

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by MORTON I. TEICHER, PH.D.

La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty—San Juan and New York, by Oscar Lewis. New York: Random House, New York, 1965. 669 pp. \$10.

OSCAR Lewis, in this book, with a perfected technique resulting from his earlier studies, notably *The Children of Sanchez* (1961) and *Pedro Martinez* (1964), has given us a remarkable and vivid picture of the lives of the four children of Cristobal Rios by his first wife Fernanda. This work is outstanding because of its new approaches toward the understanding of the dynamics of social relationships in an environment of extreme deprivation. It is notable also for its effort to emancipate anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists from their own personal biases and distortions due to the differences in the value systems of the observer and the observed.

The study procedure included the "traditional techniques used in sociology, anthropology and psychology," and, in addition, "questionnaires, interviews, participant-observation, biographies, a limited number of intensive whole-family case studies, and the application of selected psychological tests such as Thematic Apperception, Rorschach and Sentence Completion." One interviewer, a trained and disciplined researcher, knew every member of the family most inti-

mately—ate with them, slept with the girls and women on occasion, shared their joys and their sorrows.

This volume is one of a promised series dealing with the way of life, the multiplicity of problems confronting the family unit and its separate members, and the fashion in which each attempts to satisfy his or her yearnings in a setting of extreme privation and social pathology. Yet some positive, constructive attitudes and values are manifested in the lives of each of them. But in a society where the worth and dignity of the individual are preached but rejected in practice, the tragedy of meaningless existence comes into sharp focus, whether in the slums of San Juan, Puerto Rico or in Harlem, New York.

As a Commonwealth of the United States, confirmed by vote of the Puerto Ricans, this island is outstanding for its wealth, its prosperity and its promising future. Presumably there is no other island in the Caribbean whose social and economic status has advanced farther. To call it the "Pearl of the Caribbean" is no exaggeration as color tourist-films will attest. Without question, Puerto Rican prosperity has been due in large part to our country's interest in that strategic territory for reasons good or bad. Yet its slum areas have a distinctive élan of their own. Chester Bowles, in his introduction to Earl P. Harrison's

Transformations speaks in glowing terms of the startling improvements, in just two years of their Commonwealth status (1952-1954), directed toward the health, economy and the general welfare of the Puerto Ricans.

Out of a total population of some 3,000,000, almost 100,000 live on low standards of food, shelter and clothing. Some 60,000 of these suffer extreme impoverishment, deprivations, serious physical and mental disabilities, and all the evils associated with slum life. It is these people, who, Lewis states, live in a "Culture of Poverty."

A travel film in "spectacular color" which I happened to see recently advertised Puerto Rico as an "Island Paradise." It told the prospective traveler what he may expect to find by way of plush hotels, delightful swimming in sun-bathed waters, golf and other sports, exotic entertainment, the historic and architectural beauties, sparkling cleanliness of the city—rivaling anything that Miami, Honolulu, Acapulco or the Riviera have to offer. But the hunger, the misery, the disease and the stink of the slums—as is the case all over the world—are kept from view.

A School of Social Work, a division of the University of Puerto Rico, was accredited in 1947 by the American Association of Schools of Social Work. Originally established in 1935, it withdrew in 1937. Ten years later it was able to meet the standards of the profession.

The poor of Puerto Rico are familiar with "el Welfare." In many instances it is as incomprehensible and as frustrating in San Juan as it is in Harlem where standards of relief and public assistance are higher. The Lewis study covers those years, from 1952 through 1960, with occasional contacts since, involving four generations, totaling dozens of blood relatives and scores of socially related individuals. To keep track of even the more important of them as one

plows through the approximate 700 pages of the book is an interesting exercise in memory.

The main characters, each, tell their own story, through their own colored glasses, as participants and witnesses in their respective life dramas—the joys, the frustrations, the agonies and the anxieties, the dreams and hopes, the spiritual supports, the disillusionments, the aimlessness of life, its lack of meaning, its futility, the hunger for food, for sex, for *agape*. All of this is what the author spells out as the "Culture of Poverty." Its major features, he explains, are "family disruption, violence, brutality, cheapness of life, lack of love, lack of education, lack of medical facilities, in short, a picture of incredible deprivation the effects of which cannot be wiped out in a single generation." Although he is not as optimistic as other social scientists might be on the possibility of rapid change for the better resulting from the removal of these deprivations, he does admit that as one examines the conditions, attitudes, and life style of grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren that there is "a great rise in aspiration level" with each new generation. But this higher aspiration level is beaten down. Hopelessness and pathology develop when social and economic attitudes of the world outside cheats them of their birthrights and locks them in.

Let us look at this concept: The Culture of Poverty. The term "poverty," in dollar terms, needs no clarification since, in our country, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has established the level below which material poverty becomes the characteristic of individual and family life. The term "culture," however, as used by Lewis in this connection is open to very serious question. This is particularly pertinent these days because there is a rapidly growing notion, not limited to the so-

called overburdened taxpayers but to a very large segment of our presumably educated population who believe poverty is a condition which many people wilfully choose, because it is much easier to live off the public trough than labor for one's bread. This impression will, no doubt, be intensified as persons eligible for public assistance and the other categorical aids (50 percent of our poverty population) but not now on the relief rolls, together with the current relief beneficiaries, become organized under the encouragement, direction and organization skills of professional social workers. As a profession, social workers are doing mighty little to counteract this growing myth that a large segment of our American population wants to develop and live in a culture of poverty—quite satisfied with a minimum hand-out not exceeding \$3,200 a year for a family of four, but in actual fact much below that amount.

Lewis uses this term in a fashion somewhat new to cultural anthropology. Although there is no generally acceptable definition of "culture" most workers in the field of the behavioral sciences look upon culture as one's social heritage. But this has to be spelled out. As Bronislaw Malinowski has put it "Culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values." *Social organization* is a concomitant of a culture. The development and the perpetuation of a culture implies some degree of *free choice*—the group prefers one feature of its existence and rejects another. Ecological factors are important in the fashioning of a culture, but its fixation represents a fairly permanent *adaptation* to the natural and other conditions resulting in the *institutionalization* of its social patterns. The persons in Lewis' studies whether in *The Children of Sanchez*, *Pedro Martinez*, or *La Vida*, with few exceptions, *refuse* to accept their social heritage and

rebel against it because it is *imposed* rather than preferred. Can the Negro's 200 years of subjection to the white man's treatment of him be designated as features of "Negro Culture"?

Perhaps, what Lewis is talking about is "The Culture(?) of *Deprivation*." Or better still "The *Cult* of Deprivation"—a cult practiced by the "haves" versus the "have-nots;" the central thesis being that deprivation is an essential incentive for securing the better things of life. (How many parents are inclined to practice this approach to assure improved behavior by their children in all instances?) The point is—true, people should not be left to starve, children should not suffer needlessly; but if you provide people with all the basic essentials for decent human existence "gratis, free-of charge, for nothing" where is the incentive to be self-supporting in a free-enterprise, capitalistic, Protestant Christian society?

One can understand and accept the notion of a "Culture of Poverty" as it relates to the social and religious life-patterns of Brahmins and Buddhists. Their life objectives are contemplation, concern for the inner man and where the realities of life are not of today or tomorrow but in the distant future—the achievement of Nirvana. For them a life devoted to the accumulation of property and wealth, and the pursuit of earthly and physical satisfactions, is essentially evil. A "Culture of Poverty" is correctly descriptive of such groups. But to apply this designation to the forcibly deprived among us makes no sense—scientific or otherwise.

"Culture" implies the creation or the development of social instruments and a value system by and for a society which aims to achieve desired objectives—mechanical, social, religious, ethical. These are generally promoted by leaders who influence public opinion. The group is governed by established rules or customs

(taboos), collective decisions, all of which are frequently enforced by appropriate penalties for failures. Can one designate the disinherited and the deprived as a cultural group, or even as a sub-culture? Are the Japanese Etas, in a real sense, a cultural group? The Ainus? Yes. The Etas? No. The reasons for the distinction should be clear. Society at its pleasure can socialize its members. It can also desocialize them through deprivation and the denial of their human rights.

As Haggstrom has indicated in *Poverty in America*: "Over time the dependency relationship of the poor becomes institutionalized and habits, traditions, and organizations arise in both the affluent community and in the neighborhoods of poverty, maintaining the relationship between them." This *institutionalization* of poverty by a power elite is a far cry from its identification as cultural.

Although not original with Lewis it is regrettable that he has chosen to use such a picturesque term as the Culture of Poverty, and given it such undeserved prominence in the title of the book. Because of its semantic dangers it would be wise to abandon its use in this way.

One of our national Jewish social organizations would be well advised to undertake a project concerned with the dynamics of Jewish life in the Diaspora contrasted with those in Israel, utilizing Lewis' procedures and techniques for determining the forces which operate to make Jewish life most rich and meaningful in both societies.

Without question Lewis has made a very valuable contribution, both to anthropological methodology and to a more profound understanding of the dynamics in interpersonal relationships, inside as well as outside the family.

S. C. KOHS, PH.D.
Burlingame, California

Louis Marshall, Defender of Jewish Rights, by Morton Rosenstock. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1965. 334 pp. \$8.95.

THE story of this century's American Civil Rights could be summed up in the biographies of two Marshalls—Louis and Thurgood.

Morton Rosenstock has written solidly and meaningfully of Louis Marshall (1856–1929), the founder of the American Jewish Committee and its president from 1912 to 1929, and defender against anti-Semitism during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Rosenstock gives a solid, factual description of Louis Marshall's role as jurist; community leader; appellate attorney; successful campaigner to abrogate the United States—Russian Commercial Treaty of 1832; member of the Comite des Delegations Juives at the Versailles Peace Treaty which secured minority rights clauses in treaties establishing new states in Central and Eastern Europe; and defender of Civil liberties, securing Henry Ford's apology, in 1927, for Ford's Dearborn Independent's vicious articles on "The International Jew."

Louis Marshall understood that liberal immigration policy was a basic part of the fight against anti-Semitism. As Chairman of Governor Charles Evans Hughes' Immigration Commission of New York State and as a member of HIAS delegations, he was active in securing stays of deportation for thousands of East European Jews.

Marshall, though not a Zionist, welcomed the Balfour Declaration. He supported Palestine as a spiritual center and as a refuge. Just before his death, he, Chaim Weizmann and other Zionist leaders concluded the pact which established the Jewish Agency including both Zionists and non-Zionists. He also helped found the National Jewish Welfare

Board and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

GAYNOR I. JACOBSON
New York

Community Organization: Conflict and Reconciliation, by Lyle E. Schaller. Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1966. 176 pp. \$1.95.

THIS book is an earnest recapitulation of the issues which might face or actually do face churches considering their role in social reform. This is what it amounts to even though it is described as an account of contemporary community organization. Writing in a straightforward, generally lucid manner, the author is inclined to give the pros and cons of almost every issue he discusses. He is biased in favor of validating the role of the church as "change agent" with both its parishioners and others. However, he affects the sweet reasonableness of a peaceful clergyman, calling for understanding of the reluctance of those "churchmen" who feel social action is not a part of the ministry, as well as of the eagerness of those who feel it is.

The arguments presented explain the positions and conflicts of synagogue leadership as well, although some of the premises are obviously different.

The author is an unfortunate victim of professional literature and thought, upon which he draws extensively, in that he perpetuates confusions about the nature of community organization—as field, as process, as mission, etc.—as it may be distinguished from professional responsibility. His conclusion that, for social workers, community organization is an art is rather simplistic. His juggling of "conflict" as instrument, weapon, and existential reality, does not help to clarify problems in sociological and professional analysis. His inter-

mingling of lay and professional roles and conflicts does not provide a sufficiently delineated framework for professional education. His description of the what's and why's of community organization as it has been known for the past eighty years is both accurate and useful.

CHARLES S. LEVY, D.S.W.
New York City

Negro-Jewish Relations in the United States, Papers and Proceedings of a Conference Convened by the Conference on Jewish Social Studies, edited by Meir Ben-Horin. The Citadel Press, New York, 1966. 71 pp. \$1.50.

THIS brief book is what it says it is, a collection of papers and comments, mostly by social scientists, on the subject of Negro-Jewish relations. What is startling, considering the auspices of the conference, is that almost none of the material reports on social studies. The major exception is David Caplovitz's brief summary of a larger study, entitled here *The Merchant* (many of whom were Jews) and *the Low-Income Consumer* (most of whom were non-white). Leo Srole, in his comments on two of the papers, reveals at least a social science orientation. And Abraham Duker uses an excellent bibliographic review as a vehicle for his strong opinions on the subject.

This small book, then, comes out like a recording of what would happen if you brought into your living room a group of bright and thoughtful Negro and Jewish intellectuals. It is fun. It is stimulating. It drips with speculations, hypotheses and propositions which merit research. While it may increase the reader's insights, it adds little certainty to the conflicting hunches and biases we all have about the sources and consequences

of the attitudes on both sides of the tension.

MANHEIM S. SHAPIRO
New Jersey

Kinship and Casework, by Hope J. Leichter and William E. Mitchell, with Candace Rogers and Judith Lieb. Russell Sage Foundation, New York 1967. 343 pp. \$7.50.

I RECOMMEND this book to all in Jewish communal service. The authors have proven that, at least for the families served by the Jewish Family Service of New York, mishpocha or kinship relations, influences and values are almost as coextensive in the industrialized city as they were for their forbears in the Shtetl. In doing so, the authors have disproved the social theory that the family, especially the urban nuclear family, is necessarily isolated and alienated from kith and kin.

Practitioners have long known intuitively that the kinship systems of their clients were as significant and influential as among the elite. Mass communication media have long known this, if we go by the popularity of "telephone visiting" between relatives separated in space, and in the approach to selling photographic equipment to families.

The ways in which kinship systems with their values and conflicts enforce and distort individual and family functioning were involved in this study. From this unusual affiliation between casework and social science in New York's Jewish Family Service, a resource book has emerged with insights into the kinship orientations of clients, caseworkers, board members, and with indications as to how these may be applied in family diagnosis and family treatment.

The volume suggests the type of "kinship" that needs to be established between practice and social science re-

search. The second half of the book deals with the network of kin relations of client families, the content of kinship values, the great importance of family circles and cousin clubs, casework intervention and kinship structure, client and caseworkers' perception of kin values and relationships, especially the language or vocabulary of such perceptions. Despite the caveats of the authors that this client group may be atypical, I believe that these social science concepts of family structure are generally indispensable in the education and orientation of caseworkers.

The influence of kin networks should be studied in the field of foster home and adoption placements, work with the aged and homemaker services. For community development, the use and development of family circles, especially cousin clubs in the big cities, offer a base for family associations and social action. For Federations, this research tells that the idea and practice of Am Yisroel Chay has been the well-spring of Jewish identity and belonging for centuries.

DAVID WEISS
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Justice—Not Charity: A Biography of Harry Greenstein, by Louis L. Kaplan and Theodor Schuchak. Crown Publishers, Inc.; New York, 1967. 176 pp. \$4.95.

IN telling the story of Harry Greenstein, the authors pay affectionate tribute to a man who dedicated his life to his concern for human beings. The events chronicled show Mr. Greenstein playing a major role in the development of Jewish institutions of Baltimore, city and state welfare programs, and then on to overseas responsibilities, in the Middle East and Greece and as advisor on Jewish affairs in post-World War II Germany.

This biography is also a history of the organization of social welfare for immigrant Jews, of public welfare, of united community planning, and of the rehabilitation of devastated victims of World War II. A student reading the volume might find it a problem, to discern whether this is a life story of a man engaged in social work for about half a century or a book that really concerns itself with the social welfare agencies and their activities before and during the Great Depression and through World War II and its aftermath. The authors find it difficult to separate Harry Greenstein from the era of which he was a part. The recognition and honors bestowed upon Mr. Greenstein aptly demonstrate that the man and his times were inextricably tied together. The times molded the man and the man molded the times.

SOL KOENIGSBERG
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Religion and the Public Order (1965), Edited by Donald A. Giannela. University of Chicago Press, 1966. 367 pp. \$6.95.

THIS is a compilation of seven significant articles relating to religion and public affairs and a summary of the year in review for 1964-65, together with a well selected and annotated listing of books on religion, law and society published during this period. The articles, all written by some of the most eminent experts in the field, include:

Conscientious Objection—1964 Term,
by John H. Mansfield
Religion in American Public Schools,
by Philip H. Phenix
The Church-State Settlement in the
Federal Aid to Education Act, by
Dean M. Kelley and George R.
LaNoue

Standing to Sue in Establishment
Cases, by Robert F. Drinan, S.J.
Organized Religion and Political Af-
fairs, by William Lee Miller
Birth Control: The Issue and the
Reality, by Albert C. Saunders
Maximum and Minimum Theories of
Natural Law, by Samuel Enoch
Stumpf

It is well nigh impossible to present a complete critical analysis of such important and contemporary issues in this brief review.

However, I must selectively praise for pertinent and well organized presentation the articles on *Standing to Sue in Establishment Cases* and *Organized Religion and Political Affairs*. But to be fair, all of the articles are timely and most informative on these crucial issues of our times.

JULIUS SCHATZ
New York City

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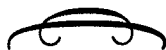
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(Please refer to p. 199 for further instructions)

Partial List of Books Required for Haifa Library

1. Alres, Joseph T. *Confidentiality in Social Work*
Washington, D.C., Catholic Univ. Press, 1959
2. Bisno, Herbert *The Philosophy of Social Work* (could use 2)
Washington, Public Affairs Press, 1962
3. Council on Social Work Education *Socio-Cultural Aspects in Casework*
N.Y., C.S.W.E. 1955
4. Dunham, Arthur *Community Welfare Organization*
N.Y., Crowell, 1958
5. Friedlander, Walter (ed). *Concepts and Methods of Social Work* (at least 2)
Prentice-Hall, 1958
6. Hamilton, Gordon *Theory and Practice of Social Casework*
(2nd edition)
Columbia U. Press, 1951
7. Kahn, Alfred J. *Issues in American Social Work*
N.Y., Columbia, 1959
8. Konopka, Gisella *Group Work in the Institution*
Whiteside, 1954
9. _____ *Social Group Work, A Helping Process*
Prentice-Hall, 1963
10. Bowen & Hogrefe *Group Work in Community Life*
N.Y., Association Press, 1959
11. National Association of Social Workers *Social Work with Groups*, 1958, 1959, 1960, etc.
12. Parad, Howard (ed). *Ego Psychology and Dynamic Casework*
N.Y., Family Service Assoc. of America, 1958
13. Proceedings, Annual Program Meetings *Council on Social Work Education*
(Between 1953 and 1960)
14. Ross, Murray *Community Organization: Theory & Practice*
N.Y., Harpers, 1955
15. Reynolds, Bertha *Social Work and Social Living*
N.Y., Citadel Press, 1951
16. Shubert, Margaret *Field Instruction in Social Casework*
U. of Chicago. School of Social Service
Monograph, 1963
17. Stein, Herman & Cloward *Social Perspectives on Behavior* (at least 2 or 3)
Free Press, 1958
18. United Nations *Various Reports on World Social Situation*
19. Vasey, Wayne *Government and Social Welfare*
Holt, 1958



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