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Book Review

Aging in Rural Places: Policies, Programs, and Professional Practice. K.M. Hash, E.T. Jurkowski, J.A. Krout, Eds. New York, NY: Spring Publishing Company. 2015. ISBN: 978-0-8261-9809-9. 308 pp. \$70.00 (Paper)

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The most challenging aspect of learning, teaching, and working with rural older Americans is the dearth of literature on policies and practice with this population. Ironically, the lack of research on rural older Americans mirrors the scant resources and services available to the population. Frustrated by this scholarly scarcity, Hash, Jurkowski, and Krout compile a collection of essays for *Aging in Rural Places: Policies, Programs, and Professional Practice* to fill “a critical need for a book that not only describes rural areas, their older residents, and their unique issues, but also discusses challenges faced by, and the best practices for, the health and human service professionals who work with, or aspire to work with, this population (xxiii).”

Aging in Rural Places contains 13 chapters, organized into five parts: introduction, health and human service needs of rural older adults, providing health and human services to rural older adults, competent practice in rural areas, and conclusion and future directions. The book begins and ends with discussions about the conceptualization of rurality and the need for accuracy in order to conduct more research. The introduction poses the questions: What is rural? Who are the rural older adults? Despite asking these important questions, Hash, Jurkowski, and Krout have found the answers elusive as national, state, and local governments define and delineate ‘rurality’ and the rural population differently, which, consequently, pose more challenges than solutions for health and human service providers working with rural aging Americans.

The strength of this book comes from its multidisciplinary perspective and the breadth of topics related to policy and practice with rural older adults. ‘Rural’ for Hash, Jurkoski, and Krout encompasses a myriad of physical, mental, and cultural elements. The overarching themes indicate the need to pull knowledge and resources from multiple disciplines when working in rural environments, and particularly, with rural elderly. Accordingly, the book has contributions from various health and human service fields to properly assess needs, resources, and effective service delivery. Using vignettes and case studies to illustrate problems facing this population, the book highlights important policies, research findings, and current practices.

The book serves as a good foundation for health and human service professionals and students, particularly social workers, who are interested in aging rural elders in the United States. Students will find the discussions of rurality, the disparity of resources and social services, and the roles of health care professionals beneficial. On the other hand, advanced practitioners and scholars may find some sections repetitive and lacking depth. For example, the chapter on health and wellness barely touches upon mental health and does not mention the topic of suicide among US rural elderly. Additionally, the international perspective could use more research on aging

from various parts of the world besides the handful mentioned (Bangladesh, Canada, and Colombia) in the book. To the editors' credit, the book makes a strong case for further research on rurality and the complexity of growing old in rural America. Given the scarcity of current research in rural American studies and gerontology, *Aging in Rural Places* is great introductory text that intersects these two fields.