



December 2001

Review of *The Course of Gay and Lesbian Lives: Social and Psychoanalytical Perspectives*. Betram J. Cohler and Robert M. Galatzer-Levy. Reviewed by Ronald J. Mancoske 215 The Gender Division of Welfare: The Impact of British

Ronald J. Mancoske
Southern University, New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Gender and Sexuality Commons, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons, and the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Mancoske, Ronald J. (2001) "Review of *The Course of Gay and Lesbian Lives: Social and Psychoanalytical Perspectives*. Betram J. Cohler and Robert M. Galatzer-Levy. Reviewed by Ronald J. Mancoske 215 The Gender Division of Welfare: The Impact of British," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 4 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol28/iss4/13>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



the implementation of OhioCare, providing for the mandatory enrollment of Medicaid beneficiaries in a managed care system.

The findings revealed that the average family member involvement with the RMI was close to the deepest involvement listed on the measurement scale used. Also, between 1995 and 1997, the families reported statistically significant decreases in satisfaction with the services.

As mentioned previously, the consumer sample did not include persons in trouble with the law nor those who were primarily substance abusers. By excluding consumers who were more likely to present contentious and highly troublesome behavior to their families, "family burden" requires further research.

One minor error appeared in the reasoning of the sick role. The authors explanation of the sick role attribution (as measured by family members agreement with six statements such as "my relative didn't try hard enough to get better") was reversed and should have indicated "disagreement" rather than "agreement" with the six statements would "signify acceptance of the sick role . . ." (p. 91).

In this book, Tessler and Gamache make a solid contribution to knowledge about the impact of mental illness on families. The thirteen chapters are organized and presented to be read selectively or collectively. The volume is literally packed with material to inform and guide service providers and other mental health stakeholders. It should be required reading in programs that prepare practitioners for the mental health professions.

James W. Callicutt

The University of Texas at Arlington

Bertram J. Cohler and Robert M. Galatzer-Levy, *The Course of Gay and Lesbian Lives: Social and Psychoanalytical Perspectives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. \$50.00 hardcover.

Cohler and Galatzer-Levy have written a scholarly book with a rich breadth of social and psychoanalytic literature used to examine the life course of gay men and lesbian women's lives. The book analyzes and critiques various theoretical models in this complex and developing field of study. They trace historical, political, and socio-cultural influences on life course development.

They cite social and psychoanalytic literature in ways that help readers grasp the depths of theoretical thinking, as well as limitations in methodology. Citations are richly woven into the text and are extensive—over eighty pages of references. The central focus of this book is that clinical psychoanalytic processes represent an important area of study of the meaning of sexual orientation across the development of the life course.

The book begins with a description of the study of biological hypotheses about the origins of same gender sexual orientation. It moves onto a discussion of the course of development from early childhood through older ages, and then moves into other gay and lesbian related topic areas, such as relationships with families, adjustment of offspring, mental health, and stressors. It works toward conclusion merging into a detailed discussion of the contributions psychoanalysis has and can make.

A wide range of biological hypotheses as a basis for the determination of sexual orientation is summarized and critiqued in this book. The work covers contributions from experimental animal research, gender nonconformity in early childhood, resistance to change of sexual orientation by traditional therapies, and a lack of non-biological explanations which may better account for the development of sexual orientation. The authors question much of this literature on philosophical grounds (reductionist thinking in that sexual orientation is not an orientation at all but a matter of choice, and these choices are fluid and mutable) and on methodological grounds (inadequate sampling plagued with difficulties in identifying reliable and valid groups differentiated by sexual orientation). The arguments on the biological bases for determination of sexual orientation are cogently summarized: there is little evidence of genetic transmission, prenatal hormonal influences, or structural changes in the central nervous system. They posit that biological predispositions remain unsupported and that there is little evidence of biological factors as relevant in understanding sexual orientation.

The book examines life course developmental explanations of sexual orientation, and stage-oriented developmental processes. These models are open to social and cultural dynamics which shape life experiences. These models are criticized methodologically for being prejudiced by historical and cultural dynamics,

especially questioning the meaning in people's self-descriptive "narrative stories." Remembered pasts, experienced present, and expected futures become part of a culturally defined self-presentation of a "good story." Memories of attraction from early childhood are suspect. Life course developmental models based on stages are similarly dismissed—gay men and lesbian women are well versed in the available biological and psychological literature and their narrative stories reflect this "good story" rather than insight into their true experiences. Ironically, when innumerable stories are presented as case studies of practicing analysts, methodology is not critically examined with the same dismissal.

Why the certitude of the dismissal of biological and social science models explaining development of sexual orientation and even sexual drive in favor of a psychoanalytic model? The book is replete with examples of how the history of psychoanalysis has contributed to scientific distortions and oppression of gay men and lesbian women, and has and continues to be used by some psychoanalysts to mask bigotry and prejudice in the name of (pseudo) science. The authors note the widely held presumption of deviancy and pathology in psychoanalytic theory. This remains so long after given up by social sciences and nearly all mental health practitioners. They decry how slow the core of psychoanalysis is to change. Prejudices are used to encase normative difference as pathology. The science which refutes this is faulted on various methodological grounds—weak samples, weak measures, priori assumptions. However, it is amazing to note in this book that most adherents to the model rely exhaustively on case study methodology. Elaborate and arcane explanations of the origins of desire and orientation are almost solely explained based on descriptive case study. Depending upon which prism the reader views this work, the reader may be grateful for the depth of explanation provided, or may wonder why the authors give such credence and attention to models based on such methodology when they are extensively critical of other methodologies.

What makes Cohler and Galatzer-Levy's book especially interesting is that it inspires deeper understandings of complex issues. The prism in which one views this work evokes polemics. It would not be easy for even the psychoanalytically informed reader to come away from this text without a richer understanding

based on the comprehensive and far-reaching depth of the literature cited and analysis provided. What do you see? Is it the certainty of scientific support for the proposed psychodynamic paradigm, or the ambiguity from the plurality of multiple understandings from other critiqued models? This book will stimulate the reader to analyze further—perhaps even to advance insightful dialogue. The state of knowledge demands methodological enhancement and tentativeness in judgments before any models are enshrined as scientific paragons, especially a model which the authors describe as replete with a history of fostering a climate of prejudice and harm to clients, promotes intolerance, and erroneously focuses on pathology. When building social supports are known to improve lives, it becomes difficult to countenance a model with such a troubled history, despite good intentions.

Ronald J. Mancoske

Southern University at New Orleans

Mary Daly, *The Gender Division of Welfare: The Impact of British and German Welfare States*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. \$64.95 hardcover, \$23.95 papercover.

Daly's *The Gender Division of Welfare* is a comparative analysis of the welfare state outside the tradition of typology-building advanced by Wilensky, Titmuss, and Esping-Andersen which differentiates itself from this line of comparative scholarship empirically and theoretically. To avoid the difficulties inherent in constructing welfare state regimes with a limited number of cases where many nation-states must be "dragged" into particular categories Daly opts to examine two cases in-depth.

Using the lens of gender division and stratification, Daly traces the development of the British and German welfare state with particular emphasis on family policies which she suggests have been largely relegated to the sideline in comparative research. Critical of "mainstream analysts'" tendency to employ macro-explanations which support either convergence or divergence among regimes, Daly suggests that the feminist perspective is rarely content with this broad-brush approach or heavy reliance on quantitative indicators. Yet Daly identifies shortcomings within the growing body of feminist scholarship, noting that