

human vulnerability and interdependence' (p. 129): a statement which leaves the reader wanting to explore these questions further.

To my mind the only limitation of this book is the assumption that the reader understands themes such as Ethics of Care and neoliberalism: defining these at the beginning would have provided a useful background to the discourse. This book provokes thought and challenges assumptions, and is highly recommended to students, academics and policy makers with an interest in ageing, health and social care policy in the international arena.

University of Southampton, UK

ALISON WADEY

doi:10.1017/S0144686X12001341

Robert H. Binstock and Linda K. George (eds), *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, seventh edition, Academic Press (Elsevier), Burlington, Massachusetts, 2011, 406 pp., pbk US \$99.95, ISBN 13: 978 0 12 380880 6.

The seventh edition of the *Handbook on Aging and the Social Sciences* hails from a well-established pedigree of gerontological texts, with previous editions in 1976, 1985, 1990, 1996, 2001 and 2006. Edited by Robert H. Binstock and Linda K. George with contributions from a variety of top scholars, the *Handbook* is an easy-to-read resource for researchers as well as a useful textbook for the discerning graduate-level student.

As with many multi-edition texts, the authors make a strong case for the current edition's divergence and progression from previous editions. Of the 25 chapters here, 18 were not included in the previous editions, and of the seven previously addressed topics, six were addressed by different contributors. New topics covered in the seventh edition of the *Handbook* include: demography and ageing; trends in longevity; disability and functional ageing; global ageing; racial and ethnic influences over the lifecourse; health disparities among older adults; molecular genetics, ageing and wellbeing; employment and ageing; ageing and social policy. Of the 40 contributors in the current edition, 32 did not contribute to the last edition. The text is broken up into four parts: theory and methods; ageing and social structure; social factors and social institutions; ageing and society. I believe Binstock and George have succeeded in finding a balance, moving forward without omitting valuable content because it had been covered previously.

Part One (Chapter 1: 'Ageing, the Life Course, and the Sociological Imagination: Prospects for Theory'; Chapter 2: 'Ageing, Cohorts and Methods') touches on the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of ageing research. I felt that these chapters, while worthy additions, would benefit from expansion – one can only cover so much in the span of two chapters. Part Two (Chapter 3: 'Demography and Aging'; Chapter 4: 'Trends in Longevity and Prospects for the Future'; Chapter 5: 'Disability, Functioning and Aging'; Chapter 6: 'Global Aging'; Chapter 7: 'Racial and Ethnic Influences Over the Life Course'; Chapter 8: 'Stratification and Inequality Over the Life Course') is where the *Handbook* dives into ageing

from a social science perspective. Chapters 3, 4 and 6 examine the ways in which the world is ageing whilst Chapters 5, 7 and 8 discuss the influence of social structures on the processes of ageing across the lifecourse.

Part Three (Chapter 9: 'Health Disparities Among Older Adults'; Chapter 10: 'Molecular Genetics, Aging and Wellbeing'; Chapter 11: 'Social Factors, Depression and Aging'; Chapter 12: 'Aging, Inheritance and Gift-giving'; Chapter 13: 'Economic Status of the Aged in the United States'; Chapter 14: 'Employment and Aging'; Chapter 15: 'The Changing Residential Environments of Older People'; Chapter 16: 'Civic Engagement and Aging'; Chapter 17: 'Late-life Death and Dying in 21st Century America') examines the relationships between social factors, social institutions and the ageing process. Spanning a broad range of topics, Part Three discusses a variety of social structures that are becoming increasingly complex as the world ages in greater numbers. Unfortunately, these social structures are illuminated from an exclusively American perspective, both in terms of content and contributor origin: future editions may benefit from a more multicultural perspective.

Part Four (Chapter 18: 'The Political Economy of Pension Reform in Europe'; Chapter 19: 'Politics and Aging in the United States'; Chapter 20: 'The Future of Retirement Security'; Chapter 21: 'Organization and Financing of Health Care'; Chapter 22: 'Long-term Care Financing, Service Delivery, and Quality Assurance'; Chapter 23: 'Gender, Aging, and Social Policy'; Chapter 24: 'Aging and Social Intervention'; Chapter 25: 'Fiscal Implications of Population Aging') looks at the monetary and political implications of an ageing society. There is a much more international focus than in Part Three, including chapters with European (Chapter 18), American (Chapter 19) and broadly international (Chapter 22) perspectives. These chapters are a well-articulated overview of the interplay between society and the ageing populace.

The content of the *Handbook* has many more strengths than weaknesses. The presentation of themes is conducive to producing a cohesive message, although the ordering of the chapters within each part does in my opinion detract at points from the flow of the book as a whole. That said, for the graduate student/researcher, overall cohesion is often a moot point. With regard to generalisability, although the majority of the contributors to this edition are of American origin, with the exception of Part Three an international perspective is generally presented. Finally, the material covered on theories and methods is solid, but I feel the book would benefit from expansion in this particular area.

The seventh edition of the *Handbook of Aging and Social Sciences* provides a broad overview of many of the issues faced by the global demographic shift in a well-written, well-researched text. I think this book would be a worthy resource for graduate students as a textbook and as a summary reference for researchers.

University of Cambridge, UK

THEODORE D. COSCO