

example, on the use of ECT as a treatment between 1948 and 1956 (p. 199). However—and despite not quite knowing where they come from—the reading of the patients' voices (and to a lesser extent the staff's) is the most interesting aspect of Gittins's book. These voices portray Severalls (although it is not always clear within what time period) as both social control and liberation; as institution and asylum; as formal organization and community. And they describe both the hierarchies dividing staff and patients as well as the pull to overcome hierarchies that can flow from everyday/everynight social relations.

Like Goffman, Gittins speaks of the hierarchy of staff and patients that forms the fundamental division of labor and status within the mental hospital. Other asylum hierarchies she describes are those of class (between levels of staff and levels of patient), gender, and (over the more recent years of Severalls) race, nationality, and immigration. These various hierarchies formed an intricate status network, lived within the military geography of the "men's side" and the Victorian domestic family of the "women's side."

For the lower class in Essex, at least until after World war II, Severalls provided a place of secure employment; for the women confined within its walls, there was relief from household gender roles. For some of the patients, there were real effects of some asylum policies upon their well-being; for a few of the staff, there was real affection for some of the patients. If there is one truism that can be extracted from the vase literature on mental hospitals in Europe and America over the last century, it is this ambivalence of control and care. As the last lines of Gittins's book read: "Contradictions about: it is, I think, just as foolish to romanticise Severalls' past as co demonize it" (p. 223).

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*Missed Connections: Hard of Hearing in a Hearing World*, by **Barbara Stenross**. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999. \$39.50 cloth. ISBN: 1-56639-681-6. \$16.95 paper. ISBN: 1-56639-682-4.

JACQUELINE BOLES  
*Georgia State University*

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I am sure that I was invited to review this book because two of my children and I are hard of hearing. Perhaps a reviewer unfamiliar with the

problems of the hearing impaired would find the information in this book more useful than I did. Misunderstood words, missed punch lines, embarrassing silences: We've experienced them all. I am a master of the nonspecific answer when responding to a question I've not heard: "Say, that's interesting; I haven't thought of that. Tell me more."

Barbara Stenross is sociologist who is an assistant dean at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Though this book is not a typical ethnography, the author attended and audio-taped the monthly meetings of a self-help group for the hearing impaired, SHHH. She also interviewed 12 of the key members.

SHHH meetings seem to consist of equal parts griping, esteem building, and learning about new technologies. Members evidently spend a lot of meeting time recounting the problems they experience in the hearing world. However, both members and physicians discuss and evaluate various technologies, and new devices are demonstrated.

This book aims to provide information on the problems faced by the hearing impaired. It is not an ethnography of a self-help group. Most of the bibliography and the list of selected books and journals consist of material written for the hearing impaired or their families. We learn about how certain SHHH members cope (or fail to cope) with hearing loss, but we learn very little about the structure of SHHH. Organizations dealing with the disabled generally have strong ideological commitments to one view or another of how the disabled should deal with their disability. For example, among some of those who are born deaf (and thus have never heard speech) and their advocates, communication should be exclusively through sign language, while others encourage the use of lip reading and speech. These and other strongly held positions are not touched on in this book.

I sense, though it is not specifically stated, that most of SHHH adhere to the doctrine of "I'm hard of hearing, and I'm proud." Members are encouraged to wear behind-the-ear aids, which are more effective but easier to see than the kind that fits into the ear. Some members glue rhinestones to their aids so they can be better seen. I support that stance. When my behind-the-ear aid whistles (which it often does), I tell my students, "I whistle while I work."

This book would be helpful to a hard of hearing person and his/her family. As a study of the hearing impaired or of a self-help organization, it offers very little. There are a number of excellent research monographs on the hearing impaired, and the disability research center at the Centers of Disease Control will send useful bibliographies to interested persons.

## Theories and Epistemology

*Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, Investigations*, by **Dorothy E. Smith**. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. 307 pp. \$60.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-0820-4307-00. \$21.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8020-8135-5.

**MYRA MARX FERREE**  
*University of Connecticut*  
[ferree@uconnvm.uconn.edu](mailto:ferree@uconnvm.uconn.edu)

Dorothy Smith is not just another feminist theorist. In many ways, she represents both the leading edge of what feminist theory can offer to the general sociological project and also the most authentically sociological perspective in the broad area of feminist theory. Thus the publication of any new book by Dorothy Smith is an event to be celebrated by both sociologists and interdisciplinary women's studies scholars. Since some of the essays in this volume have been published previously, this book is only partly a new event. While the huzzahs to greet its arrival will consequently be less loud than those that have welcomed her other new books, I predict they will be no less heartfelt.

The nine essays (plus introduction and conclusion) that make up this book are sorted into three broad categories: critique, theory, and investigations. But Smith's insistence on the need to situate theory in the specific "everyday/everynight" settings in which it is produced and apprehended and her desire to use empirical investigation to break down the epistemological privilege of the researcher combine to blur the line between data and theory. The essays reprinted in this volume include important reflections on "contradictions for feminist social scientists," "writing patriarchy into feminist texts," "telling the truth after postmodernism," and the "Standard North American Family

(SNAF)," all of which deserve to be more widely accessible. The new essays provide further explication and illustration of closely related themes: the situation of women in the academy, as it affects the work they do and also illuminates the underlying organization of the academic enterprise itself; the relation of discourse to the social relations of the speakers; the uses of discourse analysis to pull apart these social relations and uncover the power that is constantly active in speech situations; the similarities and differences between speech that is direct and face-to-face and speech that is textually mediated in constituting such social relations. Once again, Smith connects "high theory" with everyday life in her distinctive and provocative way.

Many of the essays, especially the more recent ones, focus on women academics as academics in a context of political backlash. This category includes Smith's discussion of the institutional obstacles to sustaining an activist-based research enterprise in the university; her critique of the cultural replication of the idea of "political correctness" as "a device through which a politics may be entered into texts and talk without politics or ideology ever appearing" (p. 193); as well as her theoretically productive deconstruction of the actual process through which juridical discourse was used to transform a report on "chilly climate" into a "charge" of harassment, thus buttressing the institutional power advantages of senior male professors in a struggle over sexism in one Canadian university.

I found her new essay on sociological discourse particularly provocative. Her critical analysis addresses why and how "sociological theory subordinates the intentions and perspectives of the original speakers to the 'order of the discourse'" (p. 139). Smith argues that sociology therefore differs from novels or journalism not in the sources it uses or the "methods" of its data collection, but in the substitution of the relevances of "sociological theory" for those of the original speakers. In so doing, sociological writing brings the standpoint of the actual historical theorists back into power. This power is potentially contested, since the interpretation offered in a text remains "two-sided," open to the reader's experience-based questions of applicability, yet "trained readers of such texts know how to suspend their own and others' experience when it challenges the theoretically regulated order of the text" (p. 152). The necessity and appropriateness of such "disciplined" perception lies at