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Book Review

Ingleby, Ewan. (2018) *Applied Sociology for Social Work*, SAGE Publications Ltd. 152 pages
£24.99 (pbk). ISBN 9781473984400

Ingleby's *Applied Sociology for Social Work* 'does what it says on the tin' with the intention of demonstrating how sociology can be applied to understand professional social work. It begins from the premise that sociology and social work are closely linked and claims that sociology and social work are often spoken about in the same sentence. Although I am not sure that this is true, as a writer and educator of sociological perspectives within social work education, I was excited to welcome another book that intends to enthuse students and practitioners of the relevance of sociology for social work practice.

The book is based on the author's experiences as social worker working with children and young people with learning disabilities and although this is the focus of one of the chapters, other chapters explore practice areas that include working with children, older people and mental health. The author's approach is to select three key sociological theories that are central to sociology as a discipline; Functionalism, Interactionism and Conflict Theory, as theoretical frameworks that can be applied to understand social work's roles and functions. A central theme of the book is the extent to which social factors and individuals are able to shape their social worlds.

The structure of the book is fairly formulaic in its approach, in providing an explanation of the three theoretical concepts, a discussion of their strengths and weaknesses and an

appraisal of how each approach links to social work. As is expected of many social work texts, there is a wide range of case studies and reflective activities that illustrate the application of the theoretical frameworks in understanding aspects of social work / practice. Although, the author could be a little more selective in the use of case studies, I particularly liked the way feedback was provided on the reflective activities. For example, when the author invited the reader to consider the interest of conflict theory to a social worker working with families in poverty, the feedback guides the reader to consider the impact of government policies on families.

I would say that some of the case studies could include more contemporary issues and whilst I would be in a queue to berate the lack of politicism amongst social work students, I am not sure many younger students will recall Margaret Thatcher or even Tony Blair. Also, though it is suggested that the book may be useful for practitioners, academics and students, I would contend that it is generally directed towards social work students

However, I feel that some of the ideas and concepts within the book are quite complex for first year undergraduate students. An early discussion of the application of Neo - Weberianism on individuals, discusses the concept of 'Vertstehen' as applied in studies of society and although the term is later explained in chapter 2, I wonder if this discussion may be too challenging for some readers unless they have prior sociological knowledge?

Similarly the section on interactionism and research discusses theoretical concepts of phenomenology and ontology and although I found this quite interesting in terms of methodology and formulating research questions to understand meanings and changing attitudes towards childhood, again I find this discussion too complex for the target audience and maybe strays from the books main focus.

The book is divided into two sections, with the first part introducing the theoretical frameworks and applying them to real life scenarios, whereas the second section considers the application of those same theoretical frameworks in more detail to the practice areas of working with children, older people and so on. The chapter on learning disability takes quite a different approach and strays a little from its sociological analysis with more of a social policy focus and provides quite a detailed exploration of relevant legislation and policies. The chapter on older people is also a bit of mix as and provides a rather long discussion of processes of ageing with an emphasis on physiological changes, alongside social constructions of old age.

Although some of the case studies incorporate aspects of diversity, there is surprisingly little mention of issues pertaining to race, gender or sexuality and I think that books has missed an opportunity to further engage with more contemporary debates concerning inequality and discrimination.

However, the author has an engaging writing style and takes a creative and unconventional approach to exploring sociological issues within social work. The book does a good job in drawing upon sociological theories to understand the purpose of social work and provides a really useful addition to a growing literature on sociology and social work. The book will appeal to students and practitioners with an existing knowledge of sociology as well as those students who are more advanced within their social work education.

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