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The Social Costs of Genetic Welfare

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else does" (p. 103). Some of the young people do not buy the alienation of the adult world, but there is no one to turn to, nowhere to go, fewer resources.

Viewing the anger and alienation of teenagers as simply a personal problem removes the event from the social context and insults the person further. Alienation continues. Gaines keeps the issue within its rightful context.

What I was left with from *Teenage Wasteland* is a system of unacknowledged emotion which leads to blame: adults blame the kids who blame the adults who blame Heavy Metal, ad infinitum. I see a system where everyone is oppressed, some worse than others, some more aware than others. We are all in the boat together: our name is Alienation. The fundamental question that I went away with from this book is about alienation on all levels, within and between persons and groups: How do we communicate to bridge the gap? How do we manage our human bonds?

Scheff and Retzinger, in *Emotions and Violence: Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflicts* (1991), discuss the nature of human bonds and how communication works to increase or decrease alienation. Braithwaite's *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* (1989), on reintegrative shame, may give law enforcement officers a new perspective on dealing with teenage subcultures in a way in which they will be heard. "The police would not release the suicide note . . . most young people watching thought this was the worst insult. Even in death, the parents won out. The dicks wouldn't even let them get their last word in. Denied to the bitter end" (p. 27). Alienation goes on, but it need not.

The Social Costs of Genetic Welfare, by Marque-Luisa Miringoff. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991. 210 pp.

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Miringoff identifies an emerging viewpoint associated with genetic intervention and reproductive technological capacities in the medical arena and labels it "genetic welfare." For the most part, such gene tampering is viewed dysfunctionally. Disabilities will be identified and rectified before a person is born. The importance of the mother will be subordinated to the rights of the fetus. Biological determinism and eugenics once again become issues when the elite (physicians and scientists) make policy decisions as to who will and will not undergo genetic counseling and who will and will not benefit from genetic intervention. For those who do not—the poor, minorities, the disinherited—the old stigmas that the disabled have slowly been shedding may again be heaped upon them many-fold.

Although the author admits that a genetic welfare ideology is not yet pervasive in society, its seeds are sown and its possible future should frighten humanist sociologists. The book *Should the Baby Live?* by Helga Singer, Dobzhansky's cost analysis of genetic variants, and such possibilities as the invention of life via artificial insemination followed by its being aborted just to obtain fetal tissues for transplants provide examples used by Miringoff to demonstrate the increased acceptance of genetic welfare. There is a great indifference among the majority of us to this emerging world view, as we fail to see its social costs. The recent successes in destigmatizing genetically and environmentally produced deviants is threatened. Specialization routinizes these newly introduced technologies, thus isolating both the public and medical practitioners from the impact of this ideology.

After discussing the increased stigmatization, powerlessness, and alienation of those deemed "unfit" by genetic welfare, Miringoff turns to the second concern of her book: public policy making. Drawing from specific examples wherein regulatory boards and the general public participated in defining, delimiting, and/or encouraging genetic research, the author recommends an approach that questions the issues of medical access and high technology. When there is input from outside the medical industry, there is hope that a balance can be struck between the values of science and public concerns.

This book claims a social problems/social policy approach. It compartmentally by chapter appeals to labeling theory, Marxian theory, and a multitude of other quotable sources. There is no overarching viewpoint by which to fit the various chapters together. It is a warning as to what will occur if the author's view of genetic welfare becomes more pervasive. It is a worthwhile effort to raise our consciousness as past warnings concerning nuclear energy, creation of new species, global warming, etc. have done. It is yet to be proved whether Miringoff's assumptions are valid. There is no original data to test her "emergence" hypothesis that the public, medical practitioners, academicians, etc., really support this viewpoint. The outcry of today's pro- and anti-choice proponents suggest not. Have not historical overviews, structural theory, and Marxian sociology already predicted that social organization and ideology will be used primarily to the benefit of the rich? Genetic welfare may be more a product of supply and demand in a market system than some new emergent ideology. This book provokes the discussion of social problems, demonstrates its applications in policy making, but has not explained the structure of its evolution beyond an immediate present. It challenges the easy road: reductionism of disabilities to genes. It ignores an old sociological theory: cultural lag.