

to his research. I found the ethical issues discussed utterly captivating. In Chapter 8, Bytheway, Ward, Holland and Peace ask what roles researchers play in the distillation of their results. They wonder whether narrowing the focus excludes the very people experiencing the risk.

In the last and unfortunately abbreviated section, Moody along with Warnes and Phillips cast their gaze ahead. Moody is on his game, posing pertinent and insightful questions about social justice and just desserts. Joining the chorus, it would seem the globalised perspective on moral economy and deciding what is fair and just is fraught with ambiguity – Moody in prime form. Finally, Warnes and Phillips scrutinise the accumulated contents of the journal *Ageing & Society* to decipher who are the players, who are the power brokers, and who gets included or excluded from discussions of who is helping whom in old age. All those years ago when Malcolm Johnson launched *Ageing & Society* I expect he did not anticipate how very crucial the journal might become to the gerontological enterprise.

Despite being a series and anthology editor myself, I cannot distinguish whether editors or authors have provided the thrust to this finely-honed collection. Bernard and Scharf are to be lauded for bringing together an exemplary panel of scholars and have polished their collective contributions to good effect. Are all the significant contributors to critical theory present? Hardly, there simply is not enough room. Are the omissions fatal? Heavens no, there is ample food for thought already. Are some of the chapters anything less than stellar? I would be hard-pressed to identify any that could have been displaced by marquee players. I recommend *Critical Perspectives on Ageing Societies* to all scholars attuned to the need to attend to macro-level considerations of the ageing experience.

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Mary Marshall and Margaret-Anne Tibbs, *Social Work and People with Dementia: Partnerships, Practice and Persistence*, Policy Press, Bristol, Avon, 2006, 256 pp., pbk £17.99, ISBN 13: 978 186134 702 2.

In the United Kingdom social workers have a key role in assessing the support needs of people with dementia and arranging and reviewing services. Nevertheless, the profession has yet to engage fully with continuing developments in dementia-care research and practice. As the authors of this book acknowledge, in some settings social work with people with dementia and their carers is ‘a creative and responsive process’, while in others it ‘is limited to competent form filling’ (p. 2). Mary Marshall and Margaret-Anne Tibbs are broadly optimistic that the creative approach is on the ascendent; their purpose is to guide and encourage this trend. Social-work texts on dementia are still a rarity and this book is a substantially revised and updated edition of a work published in 1996. Given the rapid developments in dementia research and care, it also serves to update the more recent book, *Social Work and Dementia* (Tibbs 2001).

The opening chapters provide contextual information that sets the scene for optimism grounded in realism. Chapter 1 outlines the shift from the old culture of

dementia care, with its emphasis on incarceration and routine physical care, to a new culture with a focus on understanding and responding to the unique needs of each individual – a person-centred approach (Kitwood 1997). Helpfully, a link is made between this approach and the social model of disability with which social workers are familiar. The case is then made for practice that draws on social and citizenship models of dementia care. The former alerts us to ways in which the experience of dementia is shaped by the interaction between impairment and a host of social and psychological factors, many of which are amenable to change once their significance is understood. The latter gives voice to people with dementia, not just as consumers of care, but as citizens with rights and particular expertise in dementia.

Chapter 2 focuses on demographic change and on different types of dementia; it highlights in particular the needs of people with alcohol-related brain damage, a neglected group whose numbers seem set to grow. Chapter 3 examines the UK policy context and its many shortcomings for people with dementia. These include the National Service Framework for Older People (Department of Health 2001), which makes minimal reference to dementia, and UK systems of care management that are characterised by episodic involvement ill-suited to the complex and rapidly changing needs of people with dementia and their carers. The slow progress of specialist knowledge amongst social workers in dementia care may, at least in part, be an unintended consequence of the commissioner/provider split, a key element of the community-care reforms of the early 1990s. This is because expertise in new approaches to dementia care has tended to develop in provider units leaving social workers, who are now predominantly commissioners of services and care managers, deskilled and out-of-touch. This chapter also acknowledges the diverse groups whose needs are still neglected, such as younger people with dementia, people from black and minority ethnic groups and prisoners.

A central message of the book is that understanding the experiences and behaviour of people with dementia and working in partnership with them and their carers is vital for the development of person-centred care. Subsequent chapters explore the complexity of this challenge, by drawing on thought-provoking case studies and a wealth of material on innovative ways of working, interspersed with helpful practical advice. There is far too much here to summarise but for the reviewer, a social-work educator, several points stood out. First, it is essential to gather as much information as possible about the life story of the person with dementia, and the history of their relationship with any carers, as the foundation for understanding. Secondly, it is important for social workers to extend and develop their communication skills, including skills in interpreting behaviour. Thirdly, social workers need to engage with dementia-specific approaches to assessment and to be alert to preferences and functioning in basic aspects of everyday life and wellbeing. For example, recognising difficulties in nutrition and food preparation, or unmet spiritual needs, paves the way to securing specialist help. Finally, social workers should pay greater attention to the importance of activities for people with dementia to avoid boredom, to stimulate cognition and for wider therapeutic purposes.

This book does not downplay the difficulties that practitioners face in tackling a complex task that requires enormous skill in policy and practice contexts that are often demoralising. An entire chapter considers how social workers can maximise existing opportunities to create positive change. The authors also acknowledge that ‘the knowledge base for the social model, let alone the citizenship model, is still woefully inadequate with far too little “evidence” of what works and what does not’ (p. 212). There are gaps in coverage: in particular, it would have been useful to have had something on decision making around the need for long-term residential care and on palliative care in dementia, to enhance understanding of key issues and decisions at this important stage. These are, however, minor quibbles about a book that provides a wonderful introduction to a rapidly developing field of practice. Although intended for social workers, it will be of interest to allied professions and to anyone who wishes to be informed, intrigued, excited and challenged about dementia care.

## References

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