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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Edgar F. Borgatta and Marie L. Borgatta (ed). *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992. \$ 340 hardcover (4 volume set).

At the height of the Reagan era, questions about sociology's viability as an academic discipline were asked with increasing frequency. Enrollments in sociology courses had declined significantly, job openings for sociologists in both academic and professional fields had fallen, two major sociology departments (at Rochester and Washington universities) had been shut down and several others were under threat of closure. The vague but popular notion that sociology was somehow linked to a 1960s style, anti-establishment counterculture had negatively affected the discipline's public image, and Mrs. Thatcher's emphatic declaration that "there is no such thing as society" not only reflected popular attitudes, but seemed officially to proclaim the subject's demise.

Today, sociology is in a far better position. While many sociologists still feel vulnerable, recent trends are encouraging. In August 1992, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted that academic vacancies in the field had increased and that more undergraduates were opting to major in the subject. While enrollments are not as high as they were in the 1970s, marked improvements have been recorded. The publication of scholarly books in the field also appeared to be on the increase, and new theoretical developments promise to take the subject into innovative and exciting directions.

A significant portend of the recent resurgence of interest in sociology, was the publication in 1992 of the first ever *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. This major endeavor, which has taken several years to complete, and which covers no less than 370 entries in four volumes, demonstrates that continuing anxieties about sociology's future are unfounded. The ability of a large number of sociologists to collaborate effectively to produce this prodigious work, and to cover a very wide subject matter in a condensed yet informative way, attests to the discipline's

vitality. It also attests to the editors' skill in selecting both the entries and the authors needed to provide a comprehensive summary of sociology's contribution to knowledge.

As the editors explain in their introduction, the selection of entries proved to be a major challenge. Initially, no less than 1,700 potential entries were identified and these had to be reduced to a manageable number. The final product is, as the editors point out, pragmatic and eclectic, but it does cover a wide spectrum which will be of interest not only to sociologists but other social scientists as well. For obvious reasons, students of sociology will be delighted with the publication of this major reference work.

Although brief, the editors' introduction provides further clues to the selection of entries. Reviewing what they believe to be the major challenges facing contemporary sociology, the editors' selection of entries seems to address their concerns. For example, they point out that sociology has lost its historic commitment to social melioration, and they lament the way sociologists have disdained applied endeavor while other fields such as social work have developed opportunities for professional engagement. Almost as if to address sociology's neglect of the applied domain, the encyclopedia contains numerous entries on applied topics including social work itself. Similarly, the rapid development of specialized sub-fields within the discipline is reflected in the very wide range of topics covered in the entries. It would, as the editors suggest, be to the benefit of sociologists to foster closer linkages with those disciplines which have already colonized these fields.

While some readers will question the choice of certain entries, the *Encyclopedia's* attempt to be as comprehensive yet as succinct as possible is commendable. By limiting length while managing to include a large number of topics, the publishers have kept its price within reasonable limits. This should facilitate the *Encyclopedia's* acquisition not only by libraries but by academic departments and even private individuals. The *Encyclopedia of Sociology* is an important publication, and a worthwhile acquisition which will have lasting value.

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Steve Joshua Heims. *Constructing a Social Science for a Postwar America: The Cybernetics Group, 1946-1953*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993. \$15.95 papercover.

S. J. Heims in his new and intriguing book presents a historical and analytical account of the persons and events surrounding a series of interdisciplinary conferences immediately following the end of World War II. These ten conferences, supported by the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, brought together leading scholars whose ideas came to be called cybernetics, the application of modern technologies to human decision-making and control functions. Focus is given by Heims to the core group of conference scientists who represented varied fields of study, including social sciences (Gregory Bateson and Lawrence Frank), engineering (Julian Bigelow), neuranatomy (Gerhardt van Bonin), neurophysiology (Ralph Gerard and Rafael Lorente de No), psychology (Molly Harrower, Heinrich Kluver and Kurt Lewin), ecology (G.E. Hutchinson), psychiatry (Lawrence Kubie), neuropsychiatry (Warren McCulloch), sociology (Paul Lazarsfeld), anthropology (Margaret Mead), mathematics (John Neumann, Walter Pitts, Leonard Savage and Norbert Wiener), philosophy (Filmer Northrop), and physiology (Arturo Rosenblueth). This listing, with the addition of Frank Fremont-Smith, who was the medical director of the Macy Foundation, represents the original members of the Cybernetics Group, and suggests the wide range of perspectives that were represented at the small interdisciplinary meetings.

The purpose of the Macy Foundation conferences was to support the development of technologies for understanding and creating a better world. At a time when much of the world was devastated by modern wars which featured technological marvels like guided missiles and atomic bombs, and was at the same time excited by new electronic marvels like computers and television, some hoped that this same emerging technology could be applied to create the tools for constructing a more rational and humane society. The approach was scientific and reductionistic, but still was grounded in a powerful idealism, which included the belief that models could be found through science to end violence, to solve social problems, and to cure mental illnesses. While the Cybernetic Group did tend

to focus on individual and small groups dynamics, there was clear recognition of the interaction of persons with the external environments and the roles of poverty and oppression in broader ecological models. The conferences provided a forum for an intellectual elite to talk, debate, argue, and stimulate each other's thinking.

Steve Heims painstakingly describes even minute details of these conferences, the people involved, and the contexts in which their meetings were held. But it is not the content *per se* of these meetings which is important. While the ideas which emerged and developed are very much a part of our thinking today, it was the process which intrigued the author. Here was a small elite group of scientists who were essentially committed to a general belief that positivistic science and empirical methods were the hope for the future, yet ironically their views developed through a very experiential unplanned idiosyncratic group gestalt. At first, the reader may become intrigued by the interesting descriptions of the meetings and their participants, then become slightly annoyed by seemingly extraneous detail, and finally struck by the incongruity between the views of the participants and the process of the meetings. Heims masterfully take readers on a inductive path in his highly effective expose about how scientific revolutions happen. In the end, the reader will hear a message that ideas, knowledge, truth—if this word is not too strong—are constructed through the interactions of people in collective interchange, and that this does not occur solely through the private work of scientists. Science depends on friendships, values, creativity, enthusiasm, courage, and all of the gestalt we know as being human.

Heims gives us a more realistic understanding about how we as social, behavioral, biological and physical scientists can interact if we wish to have any meaningful impact on our world. First, our ideas can be shared in multidisciplinary settings, and not only in the separate annual meetings of organizations like APA, ASA, or NASW. Second, we can be more risk-taking in expressing controversial ideas, to state unpopular views, to debate, and to grow. This may be difficult in university environments which sometimes reward the use of traditional research methods and scholarly investigations which do not

deviate too profoundly from the theories of respected scholars. Finally, we need to find ways to retain inquisitive minds and allow ourselves to become excited by ideas which may come to us at any time and from almost any source. Perhaps we need to break away from our research grinds and day-to-day tedium to experience . . . and maybe to be truly creative . . . to be fully alive.

This book, while inspiring, is not light reading, but it does have a compelling flow which makes it difficult to set aside. The volume would be an excellent collateral text in a course on epistemology or the history of the development of ideas in the social sciences. For social science scholars, learning about the lives and methods of outstanding leaders in our fields certainly does contribute to introspection and possibly to the enhancement of our own effectiveness.

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Nigel Gilbert (Ed). *Researching Social Life*. London: Sage Publications, 1993. \$22.95 papercover.

Royce A. Singleton Jr., Bruce C. Straits and Margaret Miller Straits. *Approaches to Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. \$37.00 hardcover.

These books on social research methods cover the basic material necessary for introductory research courses in the social sciences and the human service professions. Both books deal with scientific reasoning, problem and theory formulation, basic concepts (such as variables and hypotheses), measurement, survey and survey questionnaire designs, qualitative designs, use of existing data bases, data processing, basic data analysis, ethics, and writing research reports. In addition, both books provide ample examples to illustrate the material and Singleton et al. has a glossary and is accompanied by a useful instructor's manual that provides ideas for lectures and exercises, answers to questions in the text, test items, and suggestions for student assignments.

Both books are oriented primarily to research consumers and to traditional producers of research. However, from the

perspective of teaching research methods to social work students, both books have limitations. In particular, neither book sufficiently emphasizes the use of research methods by social work practitioners to enhance their practice. For example, neither book covers single-system designs sufficiently, nor applications of these designs to social work practice. Also neither book pays sufficient attention to the measurement strategies used by social work practitioners (including brief standardized scales, behavioral observation and individually constructed rating scales). Of course, these omissions are not important if the books are used exclusively for sociological research courses.

In general, Singleton et al. is a more comprehensive research text and it provides better depth in some critical areas, and the material is integrated better. For example, the book provides a much more comprehensive discussion of experimental and quasi-experimental designs and of basic measurement issues than Gilbert's book. The chapters in Singleton et al. on experimentation and experimental or quasi-experimental designs are especially comprehensive and well written for an introductory research text. Also, a notable feature of Singleton et al. is that it places a much needed emphasis on how different types of designs provide different types of complementary information, and in general how different types of designs are related.

The book by Gilbert does have some notable features. It provides some very detailed exemplars of research. It contains a chapter on gaining access to research settings (a practical matter of considerable importance, and one that typically is ignored in research texts); it offers some discussion of the use of computers in the analysis of data (an area that merits more attention in both books); and it provides considerable emphasis on different aspects of qualitative research methodology.

In summary, the book by Singleton and his colleagues is more useful as a primary text, supplemented with appropriate material, while the book by Gilbert is more useful as a supplementary text.

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Bill E. Lawson *The Underclass Question*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992. \$34.95 hard cover.

This volume is the outgrowth of a 1989 conference at the University of Delaware entitled, "Meditations on Integration; Philosophy and the Black Underclass." The coverpiece indicates that the essays are "the first full-length philosophical treatment of the underclass debate and one of the few volumes of writings by African-American philosophers." Using William Julius Wilson's claims in *The Truly Disadvantaged* and his subsequent writings as their starting point, nine authors explore philosophical and practical questions about class analysis, urban values, and social policy.

The preface and opening and closing chapters frame the essays in compelling ways. Bill Lawson prefaces the book by describing key events in his life that "... conspired to bring this book into existence" (p. xiii): his now deteriorated childhood neighborhood; being sent to Vietnam two days after the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black troops' protest of the murder; support for his work from mentors, colleagues, and family. Lawson centers himself in this academic undertaking, thereby simultaneously claiming agency and responsibility. In Lawson's opening chapter he notes what philosophers can contribute to the underclass controversy: "... most social scientific research on poverty and the underclass... usually abstains from dealing with the normative/value question, which philosophers are more proficient to handle." (p. 6). This volume provides social scientists with some provocative ideas about both values and logic. As Cornel West notes in the epilogue, the essays also contribute to a larger agenda, the "dedisciplin(izing)" of scholarship, which "... means that you go to wherever you find sources that can help you in constituting your intellectual weaponry" (p. 192). West's concluding remarks reinforce Lawson's initial appeal to agency and responsibility by addressing questions about the identity of Black philosophers and the role of Black philosophers in building institutions. Lawson's and West's remarks together offer essential grounding for any progressive academic with commitments beyond the academy.

While I was particularly moved by the Lawson and West contributions, any number of ideas from the chapters in between stand out. For example, Bernard Boxill demonstrates how Wilson's policy orientation derives from assumptions associated with Booker T. Washington's politics and suggests how W.E.B. Dubois' positions would apply to today's debates. Tommy Lott argues convincingly that rap culture represents a significant form of urban resistance and inspiration in the face of oppression. Anita Allen identifies assumptions underlying social thought about legal rights and demonstrates how such thought contributes to invalidating concerns of a Black "underclass." Albert Mosley exposes the shortcomings of Thomas Sowell's, Glenn Loury's and Wilson's criticisms of affirmative action by showing how they erroneously shift to a generalized argument about ethnicity and thereby ignore essential historical facts. In addition, many of the footnotes provide intriguing reading. I especially appreciated Lawson's footnoted suggestions about what musical compositions approximate the moods of each of the volume's chapters.

While the book covers certain criticisms that social scientists already have made of Wilson's work (see especially the December, 1989 special issue of the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*), it contributes others. I particularly found it helpful in identifying logical pitfalls and flawed arguments that I senses from my own reading of Wilson and others but was previously unable to pinpoint and name.

It has become routine in reviews of books forthcoming from conferences to note occasional repetitions of arguments from one author to the next. This volume provokes that same concern. Alternatively, however, this allows each chapter to stand on its own. I would like to have seen greater elaboration of the race-class linkage which moves beyond the artificial either-or debate posed by many social policy analysts. Here the work of economists like Tom Boston could further "de-disciplinize" scholarship and contribute significantly to our "intellectual weaponry" in the exploration of gross social and economic inequalities.

Overall, the Lawson edition renews my faith in the potential of interdisciplinary inquiry. I appreciate its ideas and am moved by its spirit of personal and professional commitment.

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Raymondo: *Population Estimation*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishers 1992. \$49.95, hardcover.

Population estimation and projection is no longer an arcane academic exercise. From private marketing to social services to state government, planners rely upon estimates of present characteristics and projections of future trends in target populations. Despite widespread use of the products of demographic methods, most comprehensive planners find demographic texts incomprehensible. Uniquely, *Population Estimation* targets the ultimate consumers of projections and estimations. Managers, planners and marketing analysts will find that Raymondo demystifies demography and presents a clear, intelligible foundation in projection and estimation techniques.

Raymondo's orientation toward the users (rather than producers) of these demographic methods is apparent in Chapter 1. This chapter provides an overview of the major topics covered with specific reference to pragmatic concerns such as data limitations and projection strategies. It enumerates conceptual and methodological issues important to interpreting population estimations and projections in succinct understandable language. The remaining chapters fall into two broad sections. Chapters 2 through 5 provide a fundamental understanding of demographic concepts, materials and methods needed for projections and estimations. Chapters 6 through 9 focus on the nuts and bolts of projection and estimation techniques.

Chapter 2 discusses the basic demographic concepts—fertility, mortality and migration—and then presents methods for measuring these concepts. Concise phrases replace cryptic mathematical terms and simple numerical examples accompany each equation. Chapter 3 focusses on issues in mortality: specifically on the use of survivorship for producing estimates and

projections. However, here Raymondo's nearly irresistible clarity founders upon the most immovable of demographic enigmas—the life-table. Chapter 4 brings the reader back to earth in an extremely practical discussion of Census geographies. It is this chapter, more than any other, that distinguishes the applied orientation of *Population Estimation*. Few standard demographic texts deal with the problems surrounding spatial units. Academic demography tends to focus on demographic processes without regard for the community contexts in which they take place. Geography is encountered only as a convenient boundary for population or as general geographic contexts (such as urban/rural) which influence fertility, mortality and migration. Rather than centering on these demographic processes, applied research in marketing, planning and policy highlights the outcomes of these processes for actual places. Chapter 4 is an excellent treatment of concepts and measurement of places. It presents information critical to applied demography not found in other texts. Discussion of the concepts underlying geographic units and the problems encountered in estimating sub-state geographies are solidly grounded in 1980 and 1990 Census definitions. Chapter 5 builds upon this discussion, providing an overview of Census data sources available for different geographic units.

Having established a foundation in demographic terms and concepts, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 tackle the methods by which numbers are crunched and best guesses produced. The Chapter 6 discussion of inter-censal estimation methods (estimates for the years preceding a Census) is of less interest to most applied researchers. However, this chapter clearly lays out the methods and issues important to the more widely used post-censal estimation procedures covered in Chapter 7. Both chapters cover the strengths and limitations of all prevalent estimation approaches. Chapter 8 covers four broad categories of population projection methodology: ration-allocation, mathematical, econometric and cohort-component methods. Notable in all three chapters is Raymondo's continuing reminder that both projections and estimations are simply best guesses about unknown populations, a fact often overlooked in the application of these methods. Chapter 9 is an overview of practical considerations in

producing estimates and projections. In many ways this chapter is the most important to the ultimate users of these methods. It is intended to outline the strategies for producing and the limitations in using estimates and projections. The scant 6 pages devoted to these issues will disappoint the reader, particularly since there are many pragmatic gems of observations scattered throughout Chapters 6 through 8. These observations could well have been reintroduced and placed in a strategy context. Also missing from this chapter are guidelines for dealing with the prosaic issues confronting the ultimate consumers of these methods. How often should estimates be conducted? When do projection series become unreliable? Why should more complex (costly) methods be employed over simpler methods? When will simpler methods suffice? Rules of thumb for such questions are strewn throughout earlier chapters, yet not gathered for the final summary.

Nevertheless, the accumulation of practical observations supplies information customarily gained (painfully) through trial and error. For demographers, this is of inestimable value. The singular contribution of *Population Estimation*, however, is not its content but its clarity. It is a good introduction to these specific demographic methods. It is an excellent bridge between producers and users of estimates and projections that clarified what demographic prophecies are possible, reasonable and useful.

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Liah Greenfeld. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. \$49.94 hardcover.

More and more younger sociologists are taking on projects that their older colleagues left to the end of long careers, if then. Liah Greenfeld's new book on nationalism is one of the most successful examples of this trend. Its scope is enormous, its learning staggering, and its argument generally persuasive, if controversial. The thin spots almost make the work more

impressive, for they remind the reader that this is not the culmination of a lifetime of study, but rather the intensive effort of a scholar ten years out of graduate school.

Greenfeld's investigation of nationalism is more one of intellectual history than of, say, social movements or institution building. For as she states, "Social reality is intrinsically cultural; it is necessarily a symbolic reality, created by the subjective meanings and perceptions of social actors" (p. 18). In this respect, nationalism is a form of social *identity*: it differs from and had to compete with other possible identities like Christian or Jew, aristocrat or peasant, Parisian or Burgundian. Nationalism did not always exist, and its emergence and success were not inevitable. Nor was it always and everywhere the same. Greenfeld attempts to show how it emerged and why it differed in five countries—England, France, Russia, Germany, and America.

Her analysis is ingenious. Nationalism often claims to be particularistic and populist, that is, the particular identity of the broad mass of *people*. On the contrary, argues Greenfeld, nationalism is a rather more global—and sometimes even universalistic—ideology, generally propagated by *elites*. Moreover, nationalism is not a unitary concept, but rather, is composed of two basic types. The first type of national identity is individualistic, libertarian, and democratic. The second type is collectivistic and authoritarian; but it may be more democratic (in the tradition of Rousseau) or more ethnic and particularistic. The two (or two and a half) types emerged in different settings for somewhat different reasons. But in all cases, nationalism emerged as an ideological weapon of contending social groups. Greenfeld traces this emergence in her accounts of the five cases.

The modern concept of nationalism or national identity first emerged, according to Greenfeld, in sixteenth century England in the matrix of "the transformation of the social hierarchy and the unprecedented increase in social mobility throughout the sixteenth century; the character and the needs of the successive Tudor reigns; and the Protestant Reformation" (p. 44). The Tudors ennobled large numbers of new aristocrats—mainly for their service to the Tudor state—who competed for social standing and power with the ancient hereditary nobility, whose

heritage was military. The authority of the new nobility was based on merit, not birth, and in seeking a rationalization or justification, "the idea of the nation—of the people as an elite—appealed to the new aristocracy" (p. 47). Here began a thread that ran through the beneficiaries of the Henrician Reformation, English Protestants opposed to a restoration of Catholicism, the Puritans, Parliamentarists, and Cromwellians, and ultimately, the settlers of North America. This tradition combined a sense of loyalty to the whole (domestic) people and resistance to outside (initially Papal) influence with adherence to individual liberty. It had an affinity for democracy which grew over time as its internal logic unfolded. From the first, this nationalism was an ideology in the service of elites contending for power; but its democratic content tended to expand the circle of those permitted to participate in public life.

Later nationalisms in France, Russia, Germany, and other countries were formed in reaction and opposition to earlier nationalisms, each in turn. According to Greenfeld, elites in these countries began by admiring the models of more successful neighboring countries. They wanted to build up their own country under their own leadership. But as the home country failed to keep up with the more advanced model, this admiration turned to anomie, envy, and ultimately *ressentiment* (a concept she adopts from Nietzsche and Scheler), and led to an ideological glorification of one's own country and denigration of the model country and all other countries. Most of these later nationalisms were collectivistic and nondemocratic, in part, because they were formed in opposition to the original Anglo-American models, which were individualistic and (proto-)democratic. And in part, they were so because they drew on indigenous traditions that were collectivistic and non-democratic, rather than stemming from a break with the past as in sixteenth century England. Thus, in France, absolutism claimed the dignity that the Christian Church had claimed, and the post-Revolutionary State claimed the same dignity. And in Germany, nationalism originated, not in the Reformation, but in the status-insecurity of intellectuals at the time of anti-Enlightenment Romanticism, and the reaction to the Napoleonic

invasion. French nationalism while collectivistic, eventually contained more democratic elements than did pre-1945 German nationalism.

This summary stresses the elite competition element of Greenfeld's analysis. Yet hers is an account of ideology, an intellectual history. While she combines structural and cultural elements well, her stress on the latter highlights inherent difficulties and limitations of the task she sets for herself. It is difficult enough to demonstrate that particular writers represent particular social structural interests or positions: intellectuals are notoriously difficult to pigeonhole in this fashion. But Greenfeld also wants to argue that certain structural situations led to certain psychological stresses and strains, and that these led to certain ideological formulations that were created by intellectuals and accepted by social masses and movements. Such claims are difficult enough to demonstrate in contemporary societies where we can measure popular and elite attitudes with surveys and interviews, and movements by other means. In earlier periods, such attitudes and activities must often be attributed to masses, according to what the "scribbling classes" said about them. These arguments risk circularity. Greenfeld does not seem insensitive to this problem, but she mostly stays in the traditional mode of analysis of intellectual history, which does not often go below face-value claims of intellectuals. A more structuralist approach might also have made her more skeptical of the idea that nationalistic ideology in countries like Germany led so inexorably to disaster. Some historians have argued recently that many ideological and social structural historians have argued recently that many ideological and social structural conditions in Germany did not differ substantially from those in England during the period, roughly, 1870-1933. Rather, it may have been the gridlock of the party system and the paralysis of coalition formation that caused voters to defect from democratic parties, and lent credence to the observer who said "this did not have to happen." Still, her chronicle of nationalists' attraction, disaffection, and rejection of advanced countries gives one pause as one observes the present-day steps of Eastern Europe toward—or not toward—democracy. Greenfeld herself, a native of Russia, has elsewhere expressed pessimism

about this progress. Yet if one does not take one's cues primarily from the ideologies of the past but also from the structural possibilities of the present, one must ask whether this pessimism is unavoidable: what would different analysts have predicted about Germany in 1945 or Spain in 1975?

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