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Review of *Hunger in the Land of Plenty: A Critical Look at Food Insecurity*. James D. Wright, Amy Donley, and Sara Strickhouser Vega

Kaipeng Wang
Texas State University

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the poor and promote the social and economic development of the fragile states. While poverty may never disappear entirely, it is imperative we remain focused overcoming poverty.

Yan Shen
Hubei Normal University

James D. Wright, Amy Donley, and Sara Strickhouser Vega, *Hunger in the Land of Plenty: A Critical Look at Food Insecurity*. Lynne Rienner Publishers (2019), 183 pages, \$65.00 (hardcover).

Food insecurity refers to the lack of consistent access to enough food for a healthy life. Food insecurity has been drawing attention among researchers and policy stakeholders due to its increasing prevalence and its impact on population health in the U.S. and globally, especially after the financial recession. While most books on health and nutrition only briefly mention food insecurity as an emerging social issue, this book is the most recent and one of the few that specifically focus on food insecurity as an independent topic.

Using findings from previous research and their own projects, the authors of this book provide an insightful discourse on food insecurity, including its social and historical context, risk factors, health consequences, current community strategies and policies, and future solutions. The book opens by contextualizing food insecurity from a multidisciplinary perspective and argues that food insecurity is not a production problem but rather a distribution problem. This is supported by empirical evidence on the risk factors of food insecurity in the U.S., including income, mobility, age, gender, race, household composition, marital status, geography, food assistance participation, and coping strategies, and comparing those with data from Canada and Australia.

The authors summarize empirical evidence on the impact of food insecurity on physical and mental health, including obesity, self-rated health, diabetes, mental well-being, cognitive function, and malnutrition, and discuss the concept of food deserts and availability-related issues. They acknowledge the influence of income and racial composition on neighborhood

access to healthy food, yet challenge the prevalent assumption that food availability is positively associated with dietary quality. Their view is that income inequality is at the root of the poor being undernourished and aggregate racial disparities of nutrition education and dietary quality.

The authors focus a following chapter on community-based alternative food movements, including home and community gardening, farmers' markets, food banks, and food pantries. They argue that although gardening and farmers' markets have provided fresh and healthy food and enhanced social cohesion, their impact on improving diet health and reducing food insecurity has been miniscule. One among many reasons for this is that those community-based alternative food movements tend to appeal more to middle-class non-Hispanic Whites, but not to ethnic minorities and low-income populations. Food banks and food pantries are intended to serve the poorest households who are food-insecure. Their roles, however, are merely supplemental due to several limitations, including low accessibility in rural and suburban areas, insufficient food supplies, scheduling conflicts with potential clients, and clients' lack of awareness of their existence in communities.

The next chapter focuses on public policies relevant to food insecurity, including Meals on Wheels, free and reduced-price (FRP) school breakfast and lunch programs, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The authors acknowledge the accomplishments of those public policies, yet they emphasize that none of them has eliminated food insecurity. Meals on Wheels, for example, has significantly improved diet quality, increased nutrient intake, and reduced food insecurity among older and frail participants, yet is hampered in its mission by long waitlists and limited outreach among the homeless elderly. FRP programs aim to provide balanced meals to schoolchildren from low-income families, yet must deal with ongoing issues including schedule conflict with schools, food waste, and unpalatable taste. SNAP seems to increase participants' subjective health status but its benefits are outweighed by its stringent eligibility criteria, burdensome application and qualification processes, and social stigma among participants.

The book ends by summarizing scientific and technological advancements to ensure food is produced abundantly and concludes that food insecurity is essentially a problem of access

and distribution more than one of food supply. Distribution is closely tied to general problems of poverty and can be eliminated only as poverty itself is eliminated.

This book provides an up-to-date summary of literature around food insecurity, an overview of previous research on food insecurity, as well as individual strategies and public programs and policies to address food insecurity for new researchers and policy stakeholders who want to learn about food insecurity. It may well serve as a desk reference book for experienced food insecurity researchers and policy stakeholders to update their knowledge and to identify new literature to guide their work and research interest, and enhance their critical thinking for framing and addressing food insecurity.

Kaipeng Wang
Texas State University

Felicia Kornbluh and Gwendolyn Mink, *Ensuring Poverty: Welfare Reform in Feminist Perspective*. University of Pennsylvania Press (2018), 240 pages, \$49.95 (hardcover).

In this overdue intersectional analysis of two decades of brutally subordinating welfare reform, the authors outline three primary concerns: the significance of gender in welfare reform; the narrowing of the welfare debate between Democrats and Republicans; and the activism of social justice feminists at the heights of welfare reform. The book provides a straightforward history of welfare reform policy while simultaneously highlighting the work of intersectional feminists who advocated for the voices of those most impacted by welfare reform, namely, low-income nonwhite single mothers. Additionally, in line with feminist perspectives, the book calls for researchers and policy makers to adopt an intersectional feminist agenda to address welfare reform today.

The authors make clear that the analytic tool for their arguments throughout the book is gender, because it “[calls] attention to the ways in which policy incorporates assumptions about maleness and femaleness, masculine and feminine behavior, and the two-option gender system itself” (p. 5). They