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## *Reflections on Community Organizing: Enduring Themes and Critical Issues.* Jack Rothman (Ed.).

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of power pervade social policy. It also shows how complex these issues are. The introduction of social security in Britain was not only the result of the efforts of competing interest groups but of more fundamental struggles around the role of the elderly in society, of labor markets, of income and wealth and indeed of the survival of capitalism as an economic and social system.

In an attempt to frame the discussion and interpret the chronology, Macnicol draws on established theoretical perspectives which offer different explanations for the origin of modern day social security systems. However, having stated his own theoretical preference, he does not always integrate theory with the historiography, and the mustering of historical evidence does not seem to lend sufficient weight to the argument. Nevertheless, this is an important contribution to literature which should be consulted by anyone interested in the historical evolution of social policy in Britain.

Jack Rothman, (Ed.), *Reflections on Community Organizing: Enduring Themes and Critical Issues*. Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1999. \$35.00 papercover.

Although community practice has been an integral part of social work for many decades, it has taken enjoyed different degrees of popularity at different times during the profession's history. In the early years, community practice found expression in settlement work and in agency coordination, and, by the 1950s, community social services planning was well established. In the 1960s, community practice adopted a more political stance, using a variety of organizing tactics to assist low income communities campaign for civic and social rights. By the 1980s, the political impetus for community action had weakened and it appeared that few social workers were much interested in the field. However, by the mid-1990s, there were signs of a resurgence of interest in community practice. By this time, a new journal devoted to community social work had been established, and many more papers on the subject were being presented at national conferences.

As community practice enjoys a resurgence, the time is ripe for scholars working in the field to engage in a thorough review of its history. There is a need to account for the different orientations community practice has taken, and to examine the way it has

experienced cycles of popularity and demise. Rothman's book may not meet this expectation but it offers fascinating insights into the views of those who have helped shape the field over the last thirty or so years. Explicitly designed to provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their experiences, this collection makes for engaging reading. In addition, the book invites comments from a few more contemporary writers on the subject. The core contributors are a veritable galaxy of notables in the field. Their personal observations on diverse aspects of community practice document for posterity the perspectives, beliefs and activities of a generation of scholars who made a vital contribution to the development of community social work practice.

David Denny, *Social Policy and Social Work*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. \$75.00 hardcover.

Although social work has traditionally sought to apply professional knowledge, values and skills to deal directly with the needs of individuals, families and communities, it has also been engaged in wider social issues. Today, many social workers accept that attempts to deal with the personal problems of individuals cannot be detached from wider social policies that address their needs through services, resource allocations and other interventions that transcend social work's preoccupation with direct practice.

In Britain and several other European nations, the majority of professional social workers are employed in statutory agencies where their direct practice skills are applied in a larger context of legislation, policies and procedures. In this milieu, social work practice is largely shaped by procedural routines emanating from the wider social policy framework. In the United States, the numbers of social workers employed in the public sector has declined steady over the years but here too, social work practice is contingent on the requirements of the wider policy environment.

David Denny's book is written for social work students in Britain. It seeks to show how social work and social policy are linked, and how social work practice in fields as diverse as child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, family treatment and disability interacts with wider social policy concerns. However, the book is not merely descriptive but encourages students to