

Book Reviews

Tom Hickey, Marjorie A. Speers and Thomas R. Prohaska (eds),
Public Health and Aging, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997,
332 pp., hbk. £49.50 ISBN 0 8018 5558 6, pbk £20.50, ISBN 0 8018
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Public health is a stimulating area of study which is concerned with the analysis, determinants and promotion of health at a population rather than individual or clinical level. There are two main challenges for public health. The first is to develop thinking about health at a population rather than clinical level and the second is to demonstrate to a sceptical world that there is more to the subject than a simple concern with drains and the control of infection! The perspective of public health has expanded considerably so that it is now concerned with issues such as chronic disease, and with groups such as older people, in addition to its tradition concentration upon infectious disease and maternal and child health.

Although the political and health service contexts vary, public health practitioners in both the United States and Britain are now taking an interest in the previously neglected issues and population groups of chronic illness and older people. As such, this book represents the results of a conference held in the United States to consider the public health implications of an ageing population. In particular the book is concerned with meeting the training needs of public health professionals who need to develop expertise in the area of ageing.

This goal is the main weakness of this book when viewed from a UK perspective. The book serves to demonstrate the multi-disciplinary nature of the public health profession in the United States. This contrasts sharply with the situation in Britain, where the discipline is dominated by the medical profession. Given the intended readership and goal of the book it has only limited applicability to the UK. The chapters concerned with developing ageing education within the public health education programme are largely irrelevant, as are those concerned with the provision of public health services (except as a way of illustrating the very different roles of public health in the UK and US). For the gerontologist and those interested in population health there are some interesting chapters, especially the three on ageing and chronic illness. However, overall, this is a disappointing book for the UK reader because of its concern with the practice of public health in the US which limits the generalisability of much of the material presented.

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Ann Orbach, *Not Too Late: Psychotherapy and Ageing*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London. 1996. 121 pp. £14.95, ISBN 1 85302 380 9.

This short book encourages those of us who work with older adults to reflect upon our practice. Examples of the topics covered include the role of ageism upon psychotherapeutic practice, the identification of the particular struggles that emerge in the course of long-term therapy with older clients, including issues of change, loss and ending, reflections on the therapist ageing and on issues of life and death. Primarily, it is an advocacy of the ways in which the therapist can usefully provide a space for the older client in their struggle to make sense of past hurts and future fears, of an ageing self, and of death and dying. This description sounds bleak, but the book is not. Its focus is upon a process of active, shared sense-making between therapist and older client.

It is also a useful contribution to the field. Reflective, honest and self-critical, Ann Orbach integrates case detail, psychotherapeutic literature and self-reflection in an almost tender consideration of the social, intrapsychic and relational issues that underpin psychotherapeutic work with older people. I have two frustrations. The first, is that the book underlines how far behind psychoanalysts are in their consideration of the usefulness and power of carrying out therapy with older people (in comparison to other mental health professionals). There exists a substantial literature on other short-term psychological approaches with this client group which is never mentioned. Second, the book ends better than it begins. Despite these issues this book is a helpful addition to the debate about the value of the therapeutic relationship for older people.

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Graham D. Rowles, Joyce E. Beaulieu and Wayne W. Myers (eds), *Long-Term Care for the Rural Elderly. New Directions in Research, Services and Policy*, Springer Publishing Company, New York, 1996, 201 pp, hbk \$39.95, ISBN 0 8261 9380 3.

Based upon contributions to a conference held in 1994, this collection of papers reviews the current state of long-term care for older people living in rural areas of the United States. The book draws together an impressive range of authors from the broad spectrum of North America's gerontological sub-disciplines. In adopting a tone uniformly critical of the currently inadequate state of long-term care for rural elders, the different contributors suggest various reforms that, if implemented, could substantially improve the care system. As a result, the book is ultimately forward looking in its approach and does not dwell excessively upon the known weaknesses of the existing system.

Such weaknesses are identified in a scene-setting chapter by Raymond T. Coward, Julie K. Netzer and Chuck W. Peek. Their critique of the rural long-term care system identifies six obstacles hindering the development of a system better suited to older people's needs. Most obstacles will already be depressingly familiar to readers with knowledge of the European long-term

care debate. They encompass such issues as the lack of consensus surrounding the nature of an appropriate care system, problems recruiting and maintaining personnel, difficulties coordinating particular components of the long-term care system, funding weaknesses and an absence of adequate empirical data on key aspects of the care system. Although these obstacles frequently apply to urban areas, the authors argue that they are rather more pronounced in rural areas, producing a system even more heavily dependent upon the contribution of informal carers.

Subsequent chapters address the individual components of the rural long-term care system. Eleanor Palo Stoller assesses the key role of family care, noting, above all, the extent of differences in the structure of informal social support networks within and between different types of rural community. Community- and home-based services form the focus for Joan K. Magilvy's analysis. Here too, European readers can directly relate to most issues under discussion, including, for example, questions of service accessibility, cost and organisation, service quality, and the integration of home-based and community-based services. The pivotal role of the senior centre in providing and often mediating long-term care services is discussed by John A. Krout. In a comparison of urban and rural senior centres, Krout shows that rural centres have fewer resources and offer a more limited range of services than metropolitan centres. Moreover, the users of rural centres are shown on average to be older, to have lower incomes and to be less healthy than those using urban centres. Krout therefore suggests a need to develop such centres across rural areas of the United States. Institutional aspects of rural long-term care are treated in successive chapters by Graham D. Rowles and by Robert E. Schlenker and Peter W. Shaughnessy. In his discussion of the nursing home, Rowles argues that there is a need to redefine the role of such institutions, traditionally regarded as inappropriate in many rural communities where a long-standing ethos of non-institutional care prevails. According to Rowles, however, the rural nursing home is often already well integrated into the local community and can be adapted to allow greater freedom of movement for frail elders into and out of institutional care. Schlenker and Shaughnessy focus attention upon the role of the hospital in the rural long-term care system, identifying a greater degree of hospital-based rather than community-based health care in non-metropolitan areas. The chapter not only describes funding mechanisms for long-term care, but also the ways in which small rural hospitals have sought to diversify into 'short-term long-term care' in order to guarantee their financial survival. An interesting, if short, chapter by Andrew F. Coburn continues the health care discussion by addressing the difficulties faced by the Clinton administration in securing health reform. While such reform could necessarily have a positive effect upon the rural long-term care system, the lack of consensus on an appropriate reform model means that Coburn's conclusions are rather pessimistic.

In a concluding chapter, Beaulieu, Rowles and Myers integrate the recurrent themes of the individual chapters. They identify seven guiding principles for rural long-term care which include, for example, the need to introduce non-linear models of care suited to the changing health status of

elderly people, and the necessity of promoting a client-centred philosophy of care. The editors argue that 'a more conscious adoption of these principles is needed to compensate for a history of uncritical, inappropriate, and ineffective application of essentially urban models of long-term care to rural settings, under circumstances reflecting an obliviousness to rural needs and culture'. Readers of this interesting collection will find it difficult to disagree with such a statement.

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Anthea Tinker *Older People in Modern Society*, Longman, 1997,
311 pp., £16.99, ISBN 0 582 29488 6.

Anthea Tinker brings together in this seminal fourth edition of *Older People in Modern Society*, a comprehensive textbook, accessible for students from gerontology, nursing, undergraduate to doctoral level and for those who are interested in this new field. A very broad sweep is accomplished in this book.

The book is divided into four parts providing a generic guide to the study of gerontology, the ideological movement from welfarism to rationalization, the development of services, and concludes by bringing together the role of older people in modern society, and the implications it has on society as a whole. The latter section focuses on the need to understand and integrate in our work that ageing is not a 'condition' to be treated by doctors or social workers, but a process that brings with it possibilities of new experience and achievement (Stott, 1981). The last section comprises of documents and tables which support the body of argument.

In Part One, the author begins with a discussion of the general trends, supporting empirical evidence with qualitative data, drawing a profile of 'older people', and interrogating the homogenization of the older person in the first chapter. This is followed by connecting the ageing process with an examination of the services available and policy responses.

Anthea Tinker begins by debunking the images surrounding ageing and problematizes this notion of 'age', deconstructing ageist ideology. It is the stereotype of the older person which she deconstructs, illustrating to the reader that identity is subject to flux and multiple possibilities. Although this idea is not developed throughout subsequent chapters, the author advocates that the re-invention of identity is determined by the relationship between the psychological, socio-economic realities and societal norms. It is this transition from 'master status' (Goffman, 1959) 'the mask of ageing' (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1989) and 'the masquerade' (Woodward, 1991) to a more complex understanding of the interplay between the social, economic and psychological variables in the process of ageing, the 'persona' (Biggs, 1993). The general review of literature, although brief, provides the reader with an historical understanding of the development of the gerontological field from the first demographic studies conducted in the mid-1940s to the most recent genre, that until now has been omitted – gender issues (see Bernard and Meade 1993, Arber and Ginn, 1995).

Part Two provides a genealogical overview of the development of policy to

the present day on a macro level, and to how policy relates to services and service users on a micro/mezzo level. Although this is a substantial chapter it is broken into sub-chapters which are wide ranging and well organized, e.g. from housing and changes within the family to statutory services, community care to the use of family and neighbourhood support structures. In contrast to the above two, the onus of this chapter is to illustrate the contribution of older people both to their own welfare and to that of others. The author emphasizes that the voices and needs of older persons have to be integrated into policy. But policy with a difference. Not one which is steeped in the stereotypes of ageing but which acknowledges and assesses diversity and difference.

The important and distinctive contribution the book makes is that it draws our attention not only to a group which have been 'problematized' and pushed to the fringes of society, but to the prevalent discriminatory practices and ageist ideology. Furthermore, its most important message is that the level of care, quality of life and the idea of 'citizenship' in a stake-holding society are just as relevant to older people as for any section of society. Overall this book is enlightening and interesting. It will be invaluable to practitioners and students and will help to cater for the way in which gerontologists, in tandem with the efforts of activists outside the academy, are raising the profile of older people in society.

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