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Introduction

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Book Reviews

Introduction

Jean H. Thoresen, Book Review Editor

The following book reviews address some important issues for clinical sociologists and serve to focus attention on our emerging disciplinary identity. Harry Cohen's work presents an attempt to link specific sociological theories to direct clinical intervention. Marie Matthews calls for a rapprochement of social work practice with sociological thinking, analysis, and data, a position similar to that advocated by John Glass and Jan Fritz (1982) in terms of the needs of clinical sociology as a field. Monica McGoldrick's edited volume suggests how a sociological variable may be translated into the basis for a specific type of clinical practice.

As both Betty Reid Mandell ("The study of ethnicity has been late in coming to professional schools . . .") and Leo Miller (" . . . social work failed to give sufficient attention to the new positivistic source of sociology . . .") emphasize, sociological thinking has been less than fully utilized by practitioners in various fields. It is important, however, that as clinical sociologists we do more than lament the lack of input from sociology and by sociologists into other disciplines or practices. Developing clinical sociology as its own recognized field is at least equally important, perhaps more so.

The early practice of sociology, as well as social work, as Leo Miller points out, developed from the interests and commitments of similar groups of people. Robert E. L. Faris (1967) elaborates in his "Heritage of Sociology" volume, *Chicago Sociology 1920-1923*, the connection between theory and practice within an urban context in an earlier era. Alfred McClung Lee's proffering of humanistic sociology as a basis for practice is complemented by the larger tradition of clinical sociology as presented by Louis Wirth (1931).

What is it that is special about clinical sociology? What is it that suggests clinical sociology as a particularly heuristic and effective perspective from which to assess and understand both human behavior and effective intervention for change or amelioration? Perhaps we can speak here of the connections among practice, theory, and research.

Books like Cohen's are part of a valuable tradition which recognizes that sound practice must be based on sound theory. The necessity for sound theory in turn supports the classical research orientation of sociology. If the study of ethnicity has only recently informed practice, it is not because of a dearth of sociological studies emphasizing the importance of ethnicity; to remain within the Chicago milieu for a moment, it would be difficult to overlook *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918 *et seq.*) as a landmark contribution to sociological theory and research. Sociologists are in

a unique position to assess the effects of an element of human social organization (membership in an ethnic group) that is often treated only as a macro-level variable, on the micro level as well, in terms of its specific impact on a particular family system. This sort of linkage of macro and micro levels of theory and practice offers fertile ground for sociological growth.

Sociological theory moves easily between these levels and incorporates as well what is identified in Mandell's review as the "mezzo" level (cf. Merton 1957:9). Recognition of a continuum between macro-and micro-level concerns, rather than a dichotomous polarity of positions, is well within the sociological mainstream. There is a need to increase understanding of the ways in which both theories of the middle range and grand theory can be translated into clinical intervention strategies. The books reviewed in this issue contribute to our understanding of such connections.

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