



Volume 39

Issue 1 March - Special Issue on Declining
Significance of Race, Revisited

Article 15

2012

Review of *Citizenship Social Work with Older People*. Malcolm Payne. Reviewed by Edward J. Gurnz.

Edward J. Gumz
Loyola University of Chicago

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

 Part of the Social Work Commons

Recommended Citation

Gumz, Edward J. (2012) "Review of *Citizenship Social Work with Older People*. Malcolm Payne. Reviewed by Edward J. Gurnz.," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 39 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol39/iss1/15>

This Book Review is brought to you by the Western Michigan University School of Social Work. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Malcolm Payne, *Citizenship Social Work with Older People*. (2011). Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books. \$36.95 (paperback).

Much has been written in the social work literature about human needs and the role of social workers in responding to their clients' needs. Much less has been written about looking at the "client" as "citizen" and how that shapes the social worker's role. This compact book addresses seeing the older people with whom social workers work as citizens and what that means.

Malcolm Payne, professor emeritus of social work and management at Metropolitan University, London, currently policy and development advisor at St. Christopher's Hospice, is the author of fourteen books on social work and related areas. He holds visiting professorships at universities in Poland and Finland. He writes from an international perspective, looking at aging and the response to it in Western Europe and the United States. For this book, he draws upon his work in Britain, Finland and Poland; throughout, he uses case examples based on his practice experience and information from colleagues and students. He is also familiar with U.S. policies toward the aged and introduces them often as a basis for comparison. American social workers can learn much from how other countries understand and deal with aging.

Payne's idea of citizenship social work starts from the idea that older people are equal as citizens in any society, state, community, or family, and that citizenship confers rights of participation in and responsibilities for older people and everyone else in social relationships with them, based on the inherent worth of the individual regardless of age. In modern societies, the aged are often viewed as having limited roles—they no longer work, are often poor consumers, and cost society much in terms of the provision of medical care and Social Security.

The initial section of the book contains a general discussion of how aging affects people in terms of its psychological, social, economic, and political aspects. The author discusses main types of aging theories such as gerontological theories, critical analyses of social ideas of aging such as conflict theories, and biological and medical approaches to aging to assist in understanding the aging process. The importance of theory (and in fact, a range of theories, including feminist, life course

and social construction theories) is mentioned. While citizenship social work is not a theory, the author contends that it can be used as a model for social work practice with older people. This is plausible from the case examples presented. For example, the author discusses critical practice with older people and contends that it can be used effectively.

Theories that question the existing social order to guide practice actions can lead to the creation of social change that affirms the citizenship of older people in society. The author contends that social work practice with older adults that uses creativity can lead to a sense of empowerment in older adults. Examples are listening to music, art therapy, community art experiences, using pictures for life review and reminiscence.

Payne also asks, "What is the role of the older adult in the community?" and discusses how social workers need to deal with this in citizenship social work. Examples are the participation of older adults in mutual support groups, organizations, and groups. Participation in service planning is also mentioned. All of these suggestions are limited by health, interest and support from the community

This book is a welcome addition to the literature on aging and, more specifically, to the little that has been written about the role of social work in social and political participation, particularly citizenship. The author brings a wealth of scholarship to this book, looking at aging and citizenship as they are encountered in Britain, Finland, Poland, and the United States. This gives the book a richness and range that a study dealing with aging in one country does not have. In one sense, this book is written in the best tradition of C. Wright Mills, who in *The Sociological Tradition* talked about "private troubles" and "public issues." Using relevant examples, the author talks about these troubles of the aged but spends the majority of the book discussing the issues of aging, social and political participation, which are generated when a society's population ages, and what the social work response needs to be to help achieve social and economic justice. While citizenship social work with older adults is not a well developed concept, it can serve as a useful model for social workers to use in their practice to enable older adults to live well with their aging and to help society to accept responsibility for the life that older people live.

This book would be edifying reading for anyone interested in aging and how to maintain the dignity and participation of the aged in society.

Edward J. Gumz, Loyola University of Chicago