

pretation than, say, internal medicine or psychiatry. The method of investigation employed was participant-observation, that firsthand immersion in a social situation that seems on the surface to be natural and straightforward but is in fact devilishly complex and difficult to bring off. Bosk spent 18 months looking and listening, questioning and noting, becoming so far as possible a member of two surgical services at an elite teaching hospital. The time was well spent, since he is able to bring us an insider's view of the making of surgeons and at the same time illuminate more general sociological considerations of how control of performance is exercised and how professionals discipline themselves and others.

The main points of the book are that the training of a surgeon is conducted on both moral and technical themes, that the morality of aspirants is more critically interrogated by their teachers than is their technical facility, and that the social control exerted upon surgical practice is almost exclusively a matter internal to the surgical hierarchy.

The core of the analysis is directed to the several types of errors that surgeons in training (and in practice too) are seen to commit. These are characterized as technical, judgmental, normative, and quasi-normative. Technical errors are the expectable mistakes that occur in surgical procedures, such as an ineptly knotted suture; judgmental errors, again entirely expectable, involve choosing an incorrect operative strategy; normative errors, by far the most serious and heavily censured, are those that constitute a flouting of the code of responsible conduct by which surgeons live, such as neglecting a patient's needs in favor of one's own comfort and convenience or failing to report to a superior when a course of treatment has gone awry; quasi-normative errors occur when a house staffer willfully deviates from particular procedures favored by the attending surgeon under whom he or she is working. Since surgeons are self-regulating to an extraordinary degree, the committer of normative error is seen to be threatening the very moral foundation of the profession. Technical error can be corrected (usually) and is ordinarily forgiven; normative error may or may not be correctable, but it is not readily forgiven because it is thought to reside in the character of the individual, to be an enduring defect that will recurrently undermine the work of the surgical group. Bosk's title, *Forgive and Remember*, refers to the custom of "forgiving" technical and judgmental errors while at the same time "remembering" them in the

event they come to constitute a pattern of technical incompetence. Through the use of rich quotations and astute observations, we are shown how the various errors occur and just what steps are taken in dealing with them; here surgery comes alive for the reader.

The surgeon's world presents itself as active (surgery is described as a "body-contact sport"), fraught with technical and moral hazards, self-confident, somewhat arrogant and elitist, and in a certain sense precarious: fragile human beings doing God-like things. Bosk evinces a fine sympathy for the rigors of the role, a sympathy that far too many medical sociologists have forsworn. Of the book's many admirable features, none is more salient than the methodological appendix, "The field-worker and the surgeon." Here, in a candid report on his field experience, Bosk presents a fresh and instructive view of this type of investigation. It should be required reading for any aspiring or experienced social scientist.

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