Review of *Building Community Capacity.* Robert J. Chaskin, Prudence Brown, Sudhir Venkatesh and Avis Vidal. Review by Michelle Livermore.

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the book for these differences to be explored further. These contributions therefore sit uncomfortably with the overall approach of the book. They potentially widen its scope to include important inter-disciplinary debates, but nothing happens. They are just left to sit there before the book moves on to another huge 100-page chapter on product and labour market policies. While much of what both commentators say is first class, it is a shame that the issues are not focused in a well-structured and themed debate.

All in all the book makes an excellent reference source for comparative social policy analysis, and there is so much to commend it, particularly to post-graduate students who are undertaking comparative quantitative research. However, I would find it difficult to recommend to a wider readership unless they were particularly interested in the EU debate about integration.

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Robert J. Chaskin, Prudence Brown, Sudhir Venkatesh, and Avis Vidal, *Building Community Capacity*. Hathorne, NY: Aldine d Gruyter, 2001. $ 25.95 papercover.

Periodically during the history of the United States, policy-makers, charitable foundations and universities have attempted to address the problems plaguing urban neighborhoods through community-based initiatives. For instance, the settlement house movement, which began during the latter part of the nineteenth century, focused on strengthening poor neighborhoods and linking them to outside resources. During the 1960s, the focus on neighborhoods reemerged with the Gray Areas and Mobilization for Youth initiatives early in the decade and the Community Action and Model Cities programs later in the decade. The focus on neighborhoods reemerged during the 1990's with 'comprehensive' community interventions that attempted to 'build community capacity'. *Building Community Capacity* focuses on the most recent version of community-based intervention.

Chaskin and his colleagues explicitly define "community capacity" and identify its' primary components. They view community capacity as the "interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital" (p. 7) in a community that can be

used to promote community interests. This includes both the assets and relationships within the community and those that link the community to outside research. The book discusses four strategies for building community capacity: leadership development, organizational development, community organizing and fostering collaboration among organizations. The authors distill lessons from a vast literatures on these topics. They summarize different approaches within each strategy and discuss the relative advantages and disadvantages of each. In addition, they present challenges and issues related to each strategy.

Leadership building, the first strategy presented, includes both formal training and on the job training. Each has advantages and disadvantages. While formal approaches are well-defined and structured, on the job training approaches are linked to an organization's operations. This allows participants to learn skills needed immediately by their organization and motivates them to remain involved when the see the results of their actions. Also addressed here are important issues related to leadership development. These include selecting individuals to participate in leadership development activities and institutionalizing leadership development.

The second strategy presented, organizational development, refers to strengthening existing organizations and developing new organizations. The decision of whether to work with existing organizations or start a new organization depends on numerous factors including the willingness and ability of existing organizations to change to meet community needs. In cases where organizations are willing to change, technical assistance and funding linked to it can help organizations acquire the skills required to undertake new roles in the community. When working with existing organizations is not a viable option, new organizations can be developed to enhance community capacity. Key considerations before undertaking new organizational development include the vast amount of time and resources required to do so and the turf issues that may emerge if existing organizations feel their funding or constituent base is threatened by the new organization.

A third component of community capacity building is community organizing. Chaskin and his colleagues present conflict and consensus organizing approaches as both alternative and

complementary organizing strategies. Conflict strategies such as protest, boycotts, and sit-ins are useful when one's goal is to publicize an issue or when individuals or organizations in power are unwilling to respond to community needs. Consensus strategies, such as promoting mutual respect and identifying opportunities for mutual benefit, are useful when those in power are willing to make changes. Most important in this discussion is the recognition that both approaches may be used at different times by the same organization, depending on the immediate circumstances.

Finally, collaboration among community organizations is essential for building community capacity. The authors present several mechanisms for fostering collaboration. Broker organizations can be formed to bring organizations together, to service as a clearinghouse for information or even to assume community governance responsibilities. Coalitions of organizations can also foster collaboration, as can specific partnerships between a small number of organizations. In order for collaboration to succeed over time, constituent organizations must receive more benefit than cost. Choosing participants who represent all segments of the community and who are seen by community members as legitimate is also important, as is being sensitive to the political, racial and historic dynamics of the community.

The discussion above is only a brief prelude to the many words of wisdom contained in this book. *Building Community Capacity* makes a major contribution to the community development literature in a variety of ways. First, it presents an amazing synthesis of literature related to leadership development, organizational development, community organizing and organizational collaboration while managing to be both accessible and critical. Second, treatment of the typically controversial topic of 'conflict versus consensus' organizing is pragmatic and insightful. Finally, the most compelling feature of the book is the thorough integration of examples into the conceptual discussion. For each point made, an illustrative, real-world example follows. In addition, detailed case examples of three organizations and brief synopses of the work of more than twenty other organizations appear in the appendices. My main criticism of the book is that additional material regarding strategies for linking community leaders and organizations to outside resources is needed since access to external resources

is such a vital element of community capacity building. On a more banal note, the excessive use of acronyms when referring to community organizations becomes monotonous and is sometimes confusing. Neither of these minor points, however, prevents me from recommending that every academic, practitioner and student interested in community practice read this book.

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Bruce A. Thyer (Ed.), *The Handbook of Social Work Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001. $ 84.95 hardcover, $ 65.00 papercover.

The *Handbook of Social Work Research Methods* is a research text written by social work researchers, most with social work practice experience, for a social work audience. The focus is on applied social work research, and most of the contributors to this edited book are well-known social work scholars. This book illustrates the breadth of research methods used by social workers.

The *Handbook* will be most useful as a primary text for MSW foundation research courses, although there also are things here for more advanced students and experienced researchers (e.g., Corcoran's chapter on locating existing measurement instruments). The *Handbook* is organized into four major parts, it provides comprehensive coverage of topics typically covered in such courses, and in general the chapters are well organized and written at an appropriate level for the intended audience.

The first six chapters in Part I cover fundamentals of quantitative research such as sampling, principles of measurement, and statistics. It is surprising that this section does not include a chapter on the computer analysis of data, and that the chapter on statistics barely mentions this important topic. Also, somewhat surprisingly, there is not a chapter on basic principles of research design. However, following the six chapters on fundamentals of quantitative approaches there are seven chapters on particular types of quantitative research designs such as surveys, randomized controlled trials, and single-system designs, among others. Basic principles of research design are covered throughout many of these chapters (e.g., external validity is discussed in the chapter