

Stow Persons, *Ethnic Studies at Chicago, 1905-1945*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987) 159 pp., \$19.95.

The University of Chicago rose out of the marshes on the south side of Chicago in the 1890s to win recognition as one of the world's leading research institutes. The multiethnic city of Chicago, teeming with immigrants and displaced rural blacks, offered its sociologists an immediate challenge. These scholars were to directly influence the study of racial and ethnic groups and the field of sociology for many decades. However influential the work of the "Chicago School" was, their hold on American sociology was broken in the post World War II period as activists and intellectuals dealt with America's unfulfilled promise for ethnic minorities. Stow Persons' book chronicles this important group of social thinkers from their peak to their decline.

Ethnic Studies at Chicago focuses on Robert Park, W.I. Thomas, and others who constitute the core of the Chicago School. It gives the reader an overview of their theories and studies relating to ethnicity. Much of this emphasis is on Robert Park whose theory of a cycle of ethnic relations had a major impact on social thinkers, and was later attacked with a fervor commensurate with its influence. Persons also examines Park's theory of the "marginal man," and its development in the work of Everett Stonequist.

In addition to examining the work of the major luminaries of the Chicago School, Persons introduces the reader to the scholarship of some lesser known figures, such as Edward Byron Reuter and E. Franklin Frazier. The attention to E. Franklin Frazier, and some references to the work of Charles S. Johnson, is especially important in a book on theory, since the contributions of ethnic scholars to the social sciences are often neglected. Frazier was able, for example, to modify Park's cycle from a minority perspective.

There are areas in *Ethnic Studies at Chicago* where more detail would be useful. For example, Persons gives a tantalizing reference to the seminal work of Sarah E. Simons as the theoretical basis for the Chicago school's ethnic theory, however he does not reveal more about her ties, or possibly lack of ties, to these scholars. He could have also explored the methodological contributions of some of the sociologists, such as Thomas and Znaniecki's much cited Methodological Note in *The Polish Peasant* which introduced important concepts, such as the situational approach, and innovative research techniques, such as the use of life histories.

In the 1980s we are seeing an increasing immigration of third world people to the United States, so it is only natural that there is a renewed interest in theory relating to the perplexing question of assimilation versus pluralism. Readers will gain from Persons' book an understanding of earlier attempts to address the issues we still face.

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