

Poon and Cohen-Mansfield should be commended for their valiant foray into addressing a slippery topic in an understudied demographic. *Understanding Well-Being in the Oldest Old* progresses logically, chapter to chapter, from foundation to processes to measurement.

I found the chapters on early life trauma to be the most intriguing read while the latter section on measurement was the most practical. *Understanding Well-Being in the Oldest Old* provides a well-thought out and balanced text for well-being researchers.

Suzanne R. Kunkel, J. Scott Brown, and Frank J. Whittington. *Global Aging: Comparative Perspectives on Aging and the Life Course*. New York, NY: Springer, 2014

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*Global Aging* is a necessary book that offers novice learners a thorough introduction to aging as well as offering experienced researchers an important expansion of the field on the topic of global aging. One of the main messages that the editors want to convey, and do so early and often, is that while older adults are individuals with unique habits, perspectives, and behaviors, these adults are also deeply influenced by culture and country. This book sets the stage for much-needed research on the international diversity of aging whether read by policy makers, educators, or researchers.

Although the editors acknowledge and do a good job of exploring individual aging processes, they primarily explore cultural and national issues that affect aging individuals. One of the key issues that they discuss is in the book's final chapter on the way in which family is linked to the aging process, and that the notion of family as a unit is changing within the international context of aging. The editors discuss the fact that while citizens of developing countries tend to view older adult family members as individuals to be respected and revered, Western nations tend to see less of a familial obligation to care for one's older family members as they age. The editors reflect on the growing trend to adopt a more Western (and perhaps individualized) approach to familial responsibility and care of older family members. Although many older adults can live productive and independent lives well into their later years without the assistance of family, many older adults globally will inevitably require some kind of assistance as they approach their final years. In this context, the editors discuss the various ways in which long-term support services are provided around the world, giving the reader a good understanding of what different cultures and countries prefer and why that is their preference. The editors point out that people often have outdated ideas about aging around the world, and to an extent, some aspects of research and policy on this topic may also be outdated.

Chapter 2 is devoted to providing readers with an overview of research methods that contemporary researchers use to study aging and older adults. The editors' main focus is the difference between descriptive and comparative research methods, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using either of these methods in the context of research centering on older adults. They argue that comparative research is gaining in popularity but that it has inherent challenges: identifying the unit of measurement, conceptualizing and measuring the selected unit, ensuring that valid data are collected, and respecting research participants especially in the context of comparative, international research.

The editors do well to focus on the shifting focus of policy issues around the world. They point out that although some policy issues affect countries differently, there are prominent issues that affect all older adults. One of these issues is health care, which is the topic of chapter 6. The discussion centers on the current health care needs of older adults within the global health care system but, even more importantly, on the growing need for health care services, which will only continue to expand exponentially as the global population ages. The chapter's focus is on the growing health care needs of older adults in the developing world, and this development is contrasted against these countries' increasing populations and lack of formal health care infrastructure. Although the problem is less severe in the developed world, the editors point out that the percentage of older adults using the health care system overall is set to increase dramatically, which could have dire consequences unless policy changes are made to address this global problem.

Chapter 8, which discusses the notions of work and retirement, provides many excellent examples of the individual nature of growing older. Although for several decades now it has been the case that individuals

work until age 65 and then retire, this trend is shifting towards later retirement ages; what's more, we must take note of international trends and differences. There are many reasons as to why individuals choose to retire, stay in the workforce, or return to the workforce after having retired which dramatically affect the aging experience. In some international examples, people do not retire at all and do not consider it a viable option.

As the editors point out in the book's preface, aging in an international context is often an afterthought in textbooks on aging. In this text, however, the editors incorporate perspectives from many international countries and cultures into each chapter and discussion. For example, chapter 4 compares populations, cultures, and individuals from various countries in varying socio-economic positions through a comparison of Swaziland, Japan, the United States, Germany, Thailand, China, and the United Arab Emirates. This creates a holistic picture of what aging looks like around the globe by including and comparing measures from various countries with very different backgrounds and circumstances.

Another valuable feature of this book is that each chapter ends with an essay written by various local or global contributors which allows the reader to think about a concrete example or detailed aspect of the chapter's topics. These essays each focus on a case from a non-Western country providing the reader with valuable and different perspectives on aging – issues that the reader may not have otherwise considered. One excellent example is in chapter 5 which discusses disability and active life expectancy, in which the essayist considers problems related to the measurement of psychiatric disorders and compares problems that this phenomenon causes for older adults in Nepal and the United States. This essay helps us to understand how differences in measurement between two very different countries can significantly impact the lives of older adults in those countries.

This book is an invaluable contribution to research and education on international aging. More like this are needed!