

shared value to the various communities of interest in this topic. It will make a significant contribution to students and researchers in family studies as well as in the sociology of ageing.

University of Otago, Christchurch, New Zealand

SALLY KEELING

doi:10.1017/S0144686X13000135

Brian Findsen and Marvin Formosa, *Lifelong Learning in Later Life: A Handbook on Older Adult Learning*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2011, 236 pp., pbk €45.00, ISBN 13: 978 94 6091 649 6.

The title of this book is significant. The book is concerned with what the authors call 'the interface between lifelong learning and later life', an area of study which, they say, 'is crucially understated'. Investigation of this interface leads them to survey a wide range of disciplines and topics. The title also describes it as a 'handbook' – which one may take to be a companion to thinking and to understanding, partly a survey of literature and a book of reference, but also an interpretation of the growth of the study of learning in later life, set within a developmental framework which the authors elaborate.

Findsen and Formosa are two well-known contemporary scholars in the field who work at opposite ends of the globe: Malta and New Zealand. Their definition of later life is life post-work and post child-rearing: a social construct. Theoretical and empirical investigation of such a construct is bound to be both problematic and paradoxical. The authors state their target audiences clearly – educators of older adults, students in higher education, academic administrators, professionals working with older adults, workers in public-sector departments and voluntary agencies, and others. It is a wide range and not exclusively academic. This sets the authors challenges in terms of communication, exposition and explanation, with which they cope well. The authors organise their handbook into three parts and 15 chapters. Part 1 explores the context and discourses of older adult learning and later life, drawing on a range of disciplines. Part 2 discusses research, perspectives and insights from particular disciplines, notably psychology, sociology and philosophy, which contribute to issues around older adult learning. Part 3, the longest, considers forms of provision of older adult learning and ways in which older adults do (or may) learn outside formal provision, as well as some related contemporary concerns such as learning and wellbeing and intergenerational learning.

To a significant extent the book succeeds in its considerable ambitions: it covers a wide range of literature both historical and contemporary and its summaries and comments are largely clear and succinct. It shows what is already known and understood about older adult learning and what still needs to be researched and clarified. It indicates what has not yet been thought out and the connections already made, and yet to be made, between a multiplicity of disciplines and perspectives. This book provides a valuable

insight into the ‘state of the art’ and stands as a valuable source for the target audiences.

That said, there are ways in which such a handbook could be developed and improved. The 15 chapters, and their sub-sections, are not even in their conceptual depth, complexity of argument and use of language. There is some repetition of material between different chapters, partly due to the fact that the book has two authors but also, probably, to the range of audiences and attempts to target them all fairly. The sheer quantity of topics means that some receive short shrift – for example the attempt to deal with self-directed learning in fewer than 1,500 words. The book is international in coverage if one takes that to mean Europe, North America and Australasia. The authors themselves express regret that they had to confine their searches to literature in the English language. There is an interesting issue over the use of sources. Books and articles by authors such as Jarvis, Moody and Withnall, who have had long writing careers, are cited or quoted throughout the text. In the list of references at the back of the handbook, references from Moody cover 28 years of publications; those by Jarvis and Withnall 22 and 18 years, respectively. The opinions and conclusions of all academics change over time. At one point in the text there is a very interesting passage showing how Withnall’s thinking on critical educational gerontology has developed. Regrettably this kind of analysis does not appear elsewhere.

At an early stage in the text, Findsen and Formosa announce that: ‘a key objective of this handbook is to set up an agenda for the future as regards the practice of older adult learning’ (p. 2). To my mind they do not quite achieve this objective, which is probably defeated by the sheer range of their material. Nevertheless, there are indications of what that agenda is. In their conclusion they say: ‘we have favoured social constructionist views of later life which celebrate older person’s agency and theories which focus on older adults as often marginalised . . . [needing] to mobilise their resources acting politically to uphold their collective voice’ (pp. 186–7).

Now that Findsen and Formosa have made available to us this valuable and readable handbook on older adult learning, I would like to see them publish further, arguing their way more closely towards their ‘agenda for the future’.

Lancaster University, UK

KEITH PERCY

doi:10.1017/S0144686X13000147

Ruth E. Ray and Toni Calasanti (eds), *Nobody’s Burden: Lessons from the Great Depression on the Struggle for Old-age Security*, Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield, Plymouth, UK, 2011, 378 pp., hbk £49.95, ISBN 13: 978 0 7391 6531 7.

Using an innovative interdisciplinary approach, this book examines the construction and experience of (old-age) burden and dependency in depression-era America and beyond. Fourteen scholars from a range of disciplines came together over two years to read and discuss the same materials and to create, largely successfully, ‘a new [interdisciplinary] object