

Book Reviews

Richard K. Manoff. *Social Marketing. New Imperative for Public Health*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1985.

This is a useful sourcebook for public health practitioners interested in planning and implementing a *social marketing* approach to behavioral change in their communities. The author starts with the premise that public health professionals still need to be convinced of the merit of a social marketing approach. He spends introductory chapters informing readers about how the approach evolved from a pure marketing perspective, how it differs from it, and why the approach is needed.

The book has three parts: background and theory of social marketing, putting social marketing to work, and social marketing case studies. The parts are somewhat uneven in terms of their value to the health practitioner. The strongest parts are two and three, although two of the three cases and the majority of examples come from third world countries that have had considerable experience with social marketing. The weakest part is the discussion of theory. Kotler's (1982) book is a much better conceptual treatment of social marketing, and Ray's (1982) book a much better review of the psychological, marketing, and mass communication literatures that provide the underpinnings for much of the social marketing perspective. Notable gaps in the author's literature review are the recent *user oriented* communication studies that have helped to improve our understanding of the active receiver and to refine ways of segmenting audiences for information campaigns (MacStravic, 1984, Dervin, 1981).

Kotler speaks fluently the language of a marketing person because he is a seasoned practitioner with many 'successful' social marketing campaigns to his credit. The book is an attempt to share his ideas, methods, and lessons learned with health professionals.

The author defines marketing broadly as 'a rationale, a problem-solving systems approach for institutionalizing an idea, product, a point of view, a public policy, a political party, or a candidate.' He sees marketing as a 'neutral methodology' and social marketing as 'its adaption to public health imperatives.' To some extent, he is accurate to say that the tools of marketing are 'neutral' and, therefore, safe to apply directly to social marketing. However, it is inaccurate to suggest that the marketing approach, like any approach, does not have its conceptual biases. In the case of marketing, these biases include close linkages with persuasive communication theory that has its own

conception of audiences, messages, and behavioral change. Some evidence of this is the emphasis on message content, design, persuasion, and memorability. Other evidence is the insufficient exploration of the message receiver as an individual, with ideas, motives, behavioral preferences and plans, decision premises, and cognitive styles.

The author is quite clear that the goal of social marketing is 'the improvement of public health'. He defines it as a 'rationale for translating scientific findings about health and nutrition into education and action programs adopted from methodologies of commercial marketing'.

The book has several sections that provide useful guidance to practitioners. Some of these sections include principles for the interdisciplinary approach to social marketing, a step-by-step social marketing process, guidelines for focus group research (a qualitative research methodology that the author recommends), and a checklist and rating scheme for a social marketing program called PRISM.

For example, the step-by-step process takes the reader through strategy development, strategy implementation, and strategy assessment. Strategy development includes several activities such as defining the problem and setting objectives, identifying the target audience, defining the proposed behavioral change, identifying the resistance points, assessing media availability, designing the product, choosing the distribution scheme, and consideration of resources. The discussion of *resistance points* is especially useful but it is not linked conceptually to barriers research (Aday, 1975) or mass media effects (Chaffee, 1980). Some barriers can be overcome by mass media, some by interpersonal communication, others by provision of incentives and others by long-term social change. While the author does not purposely create unrealistic expectations from social marketing programs, the reader unfamiliar with communication and psychological theories might come away with a strong impression that social marketing can achieve behavioral change in many areas where public health information programs have failed.

A very useful contribution of the book is the critical role it assigns to applied research at various points in social marketing planning, implementation, and assessment. Research is considered useful for formative, process, and summative (or outcome) evaluation. There seems to be greater reliance on qualitative than quantitative methods, especially on the focus group, and inadequate recognition of how quantitative methods can be used for planning purposes (De Pietro, 1987).

In sum, the book is recommended for public health practitioners who have an interest in social marketing. The book's theory and conceptual limitations are at least partly overcome by the many practical applications and useful lessons learned from social marketing efforts worldwide.

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