



2005

## *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings.* Charles Lemert.

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### Recommended Citation

(2005) "*Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings.* Charles Lemert.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 32 : Iss. 3, Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol32/iss3/19>

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is still challenged by numerous problems and it is with regard to some of these problems that Patricia Kennett has brought together some of the leading scholars in the field to discuss and debate some of the most pressing and interesting issues facing comparative social policy today. The book begins with a useful introduction by the editor and then focuses on five major topics (organized into five parts). These include the role of the state in a globalizing world; concepts and definitions international social welfare; inequality, redistribution and social policy; comparative social policy research and finally a catch-all category entitled "themes and issues." The chapters comprising these five parts of the book are wide-ranging and are indicative of the many issues, problems and challenges that characterize the field. While most of the chapters present new ideas, others restate well-established themes. One recurrent theme is the implicit equating of social welfare with governmental provision so that many of the chapters approach the subject from a Western, welfare state perspective. This tendency is reinforced by the way many chapters rely on Western welfare typologies. On the other hand, some chapters directly challenge these notions and question their global validity. Similarly, while the concept of globalization is used in a conventional, negative sense in many chapters, others offer a more nuanced and balanced account.

By bringing these diverse perspectives together in one volume, Kennett has made major contribution to the comparative study of social policy. The book will undoubtedly serve as a major resource for social policy scholars, and the editor is to be commended for taking on what must have been a herculean task. Unfortunately, the book is expensive and will probably be beyond the means of most students. It is to be hoped, however, that the book will be available in many university libraries. It deserves to be widely consult not only by those interested in international issues but by anyone concerned with the challenges facing the academic field of social policy today.

Charles Lemert, *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classical Readings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004. \$35.00 papercover.

Social work and social policy are now well-established academic subjects. In addition to applying sophisticated research methodologies, both are making far more use of theory than

ever before. However, in the early days, the founders of social work and social policy were suspicious of theory. Many embraced the positivist view that social welfare institutions could best be analyzed through observation and scientific verification. Pragmatism reinforced this perspective and theoretical speculation was generally disdained. Although social work and social policy scholarship was historically characterized by an anti-theoretical stance, the situation is very different today and a wide range of theoretical perspectives now inform social work and social policy research. Psychological and sociological theories are now widely used, and there is far more familiarity with political economy and major normative social science perspectives.

It is in this context that Charles Lemert's book should be regarded as a major resource for social work and social policy students and scholars. Focusing primarily on social theories, the book presents an extremely comprehensive collection of excerpts from the writings of leading contributors to social theory since the mid-19th century. The material is organized chronologically into six parts. Part one is concerned with the classical social theorists including Marx, Durkheim and Weber but interestingly Lemert also includes an excerpt from the writings of Jane Addams who is seldom regarded as a theoretician. Part II, which spans the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contains excerpts from the writings of Keynes, Mead, Merton, Du Bois and Gramsci as well as political and literary figures such as Virginia Woolf, Gandhi and Mao. The next two parts of the book focus on the writings of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholars such as Parsons, Goffman, Habermas and Galbraith but here again, except from the writings of political and literary figures are included. Part five deals largely with the work of postmodernist and multicultural writers of the 1980s and 1990s and, reflecting the title of the book, multicultural and postmodernist excerpts dominate the final section which is concerned with the social theories of the new century. Appropriately, a significant proportion of these excerpts address issues of globalization.

As suggested earlier, Lemert's collection should be viewed as a source book rather than a basic text. Its major strengths is its comprehensiveness and the way the editor presents short but representative selections that will appeal to students. Many students, and indeed many educators, do not have the time or

inclination to plow through heavy theoretical tomes and many rely on secondary sources when seeking to understand theoretical writing. Lemert's collection makes original writings accessible and manageable. This is a valuable book which should be extensively used in social work and social policy classes.

Valerie Polakow, Sandra Butler, Luisa Stormer Deprez and Peggy Kahn (Eds.), *Shut Out: Low Income Mothers and Higher Education in Post-Welfare America*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004. \$75.00 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

This volume examines the impact of welfare reform on low income women's access to and experiences in post-secondary education and training. The editors have assembled a collection that integrates policy analysis and qualitative research examining the experiences of low income mothers on welfare. While there is an extensive body of research literature on welfare to work programs, produced primarily by large research institutes and funded by federal or state government entities, the majority of the studies have been quantitative, often drawing upon administrative data collected by government agencies. Research that explores the perspective and daily lives of welfare recipients, particularly individuals participating in higher education or vocational training programs, has been limited. This book therefore offers an important contribution to the field.

Many of the large quantitative studies have employed an experimental design, leading policy makers and researchers to attribute a high degree of validity to their findings that welfare to work programs promoting education and training are less effective than work-first programs aimed at moving recipients immediately into the workforce. A closer reading of this literature reveals that these findings are problematic. The differences in employment rates and earnings achieved by education oriented programs, on the one hand, and by work-first programs, on the other, are minimal, and neither type of program has been demonstrated to reduce poverty rates significantly for participants. Moreover, education oriented programs are typically focused on GED acquisition or limited vocational training. Welfare to work programs offering higher education opportunities for women on welfare have been rare. Consequently, we know much less about their