

Homelessness and Drinking: A Study of a Street Population, Bernard Segal, The Haworth Press, Inc, New York, 1991, 150 pp, ISBN: 1-56024-210-8 (h/b). Price: \$24,95.

Segal (1991:82) acknowledges that “...one of the major problems involved in studying homelessness and drinking is that of causal relationship”. Other factors such as accessibility and availability, affordability and peer pressure also influence the causal relationship very significantly.

The book by Segal is based on a thorough longitudinal study which provides a comprehensive account of a street population or homeless drinking population in Anchorage, Alaska. The study was carried out over one year and it employed a number of complementary data gathering techniques such as observation and interviews. The drinking behaviour of the street people was also monitored in relation to demographic, sociological and other pertinent variables. In carrying out the study Segal adopts instruments and data gathering strategies consonant and sensitive to the situation and requirements of different ethnic groups. Without going into a lot of detail on Segal's research methodology it is important to point out that for research to be effective it has to be responsive and sensitive to the circumstances of the participants or subjects, so that it reflects a seriousness of purpose in terms of intervention and also accepting and valuing the ability of the subjects of be involved in the change or treatment process. Such a methodology shows that research is not just aimed at ‘data mining’ but at the full participation of the subjects. The research by Segal is action oriented and it also exposes some of the problems encountered in the treatment of alcohol users which include reluctance on the part of the alcoholics and recidivism.

Segal's book comprises of six chapters. In the first chapter Segal gives a brief review of homelessness and also homelessness in Anchorage and in the second chapter he grapples with issues of methodology. The third and fourth chapters present the results and discussion of findings, while intervention and treatment are addressed in the fifth chapter; lastly in the sixth chapter Segal looks at some recommendations for intervention and treatment.

Segal observes that it is important in the treatment of alcohol and drug abusers to adopt an integrated approach and for the agencies involved to cooperate so that clients do not manipulate the agencies and also to ensure that there is no duplication of services. Agencies should not compete, for clients can take advantage of such a situation and this can defeat the intended goal of rehabilitating drug and alcohol users.

Segal has carried out research on very topical problems – homelessness and alcoholism – findings of which can be generalised to both developed and developing countries. The study reflects the need to view housing just like any other social

service. Homelessness creates cultures of drinking and the impact of alcohol abuse to the addict, to society, family, the economy and employment is too severe for society to ignore. Segal's study highlights and reinforces the need to come up with effective and appropriate intervention strategies in preventing the occurrence or onset of the drinking problem and also rehabilitating the alcoholics. On the basis of available statistics on alcohol abuse internationally and its impact on society, alcoholism should be viewed as a scourge of our time and Segal's book has come at the right time, that is before the problem gets even more out of control.

The book is invaluable to professionals, both academic and practitioners concerned with social problems consequent from homelessness and alcoholism. Social workers, sociologists, health professionals and practitioners should find this book very handy in their endeavours to come to the root and solution of drug and alcohol abuse.

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Social Change and Economic Reform in Africa, Peter Gibbon (ed) Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 1993, ISBN: 91-7106-331-5. No price listed.

The phenomenon of economic reforms is crucial in Africa because the reforms are aimed at stabilising the economy in developing countries in general. This book is a documentation of facts and arguments brought up by some of the Africa-based authors. Their discussion on economic reforms, popularly referred to as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were based on studies that they carried out in Kenya, Tanzania, Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The book clearly portrays the relationship of the effects of SAP to issues of employment, education, health, poverty and the general standard of living of people in the aforesaid countries. It is important to mention, and for the reader to note, that almost all the authors examined the general overview of the economy in pre- and post-colonial eras and have reported that "*economic activities have remained depressed*" as a result of SAP. The initial intentions of implementing the reforms were genuine and were intended to increase and improve employment opportunities and the level of production, as well as to "*alleviate transitional social hardships*".

The countries of concern in this book adopted the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank sponsored adjustment programmes in an effort to achieve high economic growth. Unfortunately conditions began to decline and this became evident as a result of falling *per capita* state expenditure, deteriorating social