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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

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Volume 32  
Issue 4 December

Article 13

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2005

**Review of *Perspectives on the Economics of Aging*. David A. Wise (Ed.). Reviewed by Martin B. Tracy.**

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**Recommended Citation**

Tracy, Martin B. (2005) "Review of *Perspectives on the Economics of Aging*. David A. Wise (Ed.). Reviewed by Martin B. Tracy." *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 32: Iss. 4, Article 13.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.3122>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol32/iss4/13>

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This handbook reflects the extent to which research, including participatory research, has influenced the field of group work in recent years. Furthermore, although group work is revealed as a method in this handbook, it is also apparent that group work continues to be more than a method: it represents a set of values and a way of examining social phenomena. This book conveys a sense of continuity and unity of social group work from its origins to the contemporary scene. As such, it is a success.

Steven Rose

George Mason University

David A. Wise (Ed.), *Perspectives on the Economics of Aging*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004. \$90.00 hardcover.

During the last century there was a remarkable change in social and political attitudes towards the provision of income safety nets for the elderly in industrial nations. Extending beyond the provision of income for mere subsistence, national policies created the opportunity for sustainable retirement through social security systems that ensured protection against the loss of both income and health in old age. This is the legacy of social security programs in all industrialized nations. The sheer magnitude and scale of public and private income and health care programs under social security that have become an indispensable aspect of public policy captured the attention of researchers and policy makers, resulting in an overwhelming body of literature and wide range of disputable perspectives.

In recent decades, the scholarly and public literature has focused on perceived and real threats to the viability of income and health care programs for the elderly, especially social security systems. Much of the discussion has been related to analysis of the impact of aging populations and a shrinking dependency ratio of people who are working and contributing money through payroll taxes to finance those who are not. Research has also been conducted on the impact of diminishing government resources and the ongoing attempts to shift some, or even most, of the government burden for income support and health care from the public to the private sector, including transferring responsibility for managing programs from national to local governments. The

findings of this research are inconclusive, leaving many unanswered questions, especially as to the sustainability of the public systems, and the presence of political power sufficient to dramatically alter such entrenched and popular programs.

The edited text under review adds to our knowledge of two important but less frequently examined aspects of the debates about support systems for income and health in old age. The text is the ninth in a series of volumes on the economics of aging. The first five chapters of this volume discuss how the elderly accumulate, or fail to accumulate, wealth. The second six chapters examine how wealth is related to health, including mortality. Four chapters give an international perspective with two making comparisons between the United States and Britain. One examines experiences in South Africa and another discusses health in Russia. Several chapters are followed by commentary from an expert in the field that greatly enriches the content.

The authors draw on various sources of macro and micro secondary socioeconomic status (SES) data, as well as data on mortality rates from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Asset and Health Dynamics among the Oldest Old (AHEAD) panel study, and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), among other data sources. The data are subjected to descriptive, analytical, and econometric evaluation. Many readers may not be totally familiar with the nuances and methods of econometric analysis, but there is ample discussion of the data presented in each chapter to make this an informative and interesting book to a wide audience.

Each chapter raises intriguing questions that are pertinent to both practice with the elderly and the development of social policies. This includes, for example, detailed discussion on what has contributed to the reduction of mortality rates of the elderly. Has it been public health? Better nutrition? Improved medications? Modified behavior? What, if any, is the significance of home equity on income and age? What is the source of household wealth? Does household pooled income provide more health protection for elderly members? What is the relationship between mortality, income, and income inequality? Is there a difference in the geographic utilization of medical care and mortality among the elderly in the United States? What has been the impact of the

transition from employer managed defined benefit pensions to defined contribution programs?

The text addresses these and related questions using strong methodological approaches. The discussions are thoughtful and thought provoking. The authors of the book's chapters range over many topics of importance to understanding the needs of elderly people. Anyone interested in how the elderly are impacted by income and health care support policies and programs will find this book to be of considerable value.

Martin B. Tracy  
University of Kentucky

Ronald J. Mancoske and James Donald Smith (Eds.), *Practice Issues in HIV/AIDS Services*. Binghamton, NY, 2004. \$39.95 hardcover, \$24.95 papercover.

The spread of HIV/AIDS has emerged as a major health crisis both in the developed and developing countries. In many African countries and in small sub populations in developed countries, the rates of infection are alarmingly high. Perhaps two prominent characteristics of this crisis are: a) the rates of infection are dissimilar across various social and demographic categories such as drug users and Hispanics. b) the causal factors associated with the rate of infection are not the same across various social and demographic dimensions. Social researchers and practitioners engaged in the fight against AIDS have responded to this diversity by publishing a number of books in recent years. These books describe the rates as well as correlates of infection within sub populations such as women and minorities. Several of these books inform us of the various aspects of the demand structure of social services necessary for the prevention, treatment and management of the disease.

Understandably, a large number of social workers are engaged in the fight against AIDS. Social workers are closely involved with the provision of HIV/AIDS services at all levels ranging from the micro to macro. Social workers use a number of tools to help populations at risk. However, a book was needed that could instill not only confidence in what social workers do, but also provide broad guidelines and suggestions useful for social