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**Using theory in Youth and Community Work Practice**

**Ilona Buchroth & Chris Parkin (eds.)**

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This book is timely and meets the current need to bridge the gap between theory and community practice. It could be argued that the work in local communities with both adults and young people has been hampered by a lack of an overt, robust and consistent theoretical framework to justify, articulate and promote the work that is undertaken. Such a development may help to articulate an argument for the policy makers who consistently question practice and the regulators who inappropriately impose new managerialist frameworks to externally assess its worth. However, no single book would be able to fill this need because the field of practice is so diverse, is inherently dependent on the interactions of the people involved, and because the theoretical strands are both plentiful and complementary but also partial and contradictory. In light of this complex and ever changing situation, the editors do extremely well to outline key theoretical concepts and to provide an overarching context for significant elements of youth and community practice.

This book tries to provide an understanding of theory which is necessary to develop a critically reflective community practice. In this context it is very much an introduction to theoretical perspectives in everyday life situations and *draws out* a range of pertinent theories which inform the rationale, methods and extent of practice. The book will be of interest to other professionals including teachers and those working in integrated services. It provides a good introduction to the practical benefits of understanding social theory and has an interesting chapter on Education, exploring the nature and purpose of curriculum and relating this to theories on capital.

It is very fitting that this book is aimed specifically at undergraduate students in the professional fields of youth and community work and community education in Scotland, which has the added dimension of adult education. However, I am sure that it would also prove useful to serving practitioners to clarify and enhance their knowledge in developing a theoretically enriched practice.

The book is perceptive, challenging and practical. It resists the temptation to provide answers for practice situations and recognises the importance of encouraging readers to self reflect, and make and internalise a theoretical disposition. From the structure and content, it can be gleaned that the editors' intention is to provide the context and means for practitioners to develop the capacity to make sound ethical judgements, through self-awareness and awareness of the other and through the development of overt practice knowledge. The questions posed to the reader are relevant, the activities are appropriately challenging and the case studies are closely related to the real life dilemmas and situations encountered in practice. I would recommend this well researched book which links relevant theory to practice action. Further, it opens up ways for youth, adult and community students, and workers, to think about developing research approaches that are in keeping with their aims, orientations and purposes and which would encourage them to name and articulate their practice. I think this could lead the way and be the first of many such books.