



March 1996

Review of *Old and Homeless: Double Jeopardy*. Dianne Wiatt Rich, Thomas A. Rich and Larry C. Mullins (Eds.). Reviewed by Martin B. Tracy, Southern Illinois University.

Martin B. Tracy
Southern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw>



Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Tracy, Martin B. (1996) "Review of *Old and Homeless: Double Jeopardy*. Dianne Wiatt Rich, Thomas A. Rich and Larry C. Mullins (Eds.). Reviewed by Martin B. Tracy, Southern Illinois University.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol23/iss1/18>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Work at ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.



Diane Wiatt Rich, Thomas A. Rich and Larry C. Mullins (Eds.). *Old and Homeless: Double Jeopardy*. Westport, CT: Auburn House, 1995. \$49.95 hardcover.

John C. Rife, *Employment of the Elderly: An Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995. \$59.95 hardcover.

Each of these publications provide useful materials in subject areas that are difficult to access for research and practice. Certainly there are few comprehensive descriptions available on the characteristics of the homeless elderly in the United States. Despite the apparent growing incidence of older people without adequate shelter, income and health care, this population has received little policy or social service-oriented attention. One reason for the apparent lack of interest may be the complexity of acquiring adequate and reliable information on a population which, as Harold Sheppard notes in the Foreword to this edited text, is a very heterogenous group. It is difficult to compile data on a diverse and widely dispersed population who are often without mailing addresses or permanent community attachments. Even when the homeless elderly are located, it can be an onerous task to structure a feasible way of getting information that can be persuasively used to influence policy makers to redirect limited resources.

This text illustrates some of the problems in getting good material on significant issues affecting the homeless elderly. The book is structured around a survey of homeless elderly in the Tampa Bay, Florida area conducted in 1991. The survey is included in an Appendix for ready reference. The text goes beyond the survey, however, providing an introductory glimpse into the main areas of concern related to health and mental health, housing policies, social service, consumer participation, and community resources.

While the range of topics discussed is useful in an introductory text, there are considerable differences in the quality of the scope and depth of discussion which detract from its overall utility as a resource. Some chapters are quite analytical, offering interesting perspectives and interpretations of how the subject under discussion has a unique impact on the elderly homeless population. This is particularly true of the chapters on substance abuse and on outreach and empowerment. Several other chapters

are extremely abbreviated which severely constrains their value other than as a very brief introduction to the topic. For example, the chapter on ageism is only three pages in length. The area of social service needs and policy implications is covered in only four pages. The complex issues of housing policy and mental health are discussed in a little over four pages each.

While there seems to have been an original intent to organize each chapter around a set of guidelines, there is a marked difference in the format and focus of the various chapters. The chapter on community services is a summary of case illustrations and a listing of innovative programs. The chapter on psychotropic medication could best be described as a literature review. An overview chapter of medication issues is an analysis of secondary data and the literature, as is the chapter on substance abuse. The chapter on outreach and empowerment is primarily a guide to the steps required for community involvement with the elderly aimed at their self-empowerment.

Thus, a contributing factor to the unevenness in the quality and depth of the book's chapters is the inconsistent use of a standardized analytical format or structure. The longer contributions do seem to follow general guidelines, but these are unspecified and difficult to discern. It would have been helpful for the editors to deal with the structure of the text in more depth in the introduction. Despite these shortcomings, the book is a useful reference for students engaged in aging studies. It is a welcome addition to the literature on an under investigated area of growing importance.

In the second review text, John C. Rife has compiled a valuable resource on the employment of older persons. This is clearly a significant policy issue that has major implications for a number of public programs, including social security benefits. The employment rate of persons age 62 and over directly affects the financial security of the old-age, survivors and disability (OASDI) program in terms of cash outlays and contributions paid into the system. The situation is compounded by rising health care costs that is the social security system's greatest challenge. Older individuals out of the labor force are particularly vulnerable to the related risks of a loss of income and of health insurance. Unemployed older persons who are not yet old enough for eligibility to Medicare are faced with additional problems of income and health care

protection. These serious concerns are taking place in a rapidly changing work market shaped by new technologies which often puts the older person at a competitive disadvantage, especially re-entry or initial entry women in their 40s, 50s and 60s. Minority populations of both gender face even greater challenges in getting suitable employment in their later years.

This annotated bibliography is an excellent resource for anyone interested in exploring these and other issues related to the employment of older persons. It covers both historical and current literature and would be of particular use to students in aging studies in economics, sociology and social work. It has an unusually extensive section on displaced women, which is too often neglected in the literature and in reference guides. Its data base offers a wide range of references of journals as well as texts. The book is very well organized, making it easy to use and to find references to specific topics.

Both of these texts are welcome additions to the literature in subjects that will become increasingly important areas for research and practice.

Martin B. Tracy
Southern Illinois University

Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Whither Socialism?* Cambridge, MA: The NUT Press, 1994, 338 pp.

According to conventional wisdom, the collapse of socialist governments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s symbolized the failure of socialist ideals and, in particular, the economic and political structures developed since 1917 to implement them. This assumption has profoundly affected public dialogue in the United States over social and economic policies of direct concern to social workers, most notably debates over the relationship between individual and society, and the extent (even the existence) of what Walter Trattner termed "collective responsibility for collective need," in the form of welfare state policies and programs. If, as Vic George and Paul Wilding argued in *Ideology and Social Welfare*, 20th century welfare states are the offsprings of a curious marriage of capitalist and socialist