

Reviews

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K. Warner Schaie, Hans-Werner Wahl, Heidrum Mollenkopf and Frank Oswald (eds), *Aging Independently: Living Arrangements and Mobility*, Springer Publishing Company, New York, 2003, 376 pp., hbk \$72.80, ISBN 0 8261 1854 2.

This scholarly book, a collaborative work between German and American academics, is based on the premise that ageing takes place in communities and that the context has an impact on whether and how people can age independently. It looks at two aspects of indoor and outdoor environments – different kinds of living arrangements and mobility issues as the milieu within which people act as they age. The book has five parts: an introduction; basic considerations; ‘indoors’; ‘outdoors’; and future perspectives.

The chapters on basic considerations include James Fozard on physical ageing and Andreas Kruse on psychological issues. Person-environment theory on ageing is still dominated by the work of M. Powell Lawton, and the chapter by Laura Gitlin reviews Lawton’s vision of the role of environment, and suggests ways forward for theory and measurement. Gitlin argues for situating the study of living environments within a multi-dimensional model of quality of life, and of the effect of moving from ‘rehabilitative’ to ‘holistic social’ perspectives on the adaptive mechanisms that people use in later life. How can we do this? Gitlin emphasises the development of more precise measurement tools and quantification of the ‘dynamical’ processes Lawton’s model described. Recent work on environment and identity in the United Kingdom took a different approach based on understanding these processes from individual ‘bottom up’ descriptions of option recognition and strategic re-engagement (Peace *et al.* 2003).

In both Europe and America the living arrangements of older people are extremely varied, and range from those perfectly matched to the needs of the individual to those lacking on almost every dimension. Graham Rowles and John Watkins begin the discussion with reflections on the ways that older people bring significance to living places. They talk about life history and relocation, familiarity and routine, emotional bonding, and the territorial bonds with ‘hearth’. Some of these themes are picked up in Frank Oswald’s review of data from empirical studies on subjective and objective housing conditions. The reunification of Germany has resulted in substantial redevelopment of some of the worst housing in the East and, as a result, many more older people there have experienced relocation, but at the same time a large number of older Germans have remained in the same apartment for over 40 years. As in Britain, ‘Whether or not older individuals suffer from loss of competence or prefer to stay put or to move, they express a broad range of housing needs instead of single requirements for support and assistance’ (p. 143).

Grossjohann's discussion of purpose-built housing for older adults in Germany describes recent attempts to diversify the options. One of these is the emergence of assisted-housing to bridge the formerly stark divide between *altenwohnung* (sheltered housing without care provision) and institutional care. Another important development, especially as an improvement in dementia care, is the growth of 'home communities' or small group homes for up to eight people, with nursing care. Regnier looks at parallel provision in America, where, following developments in Europe and especially Scandinavia, the last four years have seen an opening out of types of 'purpose-built' or 'age-restricted' accommodation, including different kinds of assisted-living, continuing-care retirement communities (CRCC), and on a larger scale, independent retirement communities. In addition to these, Regnier comments on the many housing centres for older people that exist or are in development on University campuses. Most of these are CRCCs, populated by older people 'interested in educational programs sponsored by the university' and retired staff – a notion that has yet to reach the UK. The design of care settings for people with dementia in the USA is discussed, from the perspective of action research, in a chapter by Gerald Weisman.

Although there is a brief mention of 'apartments for life' (lifetime homes) and home modifications in Regnier's chapter, technological innovations and smart homes are covered in more depth in the chapter by Sibylle Meyer and Heidrun Mollenkopf on the use of ICT technologies by older Germans. Using several data sources, they conclude that older people (over 53 years old) have higher expectations of, but lower confidence in, their ability to cope with ICT applications. Over time, we might expect that the growing familiarity of later cohorts with these technologies and advances in their design might increase the profit that older people could gain from their use.

Turning to what the book has to say about mobility, two points are striking. One is the difference in the use of cars on either side of the Atlantic; the other is the similar attitudes about the significance of transport in maintaining the quality of life. Mollenkopf describes Germany as having, second only to the USA, the largest network of expressways in the world, and one car for every two inhabitants. These figures disguise significant differences in the experience of older Germans, and in particular an East-West divide in access to cars and traffic-related accidents. But on both sides of the unified Germany, most trips outside the home by older people are on foot. In contrast, Jane Stutt's discussion of the safety of older drivers in the USA finds that only about eight per cent of the trips made by older Americans are made by walking, bicycle and all forms of public transport combined. Older Americans are also more likely to continue to drive themselves, even 85-year-olds, than to take lifts. In this context, patterns of traffic accidents and outcomes become very important in risk assessment. The paradox is that it is young drivers, not older drivers, who have the highest risk of being involved in traffic accidents, but older adults are more likely to suffer serious injury or death from these accidents (this applies also in the UK). Subsequent chapters describe patterns of self-initiated compensations, and some micro- and macro-interventions aimed at improving the safety of the roads and vehicles for older people. As with arguments about inclusive housing, many of these interventions – signage,

intelligent traffic systems and vehicle design – would benefit all age groups not just older people.

The fifth section turns to future perspectives. Hans-Werner Wahl and Laura Gitlin consider the likely changes in living arrangements in both countries over the next two decades. Basing their predictions on current trends, they point to the primacy of ‘private-home’ (mainstream) living alongside the increasing diversification of options with a consumer focus. The structural differences between the USA and Germany in social and healthcare provision, the extent of home ownership and inequalities in access to resources, are expected to persist. Patricia Waller and Gunter Kroj ponder respectively the future of mobility in the USA and Germany. Waller argues forcefully that the financial and political power of older generations in the transport debate needs to be moderated in the interests of children (those aged under five years are the largest group living in poverty) and future generations. Kroj, on the other hand, emphasises the benefits of a mobile older population, looking to information and dialogue to resolve conflicts between road users of different generations.

The final summative chapter by Neil Charness returns to person-environment theory and the relationships between the design of living environments and transport systems. The bottom line is however the economy, and the extent to which social philosophies will allow redistributive interventions in the pursuit of well-engineered environments. Examples of good practice abound, but knowledge about them must become more widespread in future decision-making on societal investments. This book provides an interesting and original synthesis of housing and transport issues, material and social sciences, empirical studies and theory as they pertain to older people in the United States and in Germany. It contributes to the growing, post-Lawton canon of work on environment and ageing, and for the British reader, already interested in housing and transport issues, provides valuable comparative insights into similarities and differences in two dominant western economies.

Reference

Peace, S., Holland, C. and Kellaher, L. 2003. *Environment and Identity in Later Life: A Cross-Setting Study: Final Report to ESRC*. School of Health and Social Welfare, The Open University, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire. Available online at www.regard.ac.uk

School of Health and Social Welfare,
The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

CAROLINE HOLLAND

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Jim Ogg, *Living Alone in Later Life*, Institute of Community Studies,
London, 2003, 232 pp., pbk £17.50, ISBN 0 9536803 8 X.

Over the last 40 years or so the proportion of older people in the United Kingdom who live alone has increased dramatically, and it is quite common for policy makers and commentators to regard this trend – which shows no sign of

abating – with considerable concern. This concern rests on a complex set of beliefs about the importance of the family in later life, the association between old age and increasing social inactivity, the increasing geographical dispersion of families, and the decreasing cohesiveness and neighbourliness of local communities. It is thought that older people who live alone are more likely to be cut adrift from close family, more likely therefore to lack the kind of informal social support which helps people to cope with many of the problems of old age, and also more vulnerable to the sort of involuntary social isolation which often produces loneliness and misery.

Jim Ogg's book on living alone in later life uses data from three sources – the *British Household Panel Survey*, the 1995 *British Social Attitudes Survey*, and the recent University of Keele study on social networks and support in three urban areas – for two purposes, to challenge 'received views' on the significance of the trend towards living alone in later life (as grounds for concern), and to re-consider its significance in the light of Anthony Giddens's ideas about the social conditions of 'late modernity'. The starting point for Ogg's analysis is that older people (not unlike younger people) have a strong preference for residential independence, and this seems not to have been dampened by the decline of local kinship networks, even though these networks used to be of the first importance in enabling older people who found themselves living alone to receive social support without having to relinquish their residential independence.

This is why the first main question that the book asks of the chosen datasets is whether or not living alone in later life has *in fact* 'been accomplished successfully'. Have changing patterns of family life undermined the ability of older people living alone to maintain their residential independence without paying too heavy a price in terms of social isolation? That there has been a reduction in face-to-face contact between older people living alone and their close relatives, especially adult children, is beyond question. Although family members are not 'on hand' in quite the same way as they used to be in the recent past, 'regular and frequent contact with children and other family members is still the norm' (p. 182). There is, moreover, no evidence to suggest that 'living alone is strongly ... associated with social exclusion or isolation' (p. 182). Most of this is familiar territory, though Ogg's analysis of the data does lead to one very important qualification of his general conclusion, namely that advanced old age and ill-health 'pose particular challenges for solo living'. In other words, our answer to the question about the costs of residential independence for older people living alone should reflect the variability in the factors which affect their need for social support and their dependency on the mobility of other people for social interaction. It is not entirely irrational to fear the prospect of living alone in *advanced* old age.

It is with Ogg's second 'big' question that he turns to those conditions of contemporary life that Giddens takes to be characteristic of late-modernity. If we accept that the emergence of this 'post-traditional' social order has effected deep changes in many of our most important social ties – replacing 'formalised' relations by 'personalised' relations – then it is clearly pertinent to ask whether *these* social changes have affected the ways in which people 'successfully accomplish' living alone in later life. Can we understand the increasing number of older one-person households in terms of a positive choice to adopt or maintain a

‘new way of living’ that is characteristic of late modernity? Quite a lot of this book is devoted to explaining the significance and value of this question, and much of its interest lies in the way in which the question provides a new angle from which to explore a familiar issue. And the answer? There is little or no evidence to suggest that older people living alone ‘are becoming either solitary or are weakening their ties with other family members to the extent that radically new patterns of social relationships are emerging. ... Individuals living alone, whether they are widowed, separated, or single, continue to position themselves within a core relation of family members’ (p. 182). For the critical reader, a lot must hang on the ability of the empirical data to support these various conclusions, and if the book is not consistently persuasive, that detracts only a little from its value as an intelligent contribution to the literature.

Oxford Institute of Ageing,
University of Oxford

KENNETH HOWSE

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John W. Traphagan and John Knight (eds), *Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2003, 248 pp., hbk \$71.50, ISBN 0 7914 5649 8, pbk \$23.95, ISBN 0 7914 5650 1.

This is an interesting and informative collection on changing family relations in the context of recent demographic change in Japan. Despite the editors' attempt to bring together anthropologists and demographers who contribute to the study of the changing family, and to synthesise their approaches, the main disciplinary weight of this volume is given to the anthropological approach. The majority of the nine chapters presented in three sections ('Family and living arrangements', 'Coping with demographic change', and 'Demographic change and aging') were written by anthropologists, and the remainder from other disciplines do not always communicate well with each other. Each chapter, especially those using an anthropological approach, provides rich and descriptive accounts of a selected aspect of the impact of demographic change on the family. The data for those chapters were mainly from fieldwork conducted in the 1990s, and cover both urban and rural issues. Three chapters (5, 6 and 10) deal with various problems facing rural communities, such as depopulation, care issues for older people, and the generational conflicts that derive from different values and expectations between the generations and from different customs in urban and rural areas.

The two chapters which I found most interesting and refreshing were by Brown, 'Under one roof: the evolving story of three generation housing in Japan', and by Kawano, 'Finding common ground: family, gender, and burial in contemporary Japan'. Brown's method of data collection was atypical, for the author accessed informants through companies which sold prefabricated 'two-household' housing and specifically their consultation processes with the client families. Kawano's chapter illustrates the trends and importance of ritual traditions such as burial and the family grave in Japan, and links these with the

concerns of single women after their death in contemporary Japan. The concluding chapter achieves a degree of theoretical synthesis from the disparate chapters.

The impact of recent policy developments such as ‘Long-Term Care Insurance’, itself partly a response to demographic change, has tended to accelerate the changes that were already happening in the family, but are only touched upon occasionally, and are not fully explored in this volume. Since the available evidence suggests that this policy has started to alter conventional family relations (with some regional variations related to available resources), it would have been beneficial if the volume had had a chapter dedicated to the impact of the new social contract. For those working in several disciplines, including social policy, this volume offers valuable information which can be further explored in policy terms. This is a welcome addition to the limited materials in the English language.

School for Policy Studies,
University of Bristol

MISA IZUHARA

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Guy McKhann and Marilyn Albert, *Keep Your Brain Young: The Complete Guide to Physical and Emotional Health and Longevity*, Wiley, New York, 2002, 296 pp., hbk \$24.95, ISBN 0 471 40792 5.

Mark Benecke, *The Dream of Eternal Life: Biomedicine, Aging, and Immortality*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, 196 pp., hbk £19.50, ISBN 0 231 11672 1.

At face value, *The Dream of Eternal Life* and *Keep Your Brain Young* might seem to be variants of the same theme – the growing fascination with pushing back the frontiers of ageing and living longer, if not for ever. A little reading, however, reveals them to be fundamentally different works, both in approach and in quality. *Keep Your Brain Young*, despite its cerebral title, covers a wide range of material about the general medical aspects of growing older. The book is by no means restricted to matters of brain ageing, nor does it promote a particularly strong message about the preservation of youth. Instead, it is a distillation of the considerable knowledge and experience of the authors, Guy McKhann and Marilyn Albert, in dealing with the manifold physical and emotional challenges of ageing. An introductory chapter, entitled ‘Healthy but realistic in the second half’ sets the tone for a book that is very much a reference guide for the older person, and which contains plenty of useful information and practical common sense. The book is divided, somewhat artificially, into three sections called ‘The brain and everyday concerns’, ‘The brain and your body’, and ‘The brain and preventing and treating serious problems’, but these divisions are unimportant. Several chapters, such as ‘Pain and your brain’ and ‘Body functions and your brain’ have a small section that tries to link other material to the overall brainy title but these are largely cosmetic. If this sounds critical, it is only that the book is rather misleadingly (and unnecessarily) sold under the promise of keeping the brain young. The resulting effort to introduce references to the brain whenever possible seems contrived.

On the positive side, McKhann and Albert have given us material that will interest anyone who is contemplating their own ageing, or that of their friends and relatives. The discussion of topics such as pain and depression is admirable, as is the clear explanation of changes affecting memory, the senses and balance. Within the sphere of brain ageing itself, the material covered is well balanced, space being given to a wider diversity of disorders that can affect the brain than is usually found in similar books. The variety of dementias is clearly explained, as are the threat of stroke and the impact of brain tumours. It is refreshing to read such candid discussion of the problems and complications that all too often accompany these conditions.

In spite of the exhortation in its title, *Keep Your Brain Young* does not offer much by way of anti-ageing advice, and most of this is contained in a short final chapter. This summarises succinctly the positive things that can be done to improve your chances of ageing well. An Appendix lists organisations that can provide advice and support for a wide variety of medical problems affecting older people. Unfortunately for British readers, the organisations listed are exclusively in the United States, although the web references may nevertheless be useful.

The Dream of Eternal Life is altogether a different kind of work. Written by a geneticist, it purports to 'peek into life's deck of cards to see how it answers questions of life and death'. Chapter 1, 'Why death is part of life', begins by enquiring into the biological basis of ageing and death. Regrettably, the chapter is not only muddled in its presentation of the basic facts and concepts but is also fundamentally out of tune with most of what has been learned about the biology of ageing over the last two decades. The author makes a classic error in assuming that the intriguing phenomenon of programmed cell death, or 'apoptosis', is part of a programmed ageing process, when most would now agree that such cell death is much more concerned with *survival*, by helping the body to eliminate badly damaged cells. Benecke's apparent ignorance and lack of understanding of work in the biology of ageing research is regrettable. His descriptions of processes like the erosion of telomeres (the protective sequences at the ends of our chromosomes) are both inaccurate and clumsy in their imagery.

Benecke's book is full of old chestnuts that were long ago exploded, such as the idea that our bodies are endowed with death genes for ageing or that length of life in different species is regulated by having a fixed number of heartbeats. The heartbeat hypothesis, sometimes known as the rate-of-living theory, is refuted by the fact that birds, which generally live significantly longer than mammals of similar size, also have much faster heart rates. Cloning (as of Dolly the sheep), the reconstruction of species from DNA (as in *Jurassic Park*), and freezing your body in liquid nitrogen, all pop up in the rather jumbled text, along with a curious chapter about environmental sustainability, climate change and biodiversity. I am sorry to say that when eventually I finished reading *The Dream of Eternal Life*, I did not feel that the time had been well spent.

Institute for Ageing and Health,
University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK

TOM KIRKWOOD

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Commonwealth of Australia, Federal Treasurer, *Intergenerational Report 2002–03*, Budget Paper 5, Commonwealth of Australia Printing Office, Canberra, 2002, 94 pp., ISBN 0642 74142 5. Available online at www.treasury.gov.au

Victoria State Government, Department of Treasury and Finance, *Shaping a Prosperous Future*, Discussion Paper, Victorian State Government, Melbourne, 2003, 88 pp., ISBN 0 7311 1459 0. Available online at www.dtf.vic.gov.au

Myer Foundation, *2020 A Vision for Aged Care in Australia*, The Myer Foundation, Melbourne, 2002, 41 pp. Available online at www.myerfoundation.org.au

Three recent reports reflect the ongoing debate about the future impact of ageing on the Australian economy and likely changes to government spending. The first report, released by the Commonwealth of Australia Federal Treasurer 2002 and entitled *Intergenerational Report 2002–03*, is a landmark publication as Australia's first so-called 'Intergenerational' report. Its aim is to consider the Federal government's fiscal outlook over the next 40 years, and to identify issues associated with an ageing population that will emerge. The focus is on 'fiscal sustainability' or, in other words, ensuring that future generations of taxpayers do not face an 'unmanageable bill' for government services provided to the current generation. The projections in the report suggest that if government revenue and spending policies are not adjusted (to increase revenue and reduce government spending growth), the current generation of taxpayers is likely to impose a higher tax burden (of about five per cent of GDP) on the next generation by 2041. The report points out that currently over half of all government spending is directed to health and aged care, and that these two areas will account for most of the projected rise in government spending over the next four decades. Although the report states that Australia is well placed to meet the 'challenges' of an ageing population, because of its targeted income support payments, a reasonably 'efficient' health system, and a superannuation system that encourages private saving for retirement, the general tone of this conservative government report is one of a pessimistic forewarning to future generations of increases in the fiscal burden.

The second report, by a State Labour-controlled government, is similarly about the long-term fiscal pressure resulting from an ageing population and its effects on regional government over 40 years. It is however, much more upbeat about the future, and places less 'blame' on the ageing population. With reference to future increases in health costs, for example, it does not see the cause as the changing age structure but rather as technological developments in pharmaceuticals, medical treatments and equipment. This report also examines the problems of achieving fiscal sustainability over the next 40 years, but argues that rather than increase tax or government spending, the solution is to increase economic activity – this will increase the wealth of future generations who will then have a greater capacity to pay or share in the costs of new or improved services. This report agrees that there could be a bigger tax burden on future generations, but

sees the solution as economic growth and increased productivity rather than increased government taxation or spending. The main argument is much more optimistic: it explicitly states that the Federal government's *Intergenerational Report* overstates the 'ageing crisis'.

While the third report under review is specifically on long-term care, like the preceding two reports it looks ahead, this time 20 years, to a reformed aged-care system, and also considers the issue of how to fund increased aged-care services. It was undertaken by *The Myer Foundation*, a private philanthropic organisation, and it argues for a much enhanced community-care sector. The vision is for easy access to high-quality aged care that is equitably distributed. To achieve this goal, reform is required in five areas: innovative and accessible housing; streamlined inter-governmental administration; well-trained and remunerated staff in the industry; and a funding model that will deliver expanded and innovative care. It is this latter point which engages with the two earlier reports, through its discussion of new ways of funding aged care that are fiscally sustainable. *2020 A Vision for Aged Care in Australia* examines various funding methods that directly and indirectly see either governments or individuals making a greater contribution to the cost of their care. One, for example, is a universal social insurance scheme for long-term care, while another is a pre-funding approach where a compulsory savings scheme is applied to all individuals. The report states that while there might be agreement on the need for policy change, appropriate models for change have not been developed in any commonly agreed form nor seriously developed.

An interesting observation on these three Australian reports is that whereas previously we had debated the extent to which any extra costs associated with an ageing population would arise, let alone be a burden, the debate now seems to have transformed to an acceptance that there will be disproportionate costs, and they will be a substantial burden. The more important issue now appears to be identifying how these extra costs will be funded and who will primarily bear that financial burden. Some local aged-care interest groups have argued in the Australian media that the aim of the recent Federal documents is not really to tackle future costs but to advance a neo-liberal ideological model which minimises the role of the government and transfers cost to individuals. They argue that the concept of the 'ageing population', rather than being about demographic shifts and consequent implications, has instead provided a very convenient vehicle through which to peddle ideological positions about individuals providing for themselves rather than this being the responsibility of governments. While it is difficult to prove the coincidence, it is an interesting argument.

The debate over cost responsibility is reminiscent of the recent UK *Royal Commission into Long Term Care (LTC)* whose remit was specifically to look at and develop a 'sustainable' system of funding for the LTC industry and to recommend how costs should be apportioned between the individual and public funds. The Commission's findings and subsequent implementation illustrates that the costs of the LTC system in the future are a function of the model of care adopted. The fact that the English government rejected free personal care but accepted free nursing care and instituted greater means testing bears directly on cost apportionment and government financial responsibility. This seems to

be the real flaw in *Intergenerational Report 2002–03*, in which there is very little explicit consideration of what model of care we want. Considering, as the report does, only aggregate costs and responses such as raising or decreasing tax, government spending cannot be allowed to dictate the development of a care system for the future. Thus the key task for the sector in Australia now seems to be, as mentioned in *2020 A Vision for Aged Care in Australia*, to develop appropriate care models, including a clear funding base that reflects core underlying values such as access and equity. If the current aged-care system is further de-regulated with a focus just on enhanced user-pays requirements, which would accord with our pervasive neo-liberal approach to promoting public choice, then it is possible that our LTC system will become more about money, less about universal high quality care for all senior Australians, and possibly a two-class care system, differentiating those who can pay from those who cannot. Currently this differentiation is not apparent in our ageing services and that absence reflects an exemplary egalitarian ethos in the system. Judging from the ominous wording in these reports, however, the signs on the horizon are that this system may be under threat.

Currently in Australia there is yet another Federal government sponsored inquiry underway entitled *Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003). It is chaired by an Emeritus Professor of Economics, Warren Hogan. This review is in progress because the Federal government says that for nearly 50 years it has been funding aged-care and that it requires review to make sure that the system is flexible and sustainable for the future. It appears however that this inquiry will, like the reports considered above, be part of the push to transfer more costs to individuals. This can be seen in the review's focused discussion of personal care cost issues, and indeed the very title of the inquiry. To date it has highlighted what it sees as intra-generational inequity in costs associated with the current aged-care system where community-based care is in some respects more expensive to recipients because they bear the burden of housing costs, whereas those in residential care receive a subsidy for this. So, we will undoubtedly see personal-care costs rise for those in residential care.

This intra-cohort competitive cost analysis approach, however, could work against existing age group solidarity and, conversely, feed into inter-generational conflict in a similar way where younger generations may start to believe the current older generations are, to use the American terminology, 'greedy geezers', whom they will resentfully have to pay for. Calling this recent report on ageing in Australia the *Intergenerational Report* seems paradoxically to be almost setting the nation up to engender generational conflict. There is nothing in this report that illustrates the complex and rich reciprocity in existing inter-generational relations that gerontologists have identified over many years. Rather the title can be seen as a mischievous way of generating ideological debate possibly at the expense of inter-generational relations. In conclusion these reports make it explicit that there will be future changes in funding of health and long-term care in Australia. While our system is obviously far from perfect, it would be a tragedy if the obsession with dollars leads to a fundamental degradation of the aged-care system and age-group solidarity for all Australians.

Reference

Commonwealth of Australia 2003. *Review of Pricing Arrangements in Residential Aged Care*. Background Paper No. 1, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, www.health.gov.au

LaTrobe University,
Melbourne, Australia

JOHN MCCORMACK

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Janet Eldred, *Like Spring Without Flowers: Why Older Women and Churches Need Each Other*, Mental Health Association Care Group, Derby, 2003, 111 pp., pbk £3.99, ISBN 1 902452 14 3.

In a climate where the focus is often on church growth and youth, it is refreshing to review a book that focuses on older women and the church. Although this is only a small book, it is packed with ‘easy to read’ and valuable information about the experiences of older women who were interviewed by Janet Eldred for her doctoral studies. It was a joy to read and I would strongly recommend it to parishes, and indeed all those involved in pastoral care. It also contains much to commend it to the helping professions and volunteers working with older people.

The book is not written from an academic stance, although the author makes excellent use of the available literature to substantiate her findings. Rather it is written from the viewpoint of older women of community connection and caring. Through their stories, it tells of the faith communities in which these women live and function. It tells of their sense of need for these communities and also, at times, of their experience of segregation from the community and their lack of recognition as individuals with past contributions made and gifts still to share. Eldred says that, in some churches at least, these older women feel that they are expected to fit into a limiting category of ‘older person’ that fails to affirm them and their past. She considers the difficulties facing older women who may move in later life: their split loyalties between the church community they used to belong to and the new one where they are unknown but into which they must now fit. And she includes the stories of women who find themselves left out when they cannot attend church regularly.

Connections are seen as being important to these older women. Eldred describes these as attachments which are essential to their wellbeing and, for those living alone, part of the strategies for spiritual wellbeing. She suggests that the main problems these older women experience are isolation and threats to their identity through the ageism and stereotyping they encounter – they feel labelled. She found a strong need for housebound and institutionalised older women to continue to engage with their church. She acknowledges the importance of a balance between ‘being’ and ‘doing’ for these women, noting that they are both carers and recipients of care. She suggests that there is a need to recognise the worth of being a recipient of care, as well as a giver. This she sees as an opportunity to realise the ‘grace of interrelatedness’ that subsequently empowers older women to care for others and to accept being cared for.

Eldred asks some important questions of the churches: Are they encouraging older women to care or to find meaning in being recipients of care? And are they asking older women what sort of care they desire? Eldred rightly suggests that when these questions are asked older women are able to experience a deeper understanding of God and faith. She goes even further to suggest that older women so nurtured 'felt spurred on to build more relationships and to practise more caring acts. Older women's communities, then, especially local churches, could be valuable resources of God's love in action'.

Eldred reports that although these older women experience physical, social and spiritual changes, their need for community, connection and caring does not change. She recognises the continuing need for older women to grow spiritually. Some of them, she suggests, may not be so sure of their place within the church now, but there remains an important place for them as the repositories of the faith and the keepers of the oral tradition in their faith communities. As one of the women told her, not having a church connection would be 'like spring without flowers'. And as Eldred says, flowers need well prepared earth, watering, pruning and nurturing for them to bloom. She makes a plea for older women to be included within the church community in a conscious and deliberate way and sets out a number of steps for churches to follow in order to become more inclusive and accepting communities, which recognise gifts and needs across the generations.

The book ends with some excellent appendices that guide us in ways to listen to older people with integrity. There is a helpful appendix, for example, which describes ways of drawing out older women's stories, both in words and in other creative ways. Finally, there is a section summarising feminist theology and a list of books for further reading. This is a delightful book that should be essential reading for people of all ages in every parish. It would be good to see a similar study of older men and the church, and we might ask, do older men and the churches need each other too?

Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies,
Canberra, Australia

ELIZABETH MACKINLAY

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E. MacKinlay, J. W. Ellor and S. Pickard (eds), *Ageing, Spirituality and Pastoral Care: A Multi-National Perspective*, Haworth Pastoral Press, Binghamton, New York, 2001, 190 pp., pbk \$24.55 or £14.70, ISBN 0 7890 1669 9.

L. VandeCreek (ed.), *Spiritual Care for Persons with Dementia: Fundamentals for Pastoral Practice*, Haworth Pastoral Press, Binghamton, New York, 1999, 125 pp., hbk \$49.95, ISBN 0 7890 0690 1, pbk \$17.95 or £10.60, ISBN 0 7890 1396 7.

As a parish priest in South London, I am keenly aware of the ways younger people repeatedly grab my attention, whether by graffiti, broken windows, good ideas or spending power. Yet very many people living here are elderly and much less visible or demanding. How to make contact with older people and respond

well to them are crucial questions that I, and others, need help in answering. So I am excited to discover two volumes devoted entirely to the spiritual, religious and pastoral care of older people.

Ageing, Spirituality and Pastoral Care gathers together papers presented at a conference in Canberra in 2000. As the editors' qualifications and professional titles indicate, this is a multi-disciplinary enterprise intended for clergy, nurses, doctors and gerontologists in Australia, the USA and, to a lesser extent, Britain. Demographic, cultural, and religious similarities between Australia and the States are identified and used as justification for a common project, though there is no agreement about the spelling of ag(e)ing. Contributors are not afraid to draw on the resources of the Judeo-Christian faith traditions to provide a perspective that challenges an entirely secular understanding of older people. Yet, curiously, the lack of reference to other faith traditions is a glaring and out-of-date omission. What, for instance, of Moslem, Hindu or Buddhist elders in Sydney, New York or London? To argue for a holistic approach and then, without explanation, consider only the resources of one part of the faith spectrum is worryingly myopic.

Despite this serious limitation there are good things here. McNamara's opening chapter on ethics and ageing in the 21st century raises important questions about the values underlying social policy and the distribution of resources. Then, shifting to the individual's experience, papers by Melvin Kimble, drawing on theology, and by John Painter, drawing on Scripture, explore the possibilities of inward renewal in the face of outward decay. By far the strongest, most readable, and skilfully interdisciplinary contributions are two papers by Malcolm Goldsmith. The first provides a powerful critique of dehumanising forms of dementia care and of religion. Here his use of poetry is crucial. Even the most weary of carers or nurses is likely to be moved by John Killick's 'The Monkey Puzzle' in which the frustration, impotence and yet strength of spirit of an overly-managed patient ring out. In the second paper, 'When words are no longer necessary: the gift of ritual', the power of touch, smell, sight and sound in communicating care is imaginatively explored. Religious ritual has always known this power, but here is no simplistic re-opening of the traditional tool-kit. Goldsmith rightly stresses 'the challenge ... is to discover just what are the experiences and rituals that affirm and which are the ones that do the opposite' (p. 147). In contrast to this delicately nuanced approach, Elizabeth MacKinlay's discussion of the spiritual tasks of ageing feels prescriptive and heavy. A more critical approach to the concept of spiritual task and of its underlying assumptions would have made for a more original contribution. Finally, Antonia van Loon describes an Australian scheme, Faith Community Nursing, which involves local faith communities sponsoring nurses to combine the roles of healthcare, social work, community development and spiritual guide. To me this sounds like a parish priest with a new title. There are estimated to be around 4,000 parish nurses across the USA: it would be fascinating to see a qualitative evaluation of such work and also to relate it to the ethical issues raised in the opening chapter.

This volume draws together the research and reflections of people who have never before collaborated, so structure is not its strongest feature. There is a rough division into theological and biblical dimensions and pastoral care, but no

obvious development of ideas and argument. Yet despite its lack of structure and progression and the overly narrow Judeo-Christian focus, this is a book worth reading. What comes to mind is a stained-glass window that draws the eye and imagination to a bigger and more inspiring vision, but don't look too closely at some of the panes (chapters) or joins.

In contrast *Spiritual Care for Persons with Dementia* is more obviously coherent. All of the contributors are based in North America and the focus is entirely on dementia. This does not appear to be a collection of conference papers but the product of the editor's personal and professional quest to increase understanding of dementia. The issues raised by Goldsmith regarding the importance of non-verbal communication reappear and the book as a whole works quite well as a practical introduction for chaplains and others who have little or no experience or training in this field. Extensive use of case studies provides a useful way of learning about and reflecting on the experience of specialist pastoral care workers. Roxanne Miller-Sinclair teases out the tension between truthfulness and the extreme distress that may result from someone being repeatedly told, for instance, that a loved one is dead. It provides some practical guidelines that will enable the beginner to fashion their own. David Wentroble describes leading worship for a group of people with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders. The session always starts with an inflated globe being passed around while singing 'He's got the whole world in his hands'. How to relate to childhood experience without becoming patronising? I found myself asking on reading this, but the question is not seriously addressed.

Several contributors provide factual information of various kinds on stages of dementia while others provide theological reflection that will be of interest and support to those new to this area of work. Bethany Knight's paper, 'Assuring professional pastoral care for every nursing home resident', moves the discussion on to questions of how to influence the quality of care, especially amongst nursing assistants. For pastoral carers and chaplains who are just setting out in this field, this is a useful and undemanding read. But like *Aging, Spirituality and Pastoral Care* it is almost entirely Christian.

St. Saviour's Church,
Brockley Hill, London

ALYSON PEBERDY

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Jay Ginn, *Gender, Pensions and the Lifecourse: How Pensions Need to Adapt to Changing Family Forms*, Policy, Bristol, 2003, 144 pp., hbk £45.00 (US\$ 69.95), ISBN 1 86134 338 8, pbk £17.99 (US\$ 28.95), ISBN 1 86134 337 X.

When one of Europe's leading authorities on retirement pensions publishes a book of this quality one has to sit up and take notice. Jay Ginn's book is a *tour de force* and I support Kirk Mann's glowing back-cover endorsement that this is 'the definitive text on gender and pensions'. As the publisher's description on the back cover says, this book is a 'provocative' read. It needs to be because, despite the research evidence, in Britain since (if not before) the abolition of the State

Earnings Related Pension Scheme in the early 1980s, women have always had a bad deal in pensions. The book's central focus is indicated by the subtitle and each chapter builds a mass of carefully researched evidence in support of the policy strategy she is advocating.

The book should be essential reading for all who study and research in social policy, sociology, women's studies, social work and social gerontology. I urge all those who teach in these areas to ensure that their reading lists give the book prominence. The more important audience for this book are policy makers in Whitehall and Brussels who should not only read but also act upon its sensible and pragmatic conclusions. Ginn and her colleague, Sara Arber, and others have been putting forward carefully researched argument in this area for over a decade. Yet there is, as she writes, a neglect of gender issues in pension policy debates. I agree that a women-centred perspective is essential when formulating pensions policy. Ever since 1908 (in the UK at least), pensions have always been designed by men for men. A much more reflexive social policy is required that accounts for women's central role in caring and their very different employment and earnings cycle from men. Such a policy, adopting her central thesis, should accommodate a changing demography and the associated new family forms.

The majority of the evidence in this book has been presented in Ginn's previous publications. Yet this is not a simple reprise, since she refines the arguments and introduces new evidence. In any case, since the research evidence has so far been ignored or at least sidelined, repetition is required. The chapters build and develop the argument. The analysis begins with an overview of employment trends and the closely-linked pension outcomes for women. This is followed by a detailed analysis, using recent evidence from the UK *General Household Survey* of women's pension choices and inequalities. Chapter 3 continues this theme, but utilises the UK *Family Resources Survey* dataset and, specifically, focuses on gender and ethnicity. The next two chapters consider the links with, first, educational achievement and pensions, and then employment and pensions and the impact of motherhood. Here she confronts and argues against the recent and important work of Rake *et al.* (2000) and Davies, Joshi and Peronaci (2000). Ginn concludes (p. 80) that contrary to their conclusions, 'there is no support for the expectation that graduate mothers will maintain almost continuous full-time employment throughout the lifecourse', and that this has consequential effects upon pension building. These are important findings, for policy and for the increasing number of female graduates. The analysis is widened in the next chapter to the adequacy of European Union pensions policy.

The final chapter summarises the arguments and sets out an alternative strategy for British pensions policy with a women-centred focus that accommodates the changing nature of family formation. Ginn argues for the replacement of the basic state pension with a citizen's pension that is set sufficiently high to prevent poverty and is indexed to the national standard of living. She also offers a less radical solution, namely a substantial rise in and an earnings link for the basic pension alongside a revitalised State Earnings Related Pension. Throughout, her engaging and authoritative yet accessible style is compelling: I read the whole book at a single sitting.

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University of Birmingham, UK

TONY MALTBY

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Ruth Hancock, Savita Katbamna, Graham Martin, Harriet Clarke and Rachel Stuchbury, *Attitudes to Inheritance: An Exploratory Study*, York Publishing Services, York, 2002, 22 pp., pbk £11.95, ISBN 1 84263 115 2.

This exploratory study inquires into the suggestion that ‘older people are becoming less likely to wish to pass on money to their children, and more inclined to use their wealth in their own lifetime, to meet everyday needs, pay for long-term care or cover major expenditure such as housing repairs or adaptations’. The researchers’ initial point of view was that ‘attitudes towards inheritance are changing seems to be based more on conjecture than research’. The core of the research sought to establish what is known about how, if at all, people’s attitudes towards bequeathing wealth are changing and to consider trends that may make this change. The report starts with a useful summary of the current scale and prevalence of inheritances in Britain. This comes from *Inland Revenue* statistics and *General Household Survey* and *British Household Panel Survey* figures which report the number and value of estates passing on death, the existence of surviving children, and the scale and frequency of inheritances received. All this provides valuable background material.

The next section examines the previous literature which proves to be remarkably sparse. The review covers publications from economics and attitudinal studies (including attitudes to home ownership, equity release and paying for long-term care). Another chapter looks in detail at the two national surveys that give data on people’s attitudes to inheritance. The researchers conclude that there is little evidence as to whether attitudes are changing: ‘None of the identified studies set out explicitly to assess changes in attitudes, and we found no surveys which were repeated at intervals, followed the same people over time or investigated whether respondents’ attitudes had changed. Although the economics literature spans almost 50 years, its conclusions are too mixed, and their data sources and methods are too varied, to conclude that differences between the findings of later or earlier studies indicate changes in attitudes’ (p. 17). In particular, qualitative studies indicate strong support for the right to conserve wealth and to pass it on to heirs, and widespread objection to having to use for needs such as paying the fees for long-term care.

Having found insufficient research to be able to answer the questions posed, the researchers wisely look at issues that need further exploration. These include the problems of how older people face making the best use of their income and capital in the light of uncertainties such as longevity, changing needs (especially

health), and the respective roles of children and the state in providing care in old age. The researchers recommend a mixture of quantitative and qualitative research to answer these questions. As they say in their last paragraph, 'the role of inheritance in older people's financial behaviour remains, it would seem, largely a matter of anecdote and supposition' (p. 19).

This is a very useful, clearly written piece of research, although close concentration is needed when reading the tables and the explanations. The last section does, however, not quite fit with the rest. It talks about the 'Foundation' (the funder was the *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*) and its views, without stating why. In fact information about the authors and where they come from would not be amiss. The report lacks an introduction about the researchers and when the research was carried out. Also, although the study is available without charge on the Internet (visit <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1842631160.pdf>), the price of the printed report is high. Nonetheless, it can be strongly recommended to researchers and practitioners as a clear account of a topic of growing importance.

Institute of Gerontology,
King's College, London

ANTHEA TINKER

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Sally Chivers, *From Old Women to Older Women: Contemporary Culture and Women's Narratives*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, Ohio, 2003, 119 pp., hbk \$36.95, ISBN 0 8142 0935 1.

This book seeks 'to dismantle odious stereotypes' of old age as found in many novels and films (p. x). Espousing feminist goals, Sally Chivers dismisses the banality of the usual troubled old woman who lives alone or among unhappy family members, and in its place proposes the more cheerful vision of elderly women who confront old age by banding together in a community. The author's literary journey starts with scrutiny of isolated elders, and closes with an optimistic semi-documentary, *The Company of Women*. Chivers writes in the tradition of 'Age studies', to borrow Margaret Gullette's term. She follows the lead of Barbara Frey Waxman, who explored the effect of literary narratives. Chivers covers a wide range of novels, short stories and films that present complex views of ageing. With the exception of Simone de Beauvoir's novels and monumental study, *Old Age*, most of her examples are Canadian. Many of them may be unfamiliar to readers from other countries, but all are of uncommon interest.

Although Chivers is relatively young, she exhibits intelligent empathy for the problems of older people. In the introduction, she analyses in balanced fashion the media coverage of a 1998 ice storm that paralysed Montreal and adjacent areas of Quebec. She does not question the intentions of media experts, who created a story out of the plight of isolated elders. They had refused to leave home for the safe haven of a shelter, to the dismay of media pundits and authorities. She sees the situation quite differently, and argues that many of these recalcitrant elders survived the Holocaust in their youth largely by refusing to obey government officials and community leaders. Moreover, how many of the middle aged,

she wonders, would abandon their pets and their dwellings for the uncertain atmosphere of a shelter, filled with noisy children and nosy bureaucrats?

Chivers analyses literary works that contain negative views of ageing without abandoning her quest to find something positive about late life. For example, she begins by discussing the writing of de Beauvoir in conjunction with Margaret Laurence's Hagar Shipley, the nonagenarian heroine of *The Stone Angel*. She recognises that both writers have contributed to our 'horrified fascination' and 'cultural fears' of growing old (p. x). Instead of dismissing these narratives, her habit of 'committed reading' (p. xxxix) allows her to balance their negative depictions with a potentially positive viewpoint. As a result one can trust Chivers's interpretations.

Chivers's ties to cultural research, in particular disability, feminist and queer studies, will however bother readers unfamiliar with their specialist vocabulary. She begins each chapter with a review of their scholarship, but might better have saved the scholarly asides for when a comment actually helped to explain her chosen texts. Moreover, she sometimes discusses her primary narratives as if they were familiar to her readers but has chosen unfamiliar work to enlarge her readers' experience of ageing. She minimises historical and autobiographical aspects that might have illuminated these narratives. For example, de Beauvoir's analysis reflects her personal situation. One of her characters is turning 40 years of age, but regards herself as old. Of course, many young women may fear the process of growing old. Yet unlike de Beauvoir's psychologist heroine, most of today's professional women have traded corsets for gym memberships. Moreover, some of de Beauvoir's attitudes were shaped by her unsatisfactory relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre, who brought young women into their household. De Beauvoir had no children and was never a grandmother. All these factors influenced her jaundiced view of later life.

Another problem emerges in Chivers's discussion of Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms*. She recognises the problems caused by the generational language barrier. The grandmother continues to speak Japanese while the granddaughter speaks only English. As David Gutmann (1987) pointed out in *Reclaimed Powers*, like most older immigrants, Goto's Canadian grandmother lives without the deference she had once paid to her elders. Fortunately these minor problems do not diminish Chivers's overall accomplishment. She convincingly argues for the power of literary narratives to expand our intimate knowledge of old age. She concludes by recommending that elders should aspire to a life of mutual interdependence. If two or more old women live together, they may be able to provide each other with mutual support, assistance, and life-affirming friendship. We should all be so fortunate.

Reference

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University of Florida, Gainesville

ANNE M. WYATT-BROWN