children's transition was complicated. Some continued to live near her, some left the state, and others returned to the colony. Her husband was refused a Hutterite burial. Colony member, she believed, viewed her as crazy. Wipf hoped that this video would be held up to Hutterite ministers as a mirror to show them that they had failed her family, her husband, and herself.

Though the perceptions of Hofer and Wipf are the most thoroughly explored in the video, there is an attempt to provide other views from the colony concerning why colony life is the way it is and how Hutterites view those who leave. When both Hofer and Wipf left, there were consequences. They became estranged

from persons in the colony, and their family members were not entered into the colony genealogy. Also, colony member viewed them as gone, persons who have "rejected the truth, [and] belong to the devil," and they were excommunicated. Hofer and Wipf suffered, from a sociological standpoint, a social death.

This video is well constructed. The cinematography is well done with frequent changes of scenes. Those who view the video may well fall into three categories: (1) those who are knowledgeable of the Hutterites, (2) those who are fairly ignorant but open-minded, and (3) those who, for whatever reasons, do not like the Hutterites. The first group will probably not change their minds about the Hutterites, but will view the video as a good, if a bit biased, study. The last group will no doubt feel that their suspicions about the Hutterites have been confirmed. And, the middle group, perhaps also the largest group, will react in different ways, but perhaps most often negatively viewing the Hutterites as opposed to freedom of choice in regards to religion, occupation, and entertainment, and as hostile to contemporary educated thought about evolution, sex education, and making your own way in the world. This video is not a good one for those who are for the first time trying to get a sense of who are the Hutterites, their beliefs, and culture. This video will, however, prove insightful for those who already have some understanding of the Hutterites. It is a good study of why Hutterites choose to leave their colonies.

Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West by Sarah Carter. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997. 247 pp. $49.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.

Laura Colmenero
South Dakota State University

Middle-class, European-origin women were originally enticed to move into western Canada because of their supposed hardiness and high moral character. They were then heralded for their heroism in settling the wilderness, while aboriginal women who had lived there all along were little mentioned. This image of European-origin women had undergone a significant transformation by the mid-1880s. These powerful and courageous women soon became vulnerable and in need of protection from their men against aboriginal and Metis (persons of mixed aboriginal and European inheritance) inhabitants. Sarah Carter in *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* contends that the government and press in Canada developed and manipulated gender and racial images in their attempt to solidify power and control over colonial holdings.

A system of racial and gender beliefs (often false), according to Carter, was carefully constructed (as it had been earlier in India and in other British colonies) and became dominant in late nineteenth-century western Canada. Purity, submissiveness, piety, domesticity, a delicate constitution, and the role of savior of "white" men were the hallmarks of these women. Their men were brave and powerful, protectors of them from "the fate worse than death" at the hands of aboriginal (and Metis) men who were characterized as idle, worthless, and cruel murderers, cowards, and thieves. In the eyes of the "white" world, however, they were less dangerous than their feminine counterparts. Aboriginal (and Metis) women were portrayed as directly the opposite of their "white" counterparts. They suffered from an inherent moral weakness, were frightening in their cruelty, bloodthirstiness, and inhuman wish to mutilate the bodies of the dead. Ultimately, aboriginal (and Metis) women were portrayed as representing a danger to the security of the Christian family through their loose sexual habits that enticed "white" men to destruction. At the same time, they were seen as the drudges of their men, abused and discarded at their whim.

Captivity narratives (i.e., stories about indigenous persons taking settlers captive) were, Carter explains, one tool used for constructing this reality (clearly a false one) which justified the theft and colonization of aboriginal lands. Such narratives served to solidify community unity and purpose, to define the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, to emphasize the need for settlement to "civilize" the "savage" aboriginal population, to justify the harsh treatment of that aboriginal population because of its supposed brutal and dangerous victimization of settlers (particularly women), and to sustain and reinforce the need for a racially stratified and divided society.

Carter chooses media discussions (including newspaper articles, poetry, speeches, and narratives) on the captivity and subsequent rescue of two Canadian women, Theresa Delaney and Theresa Gowanlock, to demonstrate how the stories of these women were manipulated and falsified to fit within the boundaries of acceptable and useful gender and racial images. The facts of the story are simple. The husbands of Delaney and Gowanlock as well as seven Metis men (whose stories were all but ignored) were killed in a rebellion against the Canadian government over land guarantees in April 1885 by a band of Cree who took the two women, the wives and families of the murdered Metis men, and other Metis men and their families prisoner for two months. The media frenzy that accompanied their capture (Delaney was originally believed to have been killed) was rabidly anti-aboriginal and served to focus enraged hatred on the indigenous population. "Concerning Madame Delaney: [it was falsely reported] 'after cruelly maltreating her the Indians stripped off her clothes, bound her feet, dislocated her hip joints, and then in turn outraged her until she was dead. They continued as long as her body was warm'" (p. 77).

Most of the published information was patently false, and initially when returned to white society, the women, Delaney and

Gowanlock, explained they had been well-treated, thanks in large part to the efforts of several of the Metis men who were also captured as well as Big Bear (the leader of the band of Cree) and the aboriginal women in Big Bear's group. Soon, however, a new spin was placed on their stories. By the time it was all done, the true story had been manipulated and falsified into a pack of lies, much more useful in continuing the battle to displace and assimilate native culture.

Carter's investigation and analysis of the Delaney and Gowanlock situation is comprehensive and thought provoking. She substantially supports the premise that the two captivity narratives by Delaney and Gowanlock were manipulated to the advantage of the dominant European-origin Canadian society, but she fails to ever really get into the heads of either of the two women to provide us with an explanation of why they so rapidly and drastically changed their stories. In addition, the work promised on its cover and in the introduction a discussion of "the manipulation of cultural imagery in Canada's Prairie West," a purpose never fully achieved. The last third of the book does attempt a greater generalization by a more complete explanation of aboriginal women and the subsequent use of the same techniques to treat later non-European immigrants in the same manner, but it fails to deal in adequate depth with the wealth of other cultural imagery available for analysis.

American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture by Joane Nagel. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997. 298 pp. $17.95 paper.

Ellen Baird

South Dakota State University

This book examines how the Red Power Movement of the 1970s has changed ethnic identity and self-concepts of Native Americans in the 1990s. It is part of a series of books that Joane Nagel has written focusing on cross-cultural sociology. Nagel uses ideas from sociology and political science to buttress her discussion of how Native Americans have constructed a collective self-identity. Her book accordingly takes what she calls a "supratribal" perspective, and avoids dealing with the differences of the hundreds of North American tribes.

Overall trends for Native Americans, using research from sources such as U.S. Census Data, are explored to provide background for understanding issues relating to the emergence of culture and ethnicity. This book is well organized with a solid bibliography. All chapters are thoroughly cited. Citations in the chapters are easy to use for reference and further research.

Nagel divides her book into three parts: ethnic renewal, Red Power and the resurgence of Indian identity, and legacies of Red Power renewal and reform. Each of these parts contains three chapters that delve further into their topics. Nagel consulted several well-known Native American scholars to review these chapters, and this gives an unusual dimension to the book. The topic of ethnic identity is not only examined from the point of view of Nagel, but it is also grounded in narratives of Native American who were involved in the Red Power Movement.

There is one problem with this book. The thoroughness and voice of the book suddenly change in the chapter titled "Reconstructing Federal Indian Policy: From Termination to Self-Determination." The book moves from strong, factual, solid research to a loose, almost unsure voice. The supporting narratives that are provided are not as compelling. The chapter relies more on a review of literature. While Nagel does a good job in preceding

chapters discussing federal law as it relates to Native Americans, she seems uncomfortable trying to explain the particular body of federal law discussed in this chapter. The cases that she uses to ground her arguments are not the strongest that she might have used. This chapter appears to be an afterthought addition.

This book is, overall, a wonderful work. It is well organized, researched, and cited. Nagel has made good sense of the very complicated issue of Native American ethnic identity and provided an important addition for researchers studying issues relating to it.

Durable Inequality by Charles Tilly. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 299 pp. $29.95 cloth.

Mary Warner
Northern State University

Charles Tilly's latest work, *Durable Inequality,* examines structural inequality through use of a relational model. He explores how inequality develops, how and why it continues, and how it affects individual who are excluded. His relational model also reveals how similar social processes can be linked to different forms of inequality.

Early on Tilly warns his readers about his concern of "over-exampling" them, but, in truth, the first three chapters could use more examples. The patience needed to work through these example-short chapters, nevertheless, is well worth the reward. Tilly develops his model for durable inequality in these early chapters by explaining key concepts, defining his model, and explaining how it works. Most importantly, Tilly defines what durable inequality is and what the terms category and categorical inequality mean. What Tilly means by category is, for example,

gender (male or female). And, categorical inequality involves whether or not a particular group is included or excluded. In the case of gender, males would be the included category, and females would be the excluded category. Tilly explores how categorical inequality is sustained using especially the concepts of exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation.

To explain exploitation, Tilly relies on Marxian thought. He suggests exploitation involves how the included, the powerful who control scarce and valued resources, gain more from the excluded. Pay for the excluded, for example, is much less than for the included. Opportunity hoarding, according to Tilly, operates when a categorically bounded group (e.g., males) gains access to a prized resource. When access is gained, the group works to ensure its control. In other words, opportunity hoarding comes about when those who monopolize control of resources include only those who are similar in background, gender, religion, or some other characteristic. Opportunity hoarders may be, for example, males, Italians, Protestants, or another group that has gained access to a resource.

Other important concepts include emulation and adaptation. Emulation is exactly what it seems to be, that is, copying. More specifically, Tilly, when discussing emulation, means copying or imitating an already established organizational model. Such a model might include a model state, corporation, or association. The point is, according to Tilly, that categorical inequality is emulated when other aspects of an organization are copied. Adaptation is the final concept that Tilly introduces in his relational model. He uses this concept to note that through adaptation controversial and conflict-ridden inequalities become accepted.

Putting all four concepts to work, Tilly asserts that "exploitation and opportunity hoarding favor the installation of categorical inequality, while emulation and adaptation generalize its influence" (p. 10). Tilly strives to illustrate this point in the

remaining chapters. He centers his attention in each of these chapters on one specific case and shows exactly how the relational model works. The specific cases he uses include apartheid in South Africa, gender inequality in the United States, health care in the United States, and the situation of Catholics in Northern Ireland. Using a relational model with historical data, Tilly is convincingly able to make his case. He also further demonstrates how the excluded groups in these several different cases experience, or have experienced, basically the same fate of exclusion. Rather than simply viewing each case as independent and having nothing to do with the others, Tilly show that "durable inequality" is a generalizable fact.

Tilly, at the close of his work, comments that inequality appears to becoming more and more durable, especially along materialistic lines. He suggests that the future, in terms of inequality, might hold one of four possibilities: more of the same, Balkanization, material equalization, or what he calls new categories. More of the same is what it suggests, a continued perpetuation of present inequality. Balkanization refers to the reduction of exploitation through technological and organizational changes, but also suggests an increase in segregated camps of hoarders who would be vulnerable to invasion and attack from the excluded. Material equalization (the choice of Tilly) would involve those groups that have amassed surpluses redistributing them to the masses. Finally, Tilly suggests, based on historical changes in patterns of inequality, that new categories of inequality might emerge through either incremental action or political mobilization.

This work is monumental in scope, but, unlike Talcott Parsons' abstract grand theory, Tilly explains inequality in concrete terms. He effectively draws examples from every corner of the world, from different times, and from various types of societies. He uses his relational framework to explain how structural inequality develops, how and why it continues, and what

its effects are. Tilly produces an outstanding work not only theoretically but also in applied terms. Understanding what Tilly has found out about inequality leads not only to more questions about it but also to the possibility of addressing the problems it creates.

Culture of Intolerance: Chauvinism, Class, and Racism in the United States by Mark Nathan Cohen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 325 pp. $27.50 cloth.

Jack Niemonen
University of South Dakota

Despite complimentary reviews by William Julius Wilson and Yolanda T. Moses, among others, I had mixed reactions to Cohen's *Culture of Intolerance*. In the broadest sense, this readable and at times engaging book examines how a systematic failure to evaluate critically tacit assumptions in "American mainstream culture" promotes intolerance toward out-groups, especially minorities, and sustains inequality. Along the way, *Culture of Intolerance* evidences a variety of strengths. For example, the book offers a spirited and balanced defense of the concept of cultural relativism as a means to reveal these tacit assumptions. Accompanied by a useful review of empirical evidence, later chapters explain why the concept of "race" is not valid scientifically; demonstrate how "racial" explanations are inconsistent with, and contradicted by, genetics research (see pp. 50, 56, 59-60), and outline how American mainstream culture sustains "race" as a form of categorization (although the book does not explain how race *relations* are structured at the state level). These chapters provide a thorough but familiar critique of the claims of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *The Bell*

Curve, challenging especially the assumptions that intelligence can be represented by a single factor and that testing is free of cultural biases (pp. 235-36). They demonstrate that racial differences in testing are essentially meaningless.

The book turns to discuss at length the tacit assumptions that comprise the foundation of American mainstream culture, such as "freedom," "progress," "efficiency," and "Manifest Destiny." A concluding chapter constructs a defense of affirmative action programs for out-groups, primarily by revealing the hypocrisy in critiques of affirmative action. For example, affirmative action is a "fact of life" in corporate America, as evidenced in informal hiring practices, defense contracting, company bailouts, price supports, and trade protection.

In this variegated context, Cohen has put together a convincing argument that American mainstream culture discourages attempts to understand the role of tacit assumptions and—more broadly—paradigms, de-values cross-cultural and comparative analyses, rationalizes away anomalies, or what Cohen calls "failures," making the American mainstream system of beliefs "largely impervious to challenge" (p. 95), encourages ahistoricity; and thus fosters intolerance toward others.

These accomplishments make the book worth reading. From a *sociological* standpoint, however, the argument constructed in *Culture of Tolerance* is flawed on several accounts. Some of these flaws are minor. For example, Cohen's claim as to why societies have incest rules presupposes a knowledge of genetics that is so recent that it could not have provided the rationale for the practice in early societies (see pp. 24, 121), since these societies had little or no knowledge of genetics. Nothing can be found in the text that would suggest an alternative explanation such as the political economic account offered by Randall Collins and Scott Coltrane in their textbook *Sociology of Marriage and the Family*.

Other flaws involve how concepts are defined and used. For

example, Cohen's definition of "society" (which is contrasted with "nation" and "nation-state" in his book) is trite and not worthy of even an introductory text. Although "race" is discussed at length, "ethnicity" is mentioned only in passing. Perhaps Cohen equates "cultural groups" with "ethnic groups" (his book gives that impression). These concepts are analytically distinct and imply different processes as recent work in the sociology of racial and ethnic relations has shown. In contradistinction to a rapidly growing literature that argues that ethnicity is a socially constructed phenomenon emerging on the basis of contradictory developments within modes of production, structures of opportunity, and the "exigencies of survival," in Cohen's framework ethnicity is merely a manifestation of culture. This occurs despite his stated concern that multicultural education is doing little more than reviewing the obvious attributes of "other cultures," such as cuisines, customs, and rituals (pp. 100-1). Recent work has demonstrated that similarity of cultural practices is not sufficient to account for the formation of ethnic groups and not necessary to account for the formation of racial groups. These observations have profound consequences for any understanding of conflict generally.

In Cohen's framework, the concept of "social class" is based loosely on income and wealth distribution (see pp. 190-192). Cohen fails to provide any guidelines by which to distinguish social classes. And, the idea that social classes embody contradictory relationships in the competition for scarce resources is absent altogether from the analysis (as a counterpoint compare the work of Erik Olin Wright). Vague references to the abuse of power almost always refer to "leaders" who are misguided as a consequence of the uncritical acceptance of American mainstream cultural assumptions. These leaders are not identified by name or position. In the process, Cohen perpetuates the myth that "white male culture" is a monolith and the root of all evil today. A

sensitivity to class cultures and their consequences (e.g., as elucidated by Richard Sennett and Thomas Cobb in *The Hidden Injuries of Class*) is absent, the relationship between class and culture is not explicated, and the controversial work by James Klugel and Elliot Smith on *minority* prejudice toward other minorities is ignored.

The tone of the book suggests flaws that are more revealing. Cohen's tendency toward sermonizing, rhetorical questioning, and over-use of examples wears thin by the middle of the book, mars objective analyses, and reveals the author's tacit assumptions. Cohen's analysis is rooted firmly in contemporary American liberalism and does not at any point transcend that paradigm to offer something new. This is apparent in Cohen's recommendations for social change throughout the book, including his proposal for tax reform (see p. 167).

Cohen's sociology is a Mertonian-influenced structural functionalism that conceptualizes the social world primarily in the language of manifest and latent functions (e.g., p. 196). There is no surprise, therefore, that Cohen reproduces its inability to explain social change on grounds other than leaders' lack of "reasonableness." In Cohen's framework the basic organizing principle of social life is found in the superstructure, not the infrastructure. Society is organized mainly around cultural groups, not around the forces and relations of production constituting particular modes of production. Cohen implies that these groups have relatively clearly defined boundaries and constitute, in and of themselves, communities that have to varying degrees distinctive histories, social structures, and degrees of consciousness and cohesion. (To use one of Cohen's rhetorical devices, if this were not the case, how could he speak of "white male culture?")

Cultural considerations are more important than social class considerations for understanding issues such as racial oppression. Consequently, objective social structures such as the

split labor market have no role here. In Cohen's world, white males perpetuate intolerance as a consequence of the confluence of ethnocentrism and disproportionate power. Although Cohen cites approvingly dependency theory, he largely ignores, and fails to develop a critique of, the structural dynamics of capitalist systems, including the evolution of social class structures and their attendant consequences, the role of the state, including its presumed role as a neutral arbiter; and complex processes of legitimation. Neo-Marxian and neo-Weberian conceptions of the state which abandon the American liberal assumption of neutrality are not addressed (compare in this context especially the work of Claus Offe, Nicos Poulantzas, James O'Connor, and Theda Skocpol).

Cohen's cultural reductionism fits well the American liberal assumption that improving interpersonal communication and understanding between groups will of itself improve relations between groups. And, it is consistent with an older, refuted view of social problems as an objective condition that can be solved by teaching appropriate cultural values (see p. 281). However, I contend that Cohen's cultural reductionism inhibits an understanding of intolerance as a social process with motives in the material forces and relations of production constituting particular modes of production. On this ground, I would argue that the assumption that mutual tolerance will result in a more equitable society is idealistic at best. By reifying the concept of culture (that is, by conceptualizing it as a set of characteristics rather than as a dialectic), Cohen encourages a view that fundamental differences can be redressed through pluralistic political processes. Cohen's model of conflict resolution ignores the existence of objective class conflict rooted in contradictory interests. And, it presupposes an academic decorum that, in turn, requires exposure to, as well as an internalization of, a particular kind of middle class education—namely, the liberal arts. At a broader level, Cohen takes for granted (unjustifiably I think) the existence of a neutral

state that has the capability to adjudicate conflict in a system of political governance that is deemed democratic. However, it seems to me that intolerance cannot be reduced to a set of social psychological attributes. Intolerance implies social processes of inclusion and exclusion in the competition for scarce resources; as a consequence of political alliances and coalitions, the boundaries that are constructed are socially negotiated and continually contested.

In short, contrary to the claim of Yolanda T. Moses, Cohen does not offer "new paradigms within which to understand and talk about the differences that we see in human cultural groups" (book jacket). He offers a simplistic, and outdated, sociology that never steps outside of the boundaries of contemporary American liberalism. Despite these observations, I would recommend *Culture of Intolerance* to undergraduates on the basis of its strengths alone. Provided its sociological shortcomings are noted in class, this book may be useful to introductory sociology and racial and ethnic relations courses as a supplementary text. Students should be made aware that more inclusive critiques are available; especially, I have in mind the works of Herbert Marcuse, Eric Fromm, Christopher Lasch, William Ryan, and Michael Parenti, among others.

Diversity in the Power Elite: Have Women and Minorities Reached the Top? by Richard L Zweigenhaft and G. William Domhoff. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. 215 pp.

David A. Lopez
Creighton University

This book explores the extent to which ethnoracial minorities, women, and gay men and lesbians have entered the power elite. The authors define the power elite as executives in

major corporations, members of presidential cabinets, those in top military positions, and members of Congress. More specifically, this book assesses whether or not minorities have made inroads into the power elite, and, if so, how they got there, and if their presence has effected the power elite. A different minority group is discussed in each chapter. The general findings are discussed below.

Jews are overrepresented in the corporate elite. There have been few Jews in key presidential cabinet positions. Jews have made it to the top in the military where being Jewish is not an impediment to promotion. The number of Jews in Congress has steadily increased to the point of over representation, with more Jews in the House than Senate. These successes are attributed to a willingness to assimilate, high educational levels, and a history of experience as business people.

The number of women in the corporate elite has increased. The authors argue that women have been allowed by male executives to join the corporate elite due to pressure from wives and daughters, social expectations, and to establish a "buffer zone" between themselves and the public and lower status employees. Some women have been on presidential cabinets but only recently been appointed to key positions. Women have not made there way to the top in the military elite in appreciable numbers, primarily due to the role of combat experience in promotion. The number of women in Congress has increased steadily but they still are under represented. Women who have risen in the power elite tend to be well educated coming from well to do social and economic circumstances. The authors conclude that women strengthen the power elite by making it less impersonal while legitimating the system.

Although there are African Americans in the corporate elite, they are under represented. Those who are in the elite tend to be well educated, come from higher social and economic classes

than other African Americans, and have social connections. The future is not bright due to the low number of African Americans in the corporate "pipeline." Ten African Americans have served on presidential cabinets. In the military, 4.0 percent of those who are at least a one star general are African American. The number of African Americans enrolled in the military academies suggest that the number of high ranking African American officers should grow. African Americans have not fared well in the Senate but have done better in the House (accounting for 8.7 percent of the members). African Americans with darker skin tend to be disadvantaged in experiencing success in the power elite.

In the discussion on Latin Americans, the authors note the importance of considering the heterogeneous nature of the Latin Americans population. Latin Americans are under represented as both corporate directors and board members. Latin Americans who do occupy such positions tend to be men, from at least the middle class, and of Cuban descent. The authors note that similar to the situation of African Americans, skin color influences one's position. Influential Latin Americans and those in top corporate positions tend to be lighter skinned and Anglo in appearance. Four Latinos have been on presidential cabinets. In the military, very few Latin Americans are generals and it is unlikely that this will change in the near future. Two Senators have been Latin Americans and 26 have served in the House. Those in the House tend to be Democrats. For Latin Americans, social and economic background, ethnicity, and skin color all influence the ability to access the power elite.

Among persons in the corporate world, only 0.4% of those on corporate boards have been Asian Americans, being mostly of Chinese descent. Some Asian Americans have risen in the corporate elite through entrepreneurship. Asian Americans, like Latin Americans, are comprised of different subgroups with varied experiences. For example, Chinese Americans in the corporate elite

tend to be founders of their own companies while Japanese Americans have generally climbed the corporate ladder. There has never been an Asian American appointed to a presidential cabinet and there are none in the military elite. Asian Americans who have been elected to Congress have come from less affluent social and economic backgrounds than those in the corporate elite. Five Asian Americans have served in Congress and eight in the House, and all have been from California or Hawaii. The authors predict that Chinese Americans, due to their large numbers, educational credentials, wealth, conservatism, and access to loans from China, will continue to rise in the power elite. Other Asian Americans, like the Japanese, will remain in their respective positions.

A problem in assessing gay men and lesbians in the power elite is the issue of identification. Their status is assigned by self-identification and many choose to conceal their status. In the corporate elite, being an openly gay man or lesbian is an impediment to advancement. In the political arena, gay men and lesbians who have been successful tend to come from affluent backgrounds and be well educated. With a few exceptions, gay men and lesbians are not part of the political elite. There have been no openly gay men or lesbian generals in the military. The authors argue that gay men and lesbians in the power elite will continue to conceal their orientation due to social stigma.

The book concludes suggesting that although minorities have accessed the power elite, they are still under represented. For those who have gained entree, class origin is the most influential factor in access and mobility. The book relies heavily on anecdotes and other less exacting data to support the authors' contentions. The work would have benefited from a more sophisticated analysis of variables related to access to the power elite (e.g., regression analysis). Also, more of a discussion on strategies to increase diversity among the elite would have been welcomed. The book is, however, an accessible piece that systematically analyzes the issue

and offers a general overview of trends of who occupies the power elite. Unfortunately for advocates of diversity in the power elite, there are no real surprises.

The Future of Ethnicity, Race, and Nationality by Walter L. Wallace. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997. 199 pp. $49.95 cloth.

Kathi Rangel-Wrono
University of Nebraska, Lincoln

In this short but salient work, Walter L. Wallace covers the history of humanity from its inception, and attempts to explain, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "where we are, how we got here, and whither we are tending." He stops short of passing judgment, however, on what the next step should be, and how it should be carried out by the human cosmos.

Wallace attempts to convey the "going somewhere" of humanity, but cautions that in terms of the earth's history, "immersion in the here-and-now may be pretty much all we humans are capable of doing." He specifies that the focus of his book is "the forest, not the trees," and sees that focus as the entire human species over a time period of 200,000 years or more. Whereas most other works analyzing ethnic, racial, and nationality groups are close-up micro-analyses, Wallace chooses the "movie-from-a-distance" perspective of conveying human history.

The author argues that all of humanity originated in Africa, spread from there into an African diaspora, and subsequently to other parts of the globe. He uses the "grand cycle" to illustrate origination, dispersion, and the "luck of the draw," as to where peoples settled geographically. These elements, combined with "sociocultural founder effect and drift," led to physical differentiation. Migration and contact with other differentiated

groups then led to competition, the formation of coalitions between groups, and has led, or eventually will lead, to consolidation of the earth's racial, ethnic, and national groups once more.

To shore up his theory, Wallace uses examples of increasing intermarriage, not only within the United States, but also globally, as well as increased contact of racial, ethnic, and national groups through the global market. He argues, using elementary school teacher Jane Elliot's 1960s "blue eyes, brown eyes" lesson in racism based on genetic constructs that population inbreeding of races over a period of hundreds of thousands of years would result not just in genetic differentiation, but also in species differentiation. This statement is very Darwinian in its implications.

Wallace points out that the benefits of the consolidation of humankind into one global race include the ability to ensure global cooperation and preparedness to deal with catastrophic epidemics, global warming, and impending natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and potential collisions with asteroids and comets. Through global consolidation and cooperation of people of all races, nations, and ethnicities, he believes the human species has an opportunity to continue to exist for tens, hundreds, or even thousands of millions of years.

The author's ultimate argument treats nationality groups as "local and regional consolidators of ethnic and racial groups." They are seen as "way stations on the road to the eventual consolidation of all ethnicities into one global ethnicity, all races into one global race, and all nationalities into one global nationality." He terms this phenomenon "global species consolidation," and asserts that the melting pot is working.

Although Wallace's book provides interesting, thoughtful reading, and he backs his claims with major functionalist views, including those of classical theorist Emile Durkheim, whose construct of society was a smoothly functioning operation much

like the human body, it is probable that within the lifetime of most of those who read this review, global racial consolidation will not happen. Although no major war has been declared in many years, there are still far too many races, ethnic groups, and nation states who are locked in the conflict stage of the "Grand Cycle." Given the discussion of the Clinton administration of a future with no dominant or majority ethnic group, and the accommodations on the new U.S. government census forms for multiple ethnicities and racially mixed categories, however, global racial consolidation would certainly appear to be an eventual possibility. This book is an important work which should be carefully considered, whatever one's position regarding the author's concept of a "global melting pot."

Crime and Punishment in America: Why the Solutions to America's Most Stubborn Social Crisis Have Not Worked -- and What Will by Elliot Currie. N.P.: Metropolitan Books, 1998. 193 pp. $23.00 cloth.

William Du Bois
South Dakota State University

University of California, Berkeley, sociologist Elliot Currie is arguably the best living criminologist in America. His *Reckoning: Drugs, Cities, and the American Future* (1993) is the best sociological book on drugs. *Confronting Crime: An* American *Challenge* (1985) is a classic on the connection between crime and poverty. His new work continues this tradition. Currie provides an overview of effective programs, relevant research, and popular trends in criminal justice. By the time you read this book, it should also be available in paperback. It is a perfect supplement for a criminology class. It is a must read.

There were 200,000 inmates in federal and state prisons in 1971. Today, there are more than 1.2 million in prison and another half million in jails. Currie shows in painstaking detail why the American prison experiment has not worked. Examining each argument for increased imprisonment, he demonstrates emphatically that the research shows prison does not reduce crime. Taking to task such "experts" as James Wilson and many studies routinely cited by the popular media, he documents the true monetary and social costs of such a strategy. He carefully debunks individualistic, conservative arguments and shows that the solution to crime must be sociological. America cannot imprison our way out of violence.

If prison is not the answer to the crime problem, then what is? Most of the book is devoted to examining alternatives including prevention, social action, and redesigning the criminal justice system.

Currie shows how crime prevention programs are not useless "pork" as they have been portrayed, but realistic strategies to lower crime. Child abuse and neglect often lead to crime as an adult. Early intervention programs such as Healthy Start dramatically reduce later crime. Assistance for those at risk of developing problems also pays large dividends when programs are properly designed. In a carefully controlled experiment, students enrolled in a modest program at the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Michigan, were less likely to become habitual criminals as teens or adults. Additionally, keeping kids on track toward higher education greatly reduces crime. Research shows the value of training programs such as Job Corps, Head Start, and Quantum Opportunity Program. Research also demonstrates that investing time and attention in youth who have already begun a serious criminal career will reduce later adult crime.

The President's Commission on Crime in 1967 concluded "crime flourishes where the conditions of life are the worst." In the

current conservative political climate, social action has been neglected as a crime fighting strategy. Currie carefully documents that the research shows we must have social justice if we are to expect lower crime rates. The criminal justice system cannot just be a backup to handle abuses of severe economic deprivation that we have chosen to ignore. Cross-culturally, research demonstrates violence is closely related to economic inequality. America's individualistic "sink or swim" mentality results in higher crime rates. Currie shows the family is important precisely because it is the setting in which the consequences of extreme deprivation get lived out. Unemployment rates, for example, get translated into an insecure family atmosphere fraught with crisis and strain. Conservative writers are wrong when they assert that the family must be held responsible. Rather, the family must be given resources if children are going to experience real hope for the future. Currie argues we need to reform work, create more work, and make crucial services such as child care universal.

The current retributive criminal justice system is impotent to decrease crime. It reacts to crime rather preventing it and focusing on root causes. Rehabilitation has become politically unpopular. A retributive stance, however, does not work. Most inmates eventually will be released. Unless we treat their problems, they will emerge worse, not better. Often this creates bizarre situations. For example, California had in 1996 over 100,000 people imprisoned with serious drug problems but only 400 drug-treatment beds. The state has since added beds but still it has only one space available for every 1,000 inmates with drug problems.

Currie argues we need to build a reintegrative justice system where offenders change their ways and are reintegrated back into the community. Strategies that have been demonstrated effective include the Key program in Delaware and the Violent Juvenile Offender program which provide a continuum of care from custody to the community. We cannot just incapacitate people

and expect them to lead productive lives when they return to society. They need new skills and resources or they will return to the same old patterns.

Currie suggests we need to rethink the purpose of sentencing. Drug Courts have been effective in using the threat of punishment to get minor drug offenders into treatment. We need to examine new policing strategies. In Kansas City, efforts to get illegal guns off the street resulted in considerably lower violence six months later. In New Haven, a partnership between police and mental health professionals means those traumatized by violence could get help and support rather than turning to violent retaliation themselves. In many communities police substations have decreased crime.

The only criticism that one might make of this book is that it does not specifically explore restorative justice and the exciting possibilities of peacemaking criminology. But, America has a choice: whether to continue to invest in an imprisonment strategy with only negligible returns and huge costs, or address the real causes of crime and build a response that works. *Crime and Punishment in America* is a perfect book to use if you want to refute individualistic thinking about crime and move students to a more sociological understanding.

Modern Social Theory: Key Debates and New Directions by Derek Layder. London: University College London Press, 1997. 264 pp. $19.95 paper.

Elizabeth A. Gill
Randolph-Macon College

Borrowing selectively from elements of both classical and contemporary social theories, Derek Layder has set out to construct

a new theory of "social domains" which attempts to explain the relations between society, social encounters, and subjective experience. Domain theory accounts for situated activity by understanding it as one of four interdependent, but partially autonomous social domains: psychobiography, situated activity, social settings, and contextual resources. Layder also incorporates into his theoretical framework the elements that "bind" these domains together including social relations and positions, power, discourses, and practices.

The strength of Layder's effort lies in his direct confrontation of the unresolved micro-macro debate which dominated much of the sociological theorizing of the 1980s. Layder soundly rejects and attempts to "go beyond" those social theorists, such as Giddens, who stress the interplay between human agency and organizations as a hybridization or "synthetic alternative" of the two social spheres (p. 8). More specifically, he seeks to reconcile two broad camps of social analysis: those committed to interpretive analysis who view social activity as an intersubjective phenomena dependent upon active human agents, and those committed to institutional or structural analysis who view social interaction as a product of the workings of the structural-systemic features of society (p. 6). Layder's solution to the reductionist approach of most social analysis lies in his attempt to integrate social and psychological factors in the explanation of face-to-face encounters. Domain theory is, according to Layder, primarily concerned with understanding the nature of social activity in general and interpersonal encounters in particular. The active human agent's viewpoint is considered to be of crucial importance.

Layder begins by setting forth the central propositions of domain theory that will be addressed in-depth in the following chapters. He provides a concise outline of his theoretical framework and, in a rare moment of empirical specification,

provides the only substantive examples found in the text to illustrate his approach.

The link between the subjective world of the person and the person's more immediate social context is examined early on. Because of the centrality of the actor in the theory of social domains, Layder emphasizes the importance of "finding a place for the psychological interior of individuals within the broader framework of sociological analysis" (p. 74). The individual is at the same time both individual and social. Layder's contribution, at danger of psychologizing human interaction, stresses the importance of what he terms the psychobiographic domain which includes the psychological dimension of human existence without forgoing the importance of social forces.

Next Layder explores the broader social context while bracketing issues of social identity, subjectivity, and human agency. Under the broader auspices of Habermas' system-lifeworld distinction, Layder takes up a discussion of the three remaining domains of situated activity, social settings and, contextual resources with an eye toward examining the way in which social relations operate to tie the domains together. This discussion is particularly sketchy in that Layder fails to acknowledge the importance of bureaucratic organizations and their ability to control and manipulate the individual.

Still later the author discusses the various forms of power that weave through social relations, domains, discourses, and practices. Power is regarded as a ubiquitous, variegated phenomena, which is woven into the different social domains operating differently in each. Layder selectively draws from Foucault, Habermas, and Giddens' positions on the nature of power in modernity in an attempt to create a more comprehensive conception of power and its relationship to situated activity.

The culmination of Layder's theoretical position emerges when he focuses on the reciprocal relationship between situated

activity and the ongoing nature of society. The basic question becomes: to what extent are people free and creative in their daily lives and to what degree are they contained by social constraints, obligations and circumstances (p. 190)? He seeks to preserve the distinctive characteristics of psychological phenomena and situated activity by incorporating the psychobiographical factors of the individual into the emergent nature of social encounters. Elaborating on Goffman's notion of an interaction order that is loosely connected with other socials orders, he criticizes such theorists as Foucault, Giddens, Blumer, Garfinkel, and Habermas for overlooking the articulation between social system elements and situated activity.

At the outset of his conclusion, Layder in a sense sets forth an apologia for the inability of domain theory and his concentration on face-to-face interaction to incorporate collective phenomena, hence precluding any meaningful consideration of collective agency involving race, gender, and class groupings. There is also a lack of attention paid to "non-Western" people and issues of power on the global scale -- a domain that he does not touch upon. Merely explaining away issues of collective agency and diversity does not excuse its omission from his theoretical framework.

Layder has written a theory text that is based on formal rather than substantive social theory. He emphasizes the philosophical and analytical approaches to the development of knowledge and understanding of social life at the expense of accessible explanations of social phenomena which incorporate theory as a part of the sociological enterprise. In addition, his distinction between situated activity and psychobiography will make many sociologists uncomfortable. A great number of sociologists, according to Layder, have overlooked the psychological dimension of human existence to highlight the importance of social forces. Layder's zeal to recenter the human subject could be read by some as reductionist and psychologizing.

The problem with Layder's conceptualization of the psychobiographical domain lies in his incomplete attention Mead's concept of the "social mind" and how reflexivity plays into situated action.

Finally, the strength of this book lies in its conflation of classical and contemporary social theory to confront one of the major issues facing social scientists today: the quest to understand the interface between the individual and social system. Its strength is also its weakness. The complex and selective presentation of the key of points of several classical and contemporary theorists is devoid of any meaningful discussions or contextualization of the social phenomena that led these theorists to formulate their theoretical positions.

Modern Social Theory: Key Debates and New Directions will work best as a supplemental social theory text for graduate students. This book probably should not be recommended for undergraduates simply because a tremendous amount of background work in classical and contemporary theory would have to be conducted prior to tackling this text.

Adoption, Identity, and Kinship: The Debate over Sealed Birth Records by Katrina Wegar. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 169 pp. $22.50 cloth.

Cindi Penor Ceglian
South Dakota State University

Acceptance of diversity is being promoted today in America as a means of bringing individuals together to demonstrate that difference does not mean deficit. Katherine Wegar is quick to point out in her book *Adoption, Identity, and Kinship* that adoption does not necessarily fit into this equation.

Wegar observes that when adoptees, adoptive parents, and the adoptive's birth parents are compared to the American ideal of the nuclear family, wherein children are blood relatives, they are perceived as different. According to Wegar, because "pathology in our society is a central marker for difference, those who are considered different in some way are usually also labeled deviant and pathological" (p. ix). From this perspective, Wegar begins her exploration of the argument between those who advocate that birth records should be sealed and the search advocates who believe adoptees should have unhindered access to their biological histories.

Neither side in the sealed records debate understands the experiences of adoption within the social context, according to Wegar, and therefore both tend to pathologize adoptive kinship. She states that her objective in writing this book "is to examine adoption and adoptees as socially and culturally constructed categories and to consider the place of these categories in the sealed records debate" (p. 3). To illustrate her point, she states that most scholarly literature on adoption has been produced by psychiatrists, psychologists, and child welfare workers who have explained problems of adoptives and their families in individualistic terms, focusing on family interaction rather than the social institution of adoption. She contends that family sociologists, on the other hand, have neglected the study of adoption because of their biocentric definitions of family, perceptions of adoption as a solution to a social problem, and because family sociologists associate adoption with "welfare services," a less prestigious area of research left best to social workers.

Wegar begins her analysis of the debate explaining that initially the identities of birth parents were not hidden from adoptives. Minnesota passed a law in 1917 that prohibited identifying information and sealed records became the rule rather

than the exception by the 1940s. The major factor contributing to this change in policy was the notion that it is was in "the best interests of the child" because it protected the adoptive child from the stigma of illegitimacy, ensured the stability of the adoptive family, and it safeguarded the privacy of the birth parents. Because social workers were more in a position than doctors, lawyers, or the clergy, who had previously been handling adoptions, to offer confidentiality, the new regulations also legitimized and professionalized the social work profession. New legal issues arose in the 1970-80s concerning there rights of unwed fathers, open adoption, transracial adoptions, children with special needs, and the rights of individuals to know their biological history. In terms of the latter, search advocates have challenged the constitutionality of sealed records on the grounds of right to privacy, including the right to self-identity, equal protection clauses, and their first amendment right to receive information about their biological heritage, a necessary part of identity formation.

The book presents both sides of the sealed birth records debate in a balanced and insightful manner. At the same time Wegar provides sociological insight regarding their arguments and the institution of adoption, illuminating that which each side fails to recognize. For example, each side presents "nature versus nurture" arguments regarding relationships between biological and adoptive parents and their children, yet neither side focuses on the experience and social context of child rearing, child bearing, the politics of race, gender, and class or the differences among adoptees who may or may not want knowledge of their birth history.

In her concluding remarks Wegar points out that while individualistic explanations can be helpful in terms of individual therapy, they do little to improve the experiences of adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents who are stigmatized individuals

because of social norms which perceive their status as inferior or pathological. She recommends a feminist critique of motherhood as a patriarchal institution, stating that definitions of motherhood are central to the sealed records debate.

This book would be relevant to any audience desiring to go beyond the "nature versus nurture" rhetoric to examine, from a larger sociological perspective, the adoption process. In particular, adoption professionals, including social workers, are offered the opportunity to view how their professional emphasis on confidentiality is construed as "secrecy" in the negative sense. Individuals who are intimately tied to the sealed adoption records debate, such as adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents can equally gain understanding of the stigmatization process, and finally adoption reformers, both those who advocate closed and open records, are offered another view to consider.

Elders' Views on the Right to Die: Facilitating Decisions about Life Sustaining Treatment by Carol Ann Baer. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1997. 128 pp. $30.00 cloth.

Susan L. Schrader
Augustana College

Presenting original nursing research, Baer examines elder Bostonians' perspectives on four life-sustaining treatment protocols and whether demographic characteristics, health status, and levels of hope have an influence on elders' preferences for life-sustaining treatments. The topic is an appropriate and timely contribution to the Garland series on the elderly in America, although the volume does not deal with the issues lauded in the title. The work (apparently a 1992 dissertation recast as a book) does not address elders' views on the right to die, nor does it discuss ways to

facilitate decisions about life-sustaining treatment.

In fairly short order (125 pages including preface, twelve appendices, and references), this book presents the author's effort to identify descriptive and correlational data to answer six key questions: (1) What are the hope scores of participants? (2) What is the health status of
participants? (3) What are the preferences of participants regarding life-sustaining technologies? (4) Is there a relationship between select demographic variables and stated preferences regarding life-sustaining technologies? (5) Is there a relationship between hope and stated preferences regarding life-sustaining technologies? and (6) Is there a relationship between health status dimensions and stated preferences regarding life-sustaining technologies? (pp. 7-8).

Baer does an excellent job of defining and operationalizing variables, utilizing existing instruments (with established reliability and validity) and creating her own (the Life-Sustaining Technologies Scale [LSTS]), and presenting in appendices the protocol insuring consent as well as instrumentation and data. A nonprobability sample of 328 elders (age 62 to 98) from the Boston area was used as the basis for the study (no date for the study was given).

In addition to answers to her six questions, Baer found that 32 percent of the sample had a living will and 41 percent reported having a proxy (in the event they were unable to make medical decisions on their own). These rates for elders were , according to Baer, much higher than the rates Emanuel reported for American adults in 1991 (p. 35). Moreover, elders who were older, widowed, more educated, or female were more likely to have taken these steps to insure that they in place an advance directive.

Baer also used five categories that elders highlighted as significant to decision-making on life-sustaining treatment. From the research data, a rank-ordering of categories most positively

associated with personal use of life-sustaining treatment by elders appeared as follows: (1) physically and mentally capable, (2) a limited life expectancy due to advanced age, (3) mentally capable of managing activities of daily living but not physically capable, (4) financially incapable of withstanding the cost of care, and (5) physically capable of managing activities of daily living but not mentally capable (p. 8). Data from the Life-Sustaining Technologies Scale (LSTS) revealed that elders' were most positive about using CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation), followed by renal dialysis (kidney machine), respirators (breathing machines), and gastrointestinal feeding (stomach tube).

This work was methodologically clear. It's author drew on dimensions of current nursing theory in laying groundwork for this study, and she adequately addressed the questions she posed. This book might consequently offer a useful template for those interested in replicating such a study, although a journal article of the work might be more succinct and financially attractive to the consumer. Conversely, many issues raised in the literature review should have been addressed in this research. For example, the debate between the fear of death versus the fear of unnecessary prolonging of life is absent in the analysis and discussion. Baer also states that conceptual models in nursing often give center stage to "human interaction and dialogue as essential to understanding the meaning of each individual's unique way of experiencing the world" (p.6). Relatedly, I wondered if a qualitative approach might have shed more light on the relationship (hope and perspectives on life-sustaining technologies) in which Baer was most interested.

Baer reports some interesting data. The ramifications of these findings for nursing, gerontology, elders, and an aging American society deserve greater elaboration. If levels of hope are not significantly related to LSTS scores, what other interpretations might there be? Are there limitations in the LSTS instrument that

deserve revision or are there other constructs that might help to explain elders' approaches to life-sustaining technologies? As another consideration, if elders do not perceive advanced age as a deterrent to seeking life-sustaining treatment (presuming one's mental and physical capabilities remain intact), this signals tremendous repercussions in health care arenas where health care providers seek to hear and implement the wishes of elders exercising self-determination. Baer's work provides some rich descriptive data, yielding some potent implications for public policy in the next century.

Critical Choices: Applying Sociological Insight in Your Life, Family, and Community by Scott Sernau. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing, 1997. 249 pp.

Thomas C. Langham
Our Lady of the Lake University

No longer can sociologists simply sit idly and contemplate the world. Those days are gone as they well should be. Like scientists in the more developed sciences, including especially the cognate disciplines of economics and psychology, sociologists are now seeking to use the body of sociological knowledge and skills that they have generated so that they may actively work to improve the human condition. Sociological practice, the professional practical use of sociology in everyday life, is a rapidly emerging area within sociology. Sociologist Scott Sernau in *Critical Choices: Applying Sociological Insight in Your Life, Family, and Community* aims to show introductory-level sociology students how they can use sociological insight in their everyday lives as an introduction to sociological practice.

Sernau, like many sociologists who today write for

introductory-level audiences, uses C. Wright Mills' "sociological imagination" as a gambit to get readers to consider the relevance of sociology for their lives. He notes that there is an intersection between individual biography and collective history. In that intersection, Sernau points out, all individuals play out their lives making, as the title of his book suggests, "critical choices."

For students this work emerges as an excellent introduction to sociological practice exposing them to the useable knowledge of sociology and providing them with the opportunity through real-life exercises to engage in the active use of sociology. This work also, perhaps just as importantly, encourages teaching sociologists, who have for too long allowed themselves simply to preach from their classrooms, to get engage their students in the full potential of their discipline through its active practice.

This book covers much of the usual territory covered in introductory texts (culture, social structure, socialization, deviance and social control, organizations and groups, social stratification, race and ethnicity, institutions including the family, religion, government, and economy, and modernity and social change) and does so making use of lively examples dispersed throughout the book (e.g., comparing social structure to both language and a coral reef, discussing the shifting roles of women and men from colonial times to the present, pointing out that race and ethnicity are today very much real everywhere from Yugoslavia to Los Angeles, and so on). Readers will accordingly gain not only a basic understanding of sociology, but it will be reinforced through examples that are easily remembered.

Sernau's selection of sociological literature is up to date, including mention of the works of sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu on class habitus and cultural capital, Stephanie Coontz on myths about the family, and Mark Gottdiener on the new urban sociology. The careful regard given to explaining the sociological enterprise is not, nevertheless, what makes this book worthy of attention. What

makes it worthy is that Sernau challenges his readers to apply what they have learned to understanding their everyday lives.

Through experiential exercises that are embedded throughout his book, Sernau challenges readers to begin to practice sociology. Two kinds of experiential exercises are provided. One located at the end of each topical section within chapters is called "For Reflection," while the other positioned at the conclusion of each chapter is titled "Reaching Out, Digging Deeper." The latter kind of exercise is particularly oriented toward professional development with recommendations for doing additional readings as well as for actively exploring sociological ideas. For instance, the "Reaching Out, Digging Deeper" exercise located at the end of the chapter on stratification "Planning Ahead, Getting Ahead, and Keeping Your Head" is a good example of Sernau's strategy to lead students to apply sociology in a scholarly, professional way. The chapter not only recommends a number of classic and current sociological readings but also encourages students to explore stratification issues that relate to their families, the community, and the media.

In both varieties of exercises this book forces students to examine sociological literature, data on trends and patterns, confront popular myths, explore current controversies, and dig into their own communities and cultures. Sernau also explores in the preface how teachers might use, in conjunction with the experiential exercises, journal writing, short written assignments, class discussion, small group discussion, and additional readings as tools that can lead students to begin to practice sociology. The integration of experiential exercises throughout the work is what especially makes this book different from most other introductory sociology texts.

Sernau makes clear that the secret to sociological practice is doing it, but if there is any shortcoming to this work, ironically, it is the lack of discussion concerning how sociologists do their

work. While students are asked to engage in experiential exercises, precious little attention is devoted to actual discussion of sociological research methods. If sociologists are to engage in practice, attention must be given to developing skills. Sernau may have chosen to downplay methodology in an introductory work in an effort to hook readers on sociology and its practice, and, of course, an author cannot, and should not be expected to, cover everything in a brief introductory work.

With its practice orientation this book provides an unique new addition to the legion of introductory-level works. Instructors of introduction to sociology courses may want to use this book as a brief introductory text to be accompanied with additional readings or it may be used as a supplementary work with a more comprehensive text such as Thomas J. Sullivan's practice-oriented *Sociology: Concepts and Applications* (1998, 4th ed.). Students and faculty, either way, will like this book. Sernau brings sociology to life as he introduces students to the practice of sociology, and his work no doubt will encourage some who have become armchair sociologists to get their students out and start doing sociology.