

Reviews

doi:10.1017/S0144686X12000682

Jeanne Katz, Sheila Peace and Sue Spurr (eds), *Adult Lives: A Life Course Perspective*, The Policy Press, Bristol, UK, in association with The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK, 2012, 496 pp., pbk £26.99, ISBN 13: 978 1 44730 043 4.

Adult Lives: A Life Course Perspective is a reader designed for the Open University Module on Adulthood, Ageing and the Life Course. As Jon Glasby writes on the cover, ‘this reader contains an exciting mix of new material and extracts from key existing texts – interspersed with the voices of real people using services’. It therefore covers much of social gerontology with a mixture of disciplines.

A scene-setting first chapter states that the book aims to move beyond just a consideration of old age to a broader lifecourse approach. This is followed by three parts where the rationale for the contents is helpfully described. These are first ‘Contextualising Adulthood’, second ‘Transforming Adulthood’ and third ‘Understanding Adulthood’. This division is helpful even though there is inevitably some overlap.

‘Contextualising Adulthood’ has three sections. The first has six chapters focusing on measuring quality of life and with a focus on health. The second section is on individual ageing and social relationships. Again much of this is about health with contributions from well-known experts. Christina Victor writes about health and mortality, Peter Coleman and others write about psychological ageing, and others such as Mike Nolan discuss related issues. Section Three is ‘The Environment from Accommodation to Community’. The first four chapters are good overviews of housing and technology with one being specifically about prisoners. The remaining two are more about community care and the exclusion of people from society.

Part Two on ‘Transforming Adulthood’ again has three sections. The first is about human rights and encompasses one of the last things which Peter Townsend wrote in 2010 before his death. This is on human rights and ageism. The other two chapters are about self-neglect and safeguarding vulnerable adults. It is good to see that these three chapters go beyond a narrow interpretation of elder abuse. Section Five is about practice and contains good material on why collaborate, working in teams, communication with older people and assessment. Section Six is entitled ‘International Dimensions’. It is good to see the important global context set.

Part Three is ‘Understanding Adulthood’. The first two chapters, ‘The Ethics Triad: Virtues, Values and Codes of Practice’ by George Giarchi and ‘Lying, Cheating, Breaking Promises and Stealing’ by Jacques Thiroux are general and not specifically related to older people. The one by Liz Lloyd is about social care and the personalisation agenda and the case analysis by

Ann Gallagher and Nigel Sykes is about end of life. Section Eight is entitled (rather misleadingly in my view) 'The Complexity of Real Lives'. In fact it is more about methods with a focus on qualitative research. They are nonetheless useful in showing how complex the lives of older people are.

The chapters are a real attempt to mix classic texts such as Tom Kitwood's 1997 'Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First' with commissioned chapters. On the classic studies one can see the logic of those which may be unlikely to change because, for example in the case of Tom Kitwood, who has died. But for others such as Ann Bowling's *Quality of Life* measures from 2005 her work has moved on. I would not go to this chapter for an up-to-date account of quality of life as her subsequent research has shown. And on the specially commissioned chapters I would have liked to have seen more of a justification for this choice. I was not convinced, for example, about the choice of Cuba and Australia for these chapters.

Where it is less helpful I feel is in the six 'voices of older people'. The editors claim that 'These real voices are central to this reader, adding reality to more structured research and discussion' (p. xii). To me they detract from the overall contents although for some people they may have brought the text alive. They seemed neither a systematic look at the views of older people nor chosen with a particular theme or reason.

There is a good comprehensive index which must have been difficult to do considering the range of content in the book. A lifecourse perspective is essential on all Social Gerontology courses and this collection of chapters would certainly help students and also policy makers. It does not make for exciting reading but then readers seldom do.

Institute of Gerontology,
King's College London, UK

ANTHEA TINKER

doi:10.1017/S0144686X12000694

Peter Backhaus (ed.), *Communication in Elderly Care: Cross-cultural Perspectives*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2011, 256 pp., hbk £75.00, ISBN 13: 978 1 4411 1254 5.

Communication in Elderly Care does what it 'says on the tin'. The issue of communication with older people is one that has been in the spotlight of gerontological practice, education research and media commentary for many years. From a health and social care perspective, communication is seen as a key skill needed for effective care with older people and for minimising undignified and uncompassionate care. However, education and training programmes continue to be dominated by a focus on verbal and non-verbal approaches to communication. Yet it is increasingly acknowledged that these simplistic divisions and behaviourally orientated approaches fail to capture the complexity of communication needs of older people and how these can be effectively met.

This book adopts a different approach to the subject. Drawing on a range of linguistic and conversational research approaches, the book explores the