

A strength of this book lies in its descriptions of the plight of people with dementia in settings where there is little understanding of their perspectives, unique needs or attempts to communicate with others. These descriptions contribute to the ever-increasing body of evidence of poor practice, insufficient staff training and understanding of dementia, insufficient leadership and mentoring of staff that characterises many care settings for people with dementia. A validation approach that is integrated with everyday practice should be included in the repertoire of skills held by care staff and, as such, this book, used critically, will contribute to this set of skills.

University of Stirling, UK

FIONA KELLY

doi:10.1017/S0144686X13000391

Ian Stuart-Hamilton, *The Psychology of Ageing: An Introduction*, fifth edition, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, 2012, 464 pp., pbk £29.99/\$45.00, ISBN 13: 978 1 84905 245 0.

In 1991 the first edition of this book was published, and this completely revised, expanded and updated fifth edition appears six years after the previous one. Stuart-Hamilton is a developmental psychologist: developmental psychology is frequently thought to concern only babies and children, and it is refreshing to find the concept carried through to its logical conclusions, with a chapter on bereavement and death (new in this edition).

Chapter 1 discusses what ageing is, in demographic and biological terms, including reviewing theories of how the body, and the senses, age. The next chapter comprehensively reviews the measurement of intellectual change in later life, including intelligence, reaction times, sensory changes and attention. Memory is covered in Chapter 3, language in Chapter 4, and the author is scrupulous in pointing out where results in these areas are confounded by factors such as intelligence, how declines in test performance are only relative, and how individuals naturally differ considerably. Chapter 5 deals with personality and lifestyle, discussing, for example, how certain traits appear to stay constant throughout life, while others change; and some of the 'Big Five' personality variables (Costa and McCrae 1980) correlate with other measures relating to age, such as mild cognitive impairments and overall life expectancy. It covers attitudes to ageing held by various population groups, including some relevant to older people such as doctors and nurses; and it also mentions cultural and ethnic group influences on such attitudes. In Chapter 6 mental health in later life is covered, including dementia, depression, anxiety and substance (ab)use. It further shows how stereotypes of older people can hinder the proper diagnosis of mental health problems.

For me, the most important chapter in the book is Chapter 7, 'Problems in Measuring the Psychological Status of Older People'. This is a critical essay pointing out the extreme difficulty of assessing the effects of ageing on psychological variables, confounded as they are by aspects of lifetime experience, intelligence and other factors. Throughout the book, the author carefully identifies the doubts that surround many research findings due to

aspects of the methodology, including sampling biases. The almost universal use, in ageing research, of students as the younger comparator group overlooks the fact that students are atypical of the younger population: and many researchers are young people, whose research designs and interpretations may be coloured by their own youthful points of view. Most tests of intellectual skills were originally set up for testing young adults, and 'intellectual ageing is being set up as a measure of how far older people have fallen from the ideal standard set by younger adults' (p. 266).

Chapter 8, 'Death, Dying and Bereavement', covers psychological aspects of the final stages of life. Lastly, Chapter 9 looks at what ageing might be like in an ever-more technologically driven society, and suggests that design of such technology, if oriented towards older people, will succeed in including everybody. The book includes useful appendices and a glossary of technical terms used.

One criticism I have is that most of the time, research findings are reported comparing 'older' with 'younger' people, without specifying the ages of the research participants involved. In so doing, the author, unintentionally I am sure, falls into the trap well described by Bytheway (2005), writing about ageism and age categorisation: the tendency of researchers to lump older people into categories such as '60 and over' or '75+', which imply the homogeneity of the people so categorised. Yet, when specific age bands are mentioned (e.g. p. 148), it is clear that the 'younger old' may differ from the 'older old'. An area neglected by Stuart-Hamilton is, I feel, the social psychology of ageing. For example, the effects of ageist behaviour and stereotyping are pernicious and it is possible that 'stereotype threat' has affected older people's performance in many areas of psychological research (e.g. Chasteen *et al.* 2005).

The book is extremely well written throughout, and the author succeeds in communicating sometimes turgid and/or complex research findings in an approachable and readable way. Each chapter is well summarised, and further reading is suggested. As such it will be a valuable text for all, including experienced gerontologists, interested in the psychological aspects of ageing.

References

- Bytheway, B. 2005. Ageism and age categorization. *Journal of Social Issues*, **61**, 2, 361–74.
- Chasteen, A. L., Bhattacharyya, S., Horhota, M., Tam, R. and Hasher, L. 2005. How feelings of stereotype threat influence older adults' memory performance. *Experimental Aging Research*, **31**, 3, 235–60.
- Costa, P. T. and McCrae, R. R. 1980. Still stable after all these years: personality as a key to some issues of adulthood and old age. In P. B. Baltes and G. G. Brim (eds), *Life-span Development and Behaviour*. Volume 3, Academic Press, New York.

Institute of Gerontology,
King's College London, UK

DINAH BISDEE