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Theorizing Welfare: Enlightenment and Modern Society. Martin O'Brein and Sue Penna.

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a useful resource for anyone interested in the field of international social work.

Martin O'Brein and Sue Penna, *Theorizing Welfare: Enlightenment and Modern Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998. \$74.50 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

Within universities, the study of social welfare is often viewed as a vocational preoccupation, committed to the training of social workers and social administrators rather than the scholarly investigation of a disciplinary subject matter. While faculty in schools of social work are regarded as kindly individuals whose commitment to improving social conditions is laudable, their work is not believed to be within the mainstream of serious academic scholarship. The study of social welfare is somehow regarded as of peripheral importance to the primary concerns of the academic community.

Theorizing Welfare should dispel the stereotypical image of social welfare inquiry a fundamentally non-academic. The authors have succeeded in writing an extremely sophisticated book which displays a impressive knowledge of current trends in social theory, and their implications for social welfare. Although billed on the cover as an 'accessible introductory text', it is not a work for the beginner but requires a sound familiarity with social theory, and a grasp of the way theorists approach the field. Of course, similar books have previously been published, particularly by British writers, but this is one of the first to focus on the most recent developments in social theory. Indeed, its niche is to focus primarily on those post-Enlightenment theories that have implications for current thinking in the field of social welfare. The chapters in the final section of the book which deal with a variety of post-modern currents in social thought are undoubtedly the most interesting. These chapters range over the work of theorists as disparate as Foucault, Jessop, Giddens and Offe and provide helpful summaries of their ideas.

The book's wide sweep is commendable but it comes at some cost to an in depth analysis of the implications of current social theory for social welfare. Although each chapter discusses these implications, the discussion is brief, and tends to emphasize critical rather than policy aspects. Similarly, the organization of the

material is questionable. Even though the authors make a case that subjectivism pervades Hayek and Friedman's work, it is hard to accept their assertion that these writers are post-Enlightenment thinkers. Nevertheless, this book is essential reading for those interested in recent trends in social thought and their implications for social welfare.

Melvin Delgado, *Social Work Practice in Nontraditional Urban Settings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. \$45.00, hardcover, \$21.95 papercover.

One of social work's great strengths is its diversity. It is not only that social workers are a very diverse group in terms of their personal characteristics but that they use a variety of practice techniques to meet the needs of their clients. They also discharge their professional obligations through a rich variety of practice settings. As many commentaries on the social work profession have shown, social workers have many different functions in society and make different contributions to the enhancement of human well-being.

While the role of social workers in conventional social service agencies is now well documented, little attention has been made to their activities in what the author of this interesting book calls 'non-traditional settings'. Focusing primarily on urban communities comprised of people of color, he examines the roles that social workers can and do play in utilizing local indigenous institutions to address pressing social needs. These local institutions include bath houses, beauty parlors and barber shops, botanical shops, food establishments, ethnic businesses, places of worship, laundromats, liquor stores, night clubs and single occupancy hotels. These institutions are focal points for community interaction and thus provide an opportunity for social workers to reach local people and help them deal with a variety of challenges. For example, bath houses can be useful in delivering a variety of educational and other services that respond to the HIV/AIDS threat. Similarly, he provides numerous examples of how places of worship are not only concerned with spiritual needs of their members but with their material and social needs. The expansion of economic and social services by these places of worship offers an exciting opportunity for social work involvement.