story over another. What is clear is that the voice and strength of the carer is a crucial part of the resistance to poor care and to the challenge to improve both understanding and provision of care.

One of the real strengths of the book is the diversity of relationships included – that we all care in some way: straight or gay, black or white, young or old. Against this context of diverse relationships there are also some clear commonalities. A strong theme across the stories is the insight given to the emotions and emotional work involved in a caring relationship. There is also deep acknowledgement of the caring journey itself – the challenges and rewards, the sadness and loss, but also the learning and giving that comes out clearly from many stories. This book is very moving, not just in the sadness, but also in the strength of the caring relationships – something we all hope for as individuals and that as a society we rely on.

This book will speak to other carers who will empathise with or learn from different chapters. However, the narratives across the chapters also provide strong lessons and experiences that both increase understanding and highlight key issues for a much wider audience – particularly for formal carers, service developers, policy makers, commissioners and anyone with an interest in improving the experience of living with dementia for both the person and their close friends and family. Central to this is the importance of relationships in all their complexity and form: the book illustrates this fundamental importance beautifully.

Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, HEATHER WILKINSON
School of Health in Social Science,
University of Edinburgh, UK

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Judith Phillips, Kristine Ajrouch and Sarah Hillcoat-Nallétamby, *Key Concepts in Social Gerontology*, Sage Publications, London, 2010, 248 pp., pbk £19.99, ISBN 13: 978 1 4129 2272 2.

The phenomenon of an ageing society may sometimes come across as a product or outcome of contemporary Western society. However, in this book Phillips *et al.* point out that 'new' realities of old age and ageing 'have been ever-present, but have received minimal attention from social thinkers' (p. 122), suggesting that in fact 'gerontology is an ancient subject but a recent science' (p. 1). This 'concise encyclopaedia' on social gerontology captures in a brilliantly and scholarly way different theoretical and historical debates found within this multi-faceted and dynamic discipline. The book offers an alternative way of thinking about ageing, laying out different long-standing debates, and presenting the process of ageing through a kaleidoscope of social, political and economical layers, showing how they influence each phase and turning point in the lifecourse.

Fifty concepts are discussed in turn within this book, which together illustrate the multidisciplinarity of gerontology, and how the flexibility of this subject is its strength. The authors demonstrate how social gerontology has the ability to bring together different perspectives from a range of disciplines including social, biological and psychological; and the intersectionality between them. Reference is

made to how socio-political factors such as technology, medicine, healthcare systems and policies may influence the process of ageing in a particular way in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). Phillips *et al.* address ways in which new research on gerontology can offer solutions to the challenges of an ageing population, highlighting how this may be turned into sound evidence for governments who are seeking to build competent age-centred policies and practices. Each concept is couched in an historical debate and intelligently inter-linked with new ongoing research within different spheres of life – the social, economic, political and religious.

Throughout the book cross-reference is made between concepts: for example between advocacy, care, and disability. Furthermore, the inter-link between concepts reflects how gerontology as a discipline is a multi-faceted and processual paradigm, always in flux and moving forward with the pace of contemporary society. This complexity reflects the fuzziness that characterises everyday life. Comparable data, mainly between the UK and the USA (and at times Canada) contextualise these concepts (e.g. 'assisted living'). This makes it easier for the reader to grasp long-standing debates within gerontology, some of which date back to the early years of the twentieth century (p. 118). The concepts discussed here may also be used as reflexive tools for use in other cultural contexts.

The voice of the authors is heard consistently throughout the book, posing critical questions and perspectives on current debates (*see e.g.* pp. 25–9 on 'ambivalence'), and this makes the reading of the book a more reflective experience. For instance, the authors offer their critical understanding of the political front in relation to governmental policies such as 'Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods' (2008) and show how such policies have a direct impact on the experience of ageing (e.g. Ageing in Place, Housing). Alongside these theoretical debates, the authors throw light on the diverse and dynamic methodological approaches found in the field. Their authorial voice as narrative (plot) binds these 50 core concepts together and engages the reader with the current issues.

The alternative way in which this book has been meticulously compiled and written makes it suitable for a wide range of audience, from students in undergraduate or post-graduate courses, especially those in the social sciences, social and health-care and gerontology; to academics interested in the process of ageing; specialists such as planners and geneticists; and policy makers. It is a valuable contribution to the literature and will be of interest not just to those working with older people but also to all those interested in the broader spectrum of age.

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