



2016

addicted. pregnant. poor. Kelly Ray Knight. Reviewed by Cara Kelly

Cara Kelly

Arizona State University, cara.kelly@asu.edu

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

 Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Cara (2016) "*addicted. pregnant. poor.* Kelly Ray Knight. Reviewed by Cara Kelly," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 43 : Iss. 2 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol43/iss2/10>

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.



their immigration status, costing them access to gainful employment, higher education, and full social and civic benefits. Additionally, the authors argue that ethnic nationalism was an energizing force facilitating the spread of restrictive immigration policy; however, discussion is lacking to further convince readers of its role. Despite these limitations, this book is highly readable and an excellent source on these timely issues.

Elizabeth Kiehne, Arizona State University

Kelly Ray Knight, *addicted. pregnant. poor.* Duke University Press (2015), 328 pages, \$94.95 (hardcover), \$24.95 (paperback).

Employing an ethnographic methodology, Kelly Ray Knight examines the tumultuous lives of unstably housed women as they navigate through addiction and pregnancy. She expands existing literature by describing underlying constructs of addicted pregnancy through the lens of multiple professionals involved in the lives of women who live and work in the San Francisco daily-rent hotels. Through observation and narrative inquiry, Knight explores the larger sociological constructs of how we understand addiction and mental illness in the United States in the 21st century. Following the lives of several addicted and pregnant women in the daily-rent hotels over a four-year period, we learn of these women's experiences navigating ineffective social programs, negotiating coercive structural policies, and surviving unimaginable suffering, thus illuminating the reality faced by drug addicted women.

The book's first two chapters introduce the reader to the concept of consumption and insecurity in the daily-rent hotels, as addicted and pregnant women fight for survival and stability through consumption, as well as the concept of temporality as it pertains to antagonistic paradigms facing addicted, pregnant, and impoverished women. Through descriptions of temporal constraints facing these women, the author explores the demands of multiple conflicting priorities, while expanding the understanding of the intersecting needs facing addicted women over the course of their lives. Persistent residential transience as women navigate temporal constraints results in women often becoming indebted to the private hotels for past due rent, thus being forced to continue to engage in predatory

business transactions with hotel owners who directly profit from their instability.

Chapters three and four describe the web in which these women find themselves entangled as they struggle with addiction, mental health concerns, and housing instability. Teasing out the symptomatic differences between mental health issues and substance abuse with these women is complex, and is further complicated by implementation of neoliberal welfare policies, which have systematically defunded substance abuse and mental health treatment as a remedy for poverty. Impoverished women in the daily-rent hotels subsequently find themselves attempting to navigate a defective social service delivery system which fails to address their comorbid features holistically, leaving women forced to manipulate systems whenever possible, and to adapt through self-medication and illegal activities.

Chapters five and six describe the use of stratified reproduction by governmental entities and communities to scapegoat complex social problems and inefficient, ineffective social programs. A social construction of worthlessness of pregnant addicted women shapes government and community responses, thus vilifying addicted pregnancy rather than offering them support through their recovery and subsequent sobriety. Isolated from their families and healthy social support systems, women in daily-rent hotels are construed both as victims of personal and social trauma, and perpetrators of criminal activity, despite available treatment programs. While pregnancies are often unplanned in the daily-rent hotels, through threat of governmental intervention, children bring women together with their families for only brief moments, as they enter their lives to care for their children and provide a constant reminder of failure, loss, and unresolved grief.

This book dives deeply into a stigmatized population which is often gravely misunderstood, tackling deeply complicated social problems with compassion, honesty, and grace. Knight challenges established social constructs of substance abuse, mental health, and pregnancy amongst vulnerable women in the San Francisco daily-rent hotels. As constructs are reframed through a multidisciplinary viewpoint, the book depicts how women in the daily-rent hotels are viewed both as

victims of their own histories, as well as perpetrators against their own children when they are unsuccessful in navigating the complexities of mental health stability, sobriety, and residential transience while pregnant. In approaching addicted pregnancy as a common phenomenon in the lives of women residing in San Francisco's daily-rent hotels, the book points to the need for larger public policy changes, and for the implementation of multidisciplinary coordinated efforts to support and improve the lives of these women and their children.

Cara Kelly, Arizona State University

Jianding Ding, *The History of the English Poor Law System*. People's Publishing House (2014), ¥54 (paperback – Chinese/English edition).

English Poor Law, the origin of the social assistance system, is the foundation of modern welfare systems. Its development in Britain played an important role in promoting Poor Laws throughout the western countries. Moreover, influenced by its economic, social and political status, English Poor Law has set a model for poor relief in western countries in modern times. It has a history of nearly 350 years from the issue of the Elizabethan Poor Law in 1601 (the Old Poor Law) through the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834 (the New Poor Law) to the National Assistance Act in 1948. However, this part of the history still needs to be better sorted out.

This book divides the history of English Poor Law into seven stages: Late Medieval – Emerging; Late 17th Century – Implementation; 18th century – Improvements; 19th century – Poor Law Amendment Act; Late 19th and Early 20th Century – Adjustment and Decline; and finally Early 20th Century – Abolition. It thoroughly analyzes and discusses the English Poor Law from various perspectives, including social backgrounds, systematic concepts, the features of different historic stages, and basic functions and social status. The book provides valuable insights into the social functions of English Poor Law. On one hand, during the mid- to late 19th century, especially the period of Marx and Engels, the English Poor Law was considered as the cruel "Poor Law Bastille" (so-called because