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Review of *Human Behavior and the Social Environment: A Perspective for Social Work Practice*, by  
Grace Ganter and Margaret Yeakel

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cinctly: "The Gray Lobby is a success because it goes beyond the sphere of old age and provides an excellent model, based on the senior citizen movement, to explain the mass character of social movements in general, as well as policy systems and strategies for successful advocacy and implementation of legislation."

I take this opportunity, however, to offer a few comments about lobbying as an American phenomenon. In other countries political influence by ordinary citizens is at local levels or with specific friendly or amenable legislators or by blackmail or bribery. Americans do not like direct bribery. In an extreme form of ethnocentrism we have even forbidden our corporations to deal with bribable people in other countries.

American lobbying is barely comparable to bribery. It functions as a third kind of democratic representation in that it allows citizens to have their different interests represented separately. For example, a man votes for Republicans in state and federal elections. He is a veteran and belongs to the American Legion, which lobbies for militaristic plans. He is a Methodist and as such supports the Federal Council of Churches, which lobbies for many humanistic actions. He likes the out-of-doors and belongs to the Sierra Club, which lobbies for protection of our natural resources. And so it goes—a person's many interests, which are often, but not necessarily, contradictory, are specifically represented by different lobbies.

Lobbies are restricted from bribery. They use three approaches: the threat of loss of votes, the threat of loss of funds for election campaigns, and the offer of very practical help in understanding and developing legislation. Good lobbyists know their business well and can and do help legislators and their staffs in many ways. Lobbying is uniquely American and would be better described as part of our culture than as purely political.

Henry Pratt's book actually illustrates in many ways what I have said. It is a well-done and useful book.

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**Human Behavior and the Social Environment: A Perspective for Social Work Practice.** By Grace Ganter and Margaret Yeakel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980. Pp. xi+311. \$15.00.

The strengths of this textbook for undergraduate and beginning graduate students are its general intentions, its ideological commitments, the thinkers that it holds up as estimable and worth knowing, and its effort to integrate social psychological and life-span developmental theories. Its limitation, possibly caused by the very ambitions that inform its strengths, is its reliance on too many ideas that are too thinly developed and insufficiently coherent with each other.

The authors have chosen to emphasize the organizational and institutional influences on individuals and the psychological implications of these influences: "[The] critical premise of this book is that the organizational and institutional arrangements within which people live largely determine the ways in which their human energies are directed. Therefore, the knowledge we have selected as fundamental to the social work practice for which students are preparing is weighted on the social determinants of human problems and their psychological implications" (p. 3). This framework is not only intrinsically promising; it also permits the integration with the text of material on institu-

tional racism as well as the assertion of a feminist perspective on life tasks and developments. One might worry that such a framework represents a limited sociopsychologism, as Paul Baran names it, a position that seems more progressive than it turns out to be because it underestimates the extent to which individuals are agents of history, on the one hand, and underplays broad sociohistorical foundations and forces on the other; but by the same token one can hope that the format speaks especially clearly to the social work tradition. Generally speaking, then, the authors set us on a most stimulating course.

A quick glance through the index reveals that the authors are widely read and well informed, and thereby qualified to bring good ideas to students. There one finds good and familiar names: Mead and Cooley, Rank and Piaget, Freud, Erikson, D. Levinson and R. White, Therese Benedek and Alice Rossi; cognitive dissonance authors like Festinger, as well as self-actualization theorists like Goldstein, Maslow, and Carl Rogers; people from depth psychology, through social psychology into sociology, and beyond into illuminaries of action such as Maggie Kuhn. It is also evident from the index that according to the true spirit and values of social work an antiracist, antisexist (profeminist), and antiageist perspective guides the work. Quite promising indeed.

The first inkling that the book might not live up to its promise came to me with a rapid skimming of its contents and a slightly more extended study of its concluding chapter, where the word "scaffolding" aroused the impression that maybe the text contained too many ideas, too many authors, and too many different theoretical bases. My concern about this grew as I read on, and by the time I had finished the book, I had been taken to two basic pedagogical questions and had come away with the conclusion that there are major limitations to the book as a teaching instrument.

The first pedagogical question is this: Should a textbook predigest material for students and then pass along that material to them? Is it the responsibility of an author (or an instructor) to scan the fields of knowledge, extract the essences of the great ideas reached by major thinkers, and then present these nuggets or nodes to the reader and student? Should the teacher evaluate ideas and include those evaluations in the presentation without giving the reader sufficient material to come to an independent valuation? When does the reader and student connect her or his own experience to the ideas put forth? Does this occur only after mastery of those concepts selected as important by an authority?

Paulo Freire has articulated these issues in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and has identified the "banking" concept of education. According to this concept, ideas are to be deposited in the student, as money in a bank account, and little chewing, doubting, tussling, inward checking, in short, proactive participation is to be demanded of the student. Rather, in reading the book or listening to the teacher the student is to focus entirely on the authority's content, as if hypnotically in the spell of that person.

I think the "banking" form of education, which is less dialogical and more authoritarian than the best wisdom of social work recommends, characterizes this book. Two illustrations may back up my assertion. The chapter on self-concept, for instance, is not overly long. It covers the high points on self made by William James, Charles Cooley, G. H. Mead, S. Freud, and O. Rank (all between pp. 11 and 19), and in that chapter as well are represented Maslow, Rogers, the existentialists, and Erikson (collapsed in pp. 26–32). On its face, not much depth or subtlety can be expected from such a rapid survey and from attention only to essence and not to line of argument or to the experiences in life that occupied the theorists. Similarly demonstrating the presence of a "banking" concept of education in this text is the general format: it presents first the theory and then the life events meant to be elucidated by the theory,

and even these events serve as occasions for the introduction of more theoretical or social points of view. We are given a vocabulary (actually numerous vocabularies) for "talking about" life, but we are hardly made to take our lives or those of others more keenly by being engaged with the raw material of life. Both by centering on essence to the exclusion of the complexity of experience and on theory before the experience meant to be understood by theory, the authors lean upon what amounts to an authoritarian mode of education, a mode that contradicts the explicit ideology in the text.

The second pedagogical question raised by this book is familiar to anyone who has taught in the human behavior and social environment area. It is the question of coherence in the network of ideas when eclectic materials are selected. While the authors articulate a social-psychological perspective, and lean upon the four main ideas of self-concept, reference groups, social reality, and social role in the opening theoretical chapters, in the life-span developmental chapters in the second half of the book, they introduce a whole new variety of concepts to fill out what is left unsaid by the four guiding themes. Thus, heavy reliance is placed on Erik Erikson's stages of development; on theories of self-actualization, of growth motives, and of attitudes toward death among the aging; and on the theories of the family and of alternative intimacy patterns.

In all fairness, one can see that the authors have chosen those theorists and concepts that are most akin to the social psychological perspective they endorse; they use Erikson, Robert White, and Harry Stack Sullivan out of the psychodynamic tradition in preference to Freud or Jung. They also, however, lean on Maslow and Carl Rogers, whose social thought is considerably less developed. They emphasize role foreclosure, role discontinuity, and role complementarity, but they also depend on projection, repression, basic trust, growth motives, identification with the aggressor, and other personality concepts. Each of these ideas is complex and difficult in itself and, what is more important, depends on context for an understanding of its full meaning.

Because so many concepts are introduced, none can be treated deeply enough to enable full understanding. Because the concepts derive from widely disparate universes of discourse and belong in very different theoretical networks, there is no way they can truly be integrated. It is not sufficient to see only that aspect of basic trust or functional autonomy which is also social psychological or which can be studied as if it were. Too much is lost in the abstraction, and students are led to believe they know enough about materials that they do not in fact understand. While the authors can be eclectic in their own thinking, and soundly so, because they have studied these different frameworks in depth and are selecting according to their own point of view, students do not have that degree of familiarity with the theorists (or would not need the book if they did) and will attain a distorted eclecticism, based on superficiality and submission to authority.

Both the "banking" style of education and the surface eclecticism give to the student a perspective and a vocabulary, but they also lead the student to believe that the vocabulary is the equivalent of knowledge and wisdom. Rather than communicate to social work students the necessity for knowing much about people and society, from prolonged and continuing study in humanistic, aesthetic, political, and historical domains as well as in the usual social scientific fields, the approach in this textbook is technological, aimed at providing a language rather than an understanding. It is my sense that our preoccupations about people's lives are far too serious and important to be served in this way. If we cannot, in the limited time available to us in schools of social work, bring students to the breadth of knowledge that the authors clearly possess and

display, we nonetheless bear the responsibility to motivate them to move toward that breadth as their professional lives unfold. The authors know this; hence their several references to the book as a scaffolding. But they do not seem to be successful in promoting that motivation.

The handling of psychoanalytic theory in this book, as in much of social work education for some years now, is subject to the same criticisms of “banking” style and of surface, vocabulary-inducing, theoretically confounded discussion. These authors reject with typical, almost stereotypical arguments the psychoanalysis of Freud, Ferenczi, and Abraham, the psychoanalysis that is provocative, socially critical, and akin to the progressive principles of social work and that attracted advanced thinkers in social work many years ago. They do not make a clean break with psychoanalysis, however, because they insert as prominent theorists throughout the book Erik Erikson and Robert White, and they also lean on classic, important concepts such as projection, repression, and identification with the aggressor. The ideas that are accepted and the way in which they are presented have been “packaged” for social work student consumption, and this produces the pedagogical issues that are hence criticized.

If social work is to leave behind psychoanalytic theory (and I do not believe it should), then the field should not repeat the error it made with psychoanalysis in the adoption of sociological, social-psychological, or ecological theories. Deep, prolonged, sophisticated, subtle, and relatively scholarly achievement needs to be expected, and that means placing demands on authors, teachers, and students of a different order than those which characterize this textbook.

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