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## Review of *The Homelessness Industry: A Critique of U.S. Social Policy*. by Elizabeth Beck and Pamela C. Twiss

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## Book Reviews

Elizabeth Beck and Pamela C. Twiss, *The Homelessness Industry: A Critique of US Social Policy*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. (2018). 287 pages, \$78.50 (hardback).

This book explores aspects of U.S. policy not typically discussed among the general population. The authors discuss the evolution of homelessness in the United States and the impact scholars, psychiatrists, and politicians have had in labeling homelessness, which in turn gave birth to its normalization. The discussion focuses on life experiences of poor and homeless individuals dating back to biblical times, the efforts of homeless advocates, and how U.S. policy developed so as to create an industry out of efforts to address homelessness. Homelessness is often ignored, and when it is discussed it is often from the perspective suggesting that homelessness is a choice. Previous authors have engaged specific elements of homelessness in the United States. However, Beck and Twiss provide a comprehensive discussion of homelessness and its roots, the efforts of homelessness advocates, U.S. neoliberal policy, and key areas of change within a human rights framework, making such information easily accessible within one book.

The authors come from a background of working with women who are experiencing homelessness, social work, and academia. They approach homelessness and neoliberal policies in an open manner. The writing style is clear and easy to understand. Each chapter begins with a statement or two setting the foundation for the entire chapter. Individualized experiences are shared to provide a real life understanding of what was going on during the discussed timeline of homelessness in America. Summaries allow the reader to put the entire chapter into a timeline of events, thus setting the stage for the following chapter. Additionally, the authors provide chapter end notes highlighting historical events which had an impact on the homelessness industry.

The book starts out by helping the reader understand the historical evolution of homelessness in the United States and introduces the reader to the terms “homelessness industry” and “neoliberal policies” as well as the McKinney Act of 1987, which was the first major federal legislation developed in order to address the needs of homeless individuals. This is followed by discussion of the historical roots of homelessness and its development prior to the McKinney Act going into effect. The authors draw attention to how society views poor people and the impact of modern thinking as to which poor people are considered worthy of being helped, as well as the criminalization of homelessness. Considerable attention is given to issues of neoliberalism and social justice, and how during the 1980s, a social issue such as homelessness was labeled a psychiatric problem rather than an economic problem, and was thus handed over to mental health workers to solve. Beginning with the Reagan administration, this resulted in conflicts between homeless advocates themselves. This is followed by attention to the first major federal legislation on homelessness, the McKinney Act, and the competition for resources between homelessness programs and programs for social justice which would eliminate homelessness. The book ends with examination of strategies used after the implementation of the McKinney Act and key areas of change built upon a human rights framework.

This book has many strengths for readers with open minds and willingness to embrace the concept that homelessness is less an individual choice than a systemic issue. The historical approach Beck and Twiss apply to the development of homelessness puts into perspective how homelessness developed in this country, while the use of personal experiences gained through work with women experiencing homelessness brings substance to the many ways individuals fall through the cracks in a land with many resources. Discussing the impact that various presidential administrations had on the development of the homelessness industry lends credibility to the critique of U.S. social policy. Such discussion can be sensitive for those who have experienced homelessness or know someone who has. Readers already

convinced that homelessness is a personal choice will find here a strong challenge to their views.

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Corina Schulze, Sarah Koon-Magnin, and Valerie Bryan, *Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation and Sexual Assault: Challenging the Myths*. Lynne Rienner Publishers (2019). 235 pages, \$79.95 (hardcover).

In this book on sexual violence and the myths that surround this prevalent social issue in the United States, Schulze, Koon-Magnin, and Bryan deconstruct the gendered societal biases concerning sexual assault (e.g., rape myths) and portray a comprehensive understanding of how LGBTQA+ community members both experience and describe sexual assault. The book places the experiences of sexual and gender minorities, jointly referred to in the book as the “queer community,” in the forefront and explores how gender identity and sexual orientation affect how these individuals are perceived and treated by the criminal justice system. The authors focus on the victim’s experience, particularly the disclosure process and how gender identity and sexual orientation are critical to understanding their experiences.

This book is distinguished by the interdisciplinary and queer theoretical approach to the qualitative research upon which it draws. The authors’ backgrounds include criminology, political science, mental health counseling, social work, and sociology. They challenge traditional academic inquiry on sexual assault and thus provide readers a new perspective for viewing the queer community’s experiences of sexual assault. Through the use of consensual qualitative research (CQR), researchers capture the complexity of 22 queer identity participants, who were presented with an array of rape myths; interviews with the participants explore their responses and viewpoints of these myths. These accounts are eye-opening, insightful, and compelling.