

From an educational perspective, an additional strength of the book is the inclusion of ‘activities’ throughout the chapters and ‘further activities’ at the end of each chapter that serve as a useful way of guiding the reader and consolidating existing knowledge. For example, at the conclusion of Chapter 3 on ‘Chronic disease and disability’, readers are asked to calculate the number of older people in their locality who have chronic illnesses, problems with activities of daily living, falls and incontinence, and then to consider the factors that might explain the class and gender differences in the prevalence of chronic illness and disability. These further activities are particularly beneficial to the independent learner but also can be used by educators to further enhance existing knowledge and understanding.

Undoubtedly, one of the key strengths of Christina Victor’s latest work is the extent to which she recognises and respects the variability of health experiences in later life and the extent to which these are influenced by gender, age, socio-economic status and ethnicity. As a respected academic in the field of Gerontology, Victor takes nothing for granted in terms of the knowledge base of the reader and has created a resource for a wide and varied audience. The book should be of interest to a diverse readership – students of gerontology, policy makers, educators and academics.

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Robert B. Hudson (ed.), *The New Politics of Old Age Policy*, 2nd edition, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 2010, 392 pp., pbk £15.50, ISBN 13: 978 0 8018 9492 3.

It is clear from the outset that this edited text is targeted at readers based in the United States of America (USA) though scholars and students of US social policy and gerontological practice based elsewhere in the world would benefit from this broad-ranging collection of excellent short essays. Indeed, the chapters would work well as background reading for undergraduate and postgraduate students studying American politics, particularly those with a focus upon social policy. My only real disappointment is that there is little comparative analysis in each chapter, which would surely enhance the content and enrich US policy analysis in the various topics chosen for consideration. The book offers 14 chapters: four of which are updated versions of those that appeared in the first edition, and ten chapters by new authors. While this balance may be may simply be down to marketing issues, the new edition does not, therefore, offer the wholesale updating of the content of the first edition as might be expected. Although I welcome the inclusion of the new authors and their different perspectives, it could be argued that this book is a completely new textbook.

The text is divided into three sections, the first presenting a political and policy analysis of ‘Perspectives on Aging Policy’ in the USA. Chapters include a useful review of US pensions policy by a leading academic on this area, John Myles (expanding and updating his chapter for the first edition) and a discussion by

Frederick R. Lynch of senior citizens' political power as (so-called) 'baby-boomers'; a term I personally dislike mainly because of its lack of precision as a descriptive term and its journalistic associations. Despite this, the section provides a useful summary of the current political and social policy dilemmas and issues within the US polity. The second section, entitled 'The Populations of Aging Policy', has interesting chapters addressing issues such as care policy; the oldest old; policy and practice affecting 'people of colour'; and a very welcome chapter by Richard A. Settersten Jr and Molly E. Trauten about the importance of the lifecourse in formulating and implementing social policy for older adults. They argue that it is inappropriate for social policy to simply target older adults and forget the need to address the transitions from middle to old age. The final section addresses specific public policy on ageing in the USA with chapters separately considering Social Security; Medicare; Medicaid; Housing for 'seniors'; a separate chapter how these four issues affect policy implementation for vulnerable elders; how taxation policy can improve health and wellbeing; and a chapter on historical importance and socio-economic impact of *The Older Americans Act*, 1965 and the Aging Services Network. All these are solid, well-researched and well-written chapters but again primarily of interest to those specialising in US policy analysis.

As someone possessing a good understanding of the issues and concerns of American senior citizens, but who does not have a specific research interest in US policy for older adults, this text has considerably updated my limited knowledge. However, I would not recommend anyone to read it at a single sitting as I did. It is a book to be used selectively as a research and reference source. Yet whilst I would recommend this text to students and academic researchers of comparative social policy and politics alike, there is little here for non-academics and practitioners (social workers, nursing professionals etc.). Whilst writing this review, I turned to John A. Vincent's (2006) excellent review of the first edition. I quote him at length since the same can be said of the content of this second edition, written and published during the earliest stages of the first Obama administration, yet reflecting upon the two administrations of George W. Bush.

He writes:

The problem that is consistently addressed in this volume is the political dilemma of informed, liberal minded, social-policy academics who, on the one hand, know and understand the severe limitations and injustices implicit in current US programmes, but on the other, have to defend an inadequate system from debilitating 'reforms' and dismemberment. (Vincent 2006: 521)

## Reference

Vincent, John A. 2006. Review of Robert B. Hudson (ed.) (2005) *The New Politics of Old Age*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland. *Ageing and Society*, 26, 3, 519–21.

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