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## Book Notes

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## BOOK NOTES

Dennis Saleebey (Ed). *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice*. New York: Longman, 1992. \$20.95 papercover.

The strengths perspective offers an inspirational alternative to conventional social work practice models that view clients and their problems as pathologies requiring treatment and rehabilitation. Instead of treatment, the strengths perspective emphasizes empowerment as a means of helping their clients identify and utilize often unrecognized capacities to solve problems. While the strengths perspective is a new conceptualization in social work, it draws on a historically grounded tradition of optimism in the profession which has emphasized growth, change, self-help and development. However, the optimism of the strengths perspective is both an advantage and a weakness. There is a danger that strengths practitioners may underestimate the desperate conditions in which many people find themselves, and that this may facilitate a sanguine view of human problems. The book does, however, attempt to address these issues and it offers an excellent introduction to the strengths approach. It should be widely read.

Mark A. Mattiani (Ed). Special issue of *Research on Social Work Practice* on "Research and Practice: Bridging the Gap." Vol. 2 no. 3. Newbury Park, CA. Sage Periodicals Press, 1992.

Conference proceedings do not make good books but this one may be an exception. Discussing the latest issues in social work research, it draws on the expertise of leading social work research investigators. The book focuses on the effectiveness of clinical intervention and various questions relating to the ongoing debate on this issue are addressed. In addition, it contains a useful account of university-agency collaboration in social work research. As many schools of social work are under increasing pressure to secure external funds for research, the prospect of contracting with social agencies will require more discussion. While these and other issues are dealt with rather briefly, the book's summary of the issues offers useful guideline for the future discussion.

Peter J. Pecora, James K. Whittaker, Anthony N. Maluccio with Richard Bath and Robert D. Plotnick. *The Child Welfare Challenge*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992. \$46.95 hardcover; \$25.95 papercover.

Although child welfare has been one of the primary field of social work practice since the profession's early years, the preference for a training in psychotherapy among social work students has distracted the professional schools from their historical mission of training child welfare personnel. In recent times, however, it appears that schools of social work are again emphasizing child welfare. Recent efforts by social work educators to establish links with local public child welfare agencies, have rekindled an interest in the field. The publication of a new book on child welfare practice will, therefore, be welcomed by educators and practitioners alike. This is a very thorough book, covering the field comprehensively and providing an up to date review of current trends and practices. There are chapters on child abuse and neglect, adoption, foster care, family preservation and other aspects. Well organized and adequately detailed, it is essential reading for anyone interested in knowing more about child welfare practice in social work.

F. Rivera and J. Erlich (Ed). *Community Organizing in a Diverse Society*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1992. \$21.75 papercover.

Community organization has been a distinctly unfashionable field of social work practice for the last decade and this is reflected in the limited literature which has been published on the subject in recent years. However, as local participation, town meetings, decentralization and other populist notions pervade the new political dispensation in Washington, the timing of this book may be fortuitous. In addition, its use of multiculturalism as an organizing theme offers a new and helpful perspective. By focusing on race, oppression and deprivation simultaneously, the editors come closer to capturing the most pressing dimensions of social need in the United States than do most other publications on the subject. Their emphasis on these dimensions as a basis for practice is tempered by a realization that the task

ahead is a formidable one. But by addressing these realities directly, the book offers new insights and makes an important contribution to the field.

Windy Dryden and Colin Feltham. *Brief Counseling: A Practical Guide for Beginning Practitioners*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992. \$27.00 papercover. (Distributed in the U.S. by Taylor & Francis, 1900 Frost Rd, Bristol, PA 19007).

This book offers a useful, practical step by step guide to brief counseling by two of Britain's leading exponents of this approach. Although short on theory, it does attempt a review of the brief practice method in social work, its development and conceptual basis. However, the book's strength lies in its clear exposition of the different steps involved in brief practice intervention. Written specifically for Britain's Open University (which caters for non-traditional students through distance learning) the book's easy to follow approach will be particularly appreciated by students.

Charles T. Glotfelter (Ed). *Who Benefits from the Non-Profit Sector?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. \$22.95 hardcover.

There has been a growing interest in the non-profit or voluntary social welfare sector in recent years. The acceptance of welfare pluralism as a legitimate basis for social policy, has stimulated more research into the nature of this sector, its operation and particularly its funding. Glotfelter is an acknowledged expert on the fiscal aspects of the non-profit sector, and his latest book is a welcome addition to the literature. Bringing together authors with a knowledge of the major non-profit fields (education, religious organizations, social services, arts and culture and the foundations) he asks how the voluntary sector distributes its resources. However, the answer to this question is not clear-cut, partly because of methodological problems and partly because of the disparate character of sector. Nevertheless, some conclusions are possible. The book dispels the popular belief that the non-profit sector exists primarily to serve the poor. While many low income beneficiaries are indeed served by this sector, it caters for many other groups as well, including the affluent.

In fact, when the non-profit sector is broadly defined, relatively few non-profit agencies serve the poor as their primary clientele. On the other hand, the non-profit sector does not distribute resources excessively towards the affluent. Another finding is that the non-profit sector is closely integrated with the public and commercial sectors. Because of the significance of the non-profit sector and its close relationship with the nation's tax structure, more research is urgently needed.

Albert Roberts (Ed). *Contemporary Perspectives on Crisis Intervention and Prevention*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991. \$30 hardcover.

Since its emergence in the Post-War years, crisis intervention is now a well established approach in social work practice, and the literature on the field is quite extensive. While some may doubt the need for yet another book on the subject, the collection offers an useful overview of the field and it is highly suitable for classroom adoption. In addition to tracing the development of the crisis intervention approach, the book deals with the application of this model in various fields of practice and discusses different practice models. Particularly useful is a section dealing with prevention, a much neglected topic in social work practice. Although written primarily for social workers in direct practice, the book's emphasis on prevention and related issues enhances its relevance to social work students who need to transcend the constricting focus of much of the clinical literature.

Kristine E. Nelson and Miriam J. Landsman. *Alternative Models of Family Preservation: Family Based Services in Context*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 1992. \$49.75 hardcover.

For most of this century, social workers engaged in child welfare practice have responded to cases of child neglect and abuse by removing children from their families. The prevailing wisdom has dictated that the removal of the child from the negative environment of the dysfunctional family offers the best prospect of promoting the child's future well-being. Today this attitude is being challenged, and the alternative family preservation approach has gained ascendancy. Although the task

of remedying a negative family situation is formidable, many social workers now believe that services should be directed towards the family and that children should be maintained in their own homes. Nelson and Landsman's study of 454 family preservation cases examines this issue in depth. It concludes that family preservation services work well with many different types of families and in different social settings. However, the authors suggest that family based services can be even more effective if they are adapted specifically to fit the needs of different client populations.



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