

wise, witty, and chutzpadic attack on a tough problem and I highly recommend it to my colleagues, clients, and friends.

Violent Emotions: Shame and Rage in Marital Quarrels, by Suzanne M. Retzinger. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988. 238 pp., \$19.95, paper and **Psychiatric Response to Family Violence: Identifying and Confronting Neglected Danger**, by Edward W. Gondolf. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1990. 280 pp., \$34.95

James A. Kitchens

University of North Texas

For the practicing sociologist, especially those interested in individual and family issues, there is good news and better news about these two books. The good news is that both books are useful and can be read with great profit by the student of medical sociology research. The better news is that one of the books is outstanding and is useful to the *practicing* sociologist.

Both books are written by sociologists interested in mental health and both deal with the timely topics of violent behavior and emotional interaction at the level of the family and other small groups. Each attempts to present both a theoretical statement and an empirical evaluation of the theory based on close scrutiny of several case studies. It is at this point that the quality of the two books begins to diverge for the practicing sociologist. Retzinger's book makes a greater contribution to the field of sociological practice by offering information and making direct suggestions that can be translated readily into intervention tactics, especially for the counseling sociologist. Gondolf's book, on the other hand, maintains a traditional sociological perspective and is solid medical sociology research. It is perhaps most useful as a subtext in a graduate-level mental health class.

Retzinger's book is a microtheory about the connection of the emotions of shame and anger in individuals' response to today's world. Her thesis is that people respond to a constant threat of the loss of an important social bond with the emotion of shame. The word shame is of growing significance among mental health professionals today. A number of books have been written in the last few years on the subject. (See Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame That Binds You*; Fossom and Mason, *Facing Shame: Families in Recovery*; and Kitchens, *Understanding and Treating Codependence* as examples.)

In these books, shame is defined simply as the sense of personal inadequacy and lack of personal worth. Most of these researchers argue that shame arises from the fear of abandonment in the family of origin. Retzinger shows the sociological significance of these arguments. As Retzinger sees it, the fear of alien-

ation from the group or the loss of a significant social bond produces the feeling of shame as an ongoing process of life.

Retzinger's goal is a theory of conflict founded on her concept of shame. She builds on the traditional theories of Durkheim, Marx, and Cooley, among others, and incorporates the more modern-day theories of family systems and other therapeutic methods. Her argument is that conflict—or anger, violence, or rage, as she calls it—is a natural and spontaneous response in the individual when the emotion of shame is left unattended. Shame, she argues, is the emotional signal of an impaired social bond and, if left unacknowledged, escalates from anger to rage in a self-perpetuating cycle. The main ingredients of her theory are:

- 1) An important social bond is threatened in the individual's life, often with disrespect for the worth of the person.
- 2) The individual experiences shame, which is a signal of the disrupting of the system.
- 3) Shame is not acknowledged and the self feels alienated and attacked.
- 4) Anger follows as a protest against the threat and as a mechanism for saving face. Depending on the importance of the bond, the anger may be small and short-lived or it may be long-lasting and severe. Retzinger reminds us that people kill for social reasons, like lost affection and lost honor.

After meticulously illustrating her ideas from four case analyses, Retzinger concludes her book with a helpful section on rebuilding the broken bonds. It is at this point that the book becomes a study in sociological practice. Knowing what shame and anger are and where they come from, the question for the practitioner becomes: What can we do? Retzinger's suggestions are succinct and are drawn from literature on communications and from theories of symbolic interactionism. It is unfortunate that her suggestions are so brief. Perhaps sociologists are not yet convinced that their theories can be applied to real live human situations and that problem-solving tactics can be developed from them. At any rate, Retzinger opens the door to the application of her theories even if she herself is not able to step completely through the door. Opening it in such a decisive manner is perhaps contribution enough.

Gondolf's book is a carefully researched and well-written description of the limitations of psychiatric responses to family violence. These limitations include a lack of understanding of the difference in family and non-family perpetrators and of how victims of violence differ. Hospital staff often underinvestigate and minimize patient reports of violence, and frequently are unwilling to confront the violent behavior of perpetrators. Gondolf presents numerous cases to demonstrate these and other defects of the medical establishment's response to family violence. He concludes his book with several suggestions for changes that range from protocol in evaluation interviews to

institutional and legislative initiatives that will result in greater responsiveness to family violence.

Gondolf's book is a well thought out and researched documentation of the limitations of the medical response to violence in human interaction. His book's greatest contribution is to encourage changes at the policy-making level and in the training of medical professionals.

The Rich Get Richer: The Rise of Income Inequality in the United States and the World, by Denny Braun. Chicago: Nelson Hall Publishers, 1991. 383 pp., \$29.95, \$19.95, paper

Assets and the Poor: a New American Welfare Policy, by Michael Sherraden. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991. 324 pp., \$34.95

Josephine Ruggiero and Eric Hirsch
Providence College, Rhode Island

Both of these books deal with the problem of economic inequality, but in very different ways. *The Rich Get Richer* is a broad analysis of recent trends in economic inequality and poverty rates in the U.S. and the world, while *Assets and the Poor* prescribes an alternative to the current welfare system in order to cure poverty in the U.S.

In his chapters on the U.S., Braun documents the oft-noted increase in inequality in the U.S. during the 1980s. He shows how basic features of our economic system—such as segmented labor markets, deindustrialization, and chief executive officer compensation programs—as well the Reagan administration's tax and spending policies created increased wealth and income disparity. The strength of the book is a review of the many potential costs associated with extreme inequality, including an increase in political violence, economic stagnation, a variety of social problems for working and middle-class families, and the increased willingness of the super rich to engage in risky investments. Thus Braun shows how the current banking and savings and loan debacle can be fruitfully viewed as a result of increasing income and wealth at the top of the U.S. class structure.

In chapters on inequality around the world, Braun again describes the severe inequality which has the top 1 percent of income recipients gaining 15 percent of world income while the poorest 20 percent get 1 percent (p. 49). He offers a fine critique of development theory by marshalling evidence that shows how investment by multinational corporations and loans by the International Monetary Fund actually lead to greater economic inequality. Multinational corporate investment leads to an initial increase in gross national product per person but slower economic growth in the long term due to the export of profits.