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Martin Orrell and Aimee Spector (eds), *Psychology of Ageing*, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, UK, 2009, 440 pp., hbk £125.00, ISBN 13: 978 0 7546 2789 0.

This compilation of published research papers brings together some of the most significant peer-reviewed work in the field of ageing and psychology conducted over the last 30 and more years. The book forms part of a wider series within which other fields of the psychological literature are addressed in much the same way. Its structure is comprehensive and clearly defined, having been organised thematically, from cognition to social and emotional functioning through to lifestyle and wellbeing in old age. There are also specific sections on psychological aspects of dementia, mental health, and a series of papers under the heading of family carers. On one level I am sometimes dubious about such books. They can appear to be convenient places for a collection of work that remains untouched, without the benefit of synthesis or further analysis. This enterprise, however, is a bold attempt to identify what the editors believe to be the most significant contributions to an important field and, given the age of some of the papers, it begins to provide a map for the development of our thinking in recent decades. By viewing the collection in this way, its potency becomes apparent. There is neither time nor space to list all 33 included papers, but it may be helpful to draw your attention to some of the highlights.

The editors rightly emphasise the contribution made by Paul and Margaret Baltes as a key turning point in the field of the psychology of ageing. I for one was pleased to see its inclusion, having used the reproduced paper for teaching many times, and its contribution to the recognition that later life is associated with development and adjustment rather than decline. Other papers that have helped to facilitate a shift in thinking about the nature of ageing and quality of life are included. For instance, there is work which has resulted in the identification of a range of factors, other than the presence or absence of chronic illness, that influence self-perceived, health-related quality of life, enabling us to seek more sophisticated methods for predicting and assessing poor psychological health. Kitwood and Bredin's groundbreaking work on personhood and dementia also features. This article in particular represents work that has most certainly impacted upon both theory and practice in the field of health and social care service development and continues to resonate with academics, students and practitioners in the field of dementia care. Indeed the entire section dedicated to the psychology of dementia helps us to move away from a medical perspective and the 'biopsychosocial'. Throughout attention is given to interventions, including the use of exercise to alleviate depression and a paper about treatment for caregiver stress.

The significance of these papers is not limited to their substantive content, but also lies in the contribution they have made to methodological developments, notably large longitudinal studies. On a more critical level, the contents rely heavily on research using quantitative methods, *cf.* a number of randomised-controlled trials are included. This may not be too surprising given the nature of the discipline, but does I believe miss an opportunity to shed light on important

work from an interpretivist approach. The section on family caring is also almost entirely centred around a stress/burden paradigm, with limited attention to the growing area of satisfaction – I was again disappointed that students new to the field would not be exposed to a more complete, or least varied, view on the care-giving experience. The lengthy introduction guides the reader through the various themes and highlights seminal texts, but a clear rationale for inclusion and exclusion of individual papers is not apparent. I believe the book will be of interest to various audiences but may be particularly useful to students who have recently entered the field of ageing, because it provides both an account of the development of the ageing and psychology literature and a springboard for further exploration.

School of Nursing and Midwifery,
University of Sheffield, UK

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