prevention for the older age group. It would have been useful for the reader if the editors had addressed issues such as the clear disciplinary boundaries evident in the various chapters' contents. What would be added to the field if research were undertaken which crossed these boundaries? A final chapter which drew together this work and explored where these diverse approaches leave us would have been a challenging but interesting exercise.

Perhaps surprisingly, although there is a chapter on feeding assistance in care homes there is no exploration of the prevention of poor nutrition in the hospital setting, a topic that attracts a great deal of media interest. Furthermore, the book addresses only issues in developed western countries. Despite these limitations, the book should be highly recommended as a resource for a wide range of audiences with an interest in nutrition: from academics, researchers, practitioners and students in the fields of biomedicine, nutrition, dietetics and food science, as well as social science, to those working in the food industry. The price of the volume will probably deter its use as a personal textbook for students, but rather places it as a reference book. Wherever nutrition is researched, taught and studied, this book should be in the library.

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Katherine Froggatt, Sue Davies and Julienne Meyer (eds), *Understanding Care Homes: A Research and Development Perspective*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London, 2008, 264 pp., pbk £19.99, ISBN 13: 978 1 84310 553 4.

This overview of life in United Kingdom (UK) care homes is edited by the three conveners of the National Care Home Research and Development Forum who were commissioned by the charity Help the Aged to prepare a review of the literature as well as an accessible report about the quality of life in care homes. The resulting report, *My Home Life*, which at the time received considerable attention from the national press, constituted a comprehensive description of life in a UK care home, from the resident's admission through to, in most cases, death.

The book reviewed here presents some of the research upon which *My Home Life* was partly based, and although it is targeted at a wide audience including policy makers, several chapters focus on practice issues particular to nurses and social workers. It commences with a scene-setting chapter in which the editors explain the fundamental premise of the book: 'an emphasis on participatory engagement and collaborative working, both within care homes and between care homes and external agencies' (p. 18). The editors identify four primary principles of these relationships: equity, engagement, mutual learning, and honesty, and they suggest that the research and development examples in the book show how these principles can be incorporated into practice to enhance the experiences of all the players in care home life.

The book has three sections although, as the editors note, there are overlaps among them. The first section focuses on the individual, and commences with a description of the challenges faced in an action research project that was undertaken by the lead author to introduce person-centred care into a long-term care setting. It concludes that the imperative to engage in person-centred care, which is central to the *National Service Framework for Older People*, ignores the relationship dimensions of the care exchanges between staff and residents. This is followed by another chapter on an action research project that focused on care planning for care-home residents with dementia. One interesting aspect of this was the challenge of getting residents to tolerate the behaviour of fellow residents with dementia, particularly where there was a low staff-to-resident ratio. Although exact figures are hard to access nationally, it is apparent that the majority of care-home residents have dementia to some degree, and that this impacts on many aspects of care. The presented findings suggest that reappraising roles and building upon existing resources in care homes could improve the experiences of all involved. Christine Brown-Wilson, Glenda Cook and Denise Forte illustrate how narrative can be used to help residents maintain existing relationships with relatives and friends as well as develop new friendships within the care setting. Robert Jenkins highlights the particular issues faced by older people with learning difficulties, and in common with many other authors in this volume makes a strong case for developing environments appropriate to the needs of the specific population as well as employing specially trained staff.

Part 2 focuses on 'organisation' and commences with an overview of three projects undertaken by Garuth Chalfont. He describes how, through conversation, he helped care-home residents with dementia to engage with nature in order to help them to reinforce their sense of self. He emphasises the need to value residents' identities and explore ways, even within the practical limitations imposed by poorly-designed premises, to enable residents to commune with nature and maintain aspects of their identities. A social work perspective was used by Furness and Tory to undertake a small study of 'Friends of Care Homes' in two locations, to ascertain whether these influenced the quality assurance and quality monitoring systems enshrined in the *National Minimum Standards for Care Homes for Older People* of 2003. They conclude that such organisations have the potential to make an important input into ensuring improved quality of life for residents as long as managers not only listen to their views but also operationalise useful suggestions.

The last section is entitled 'The wider perspective' and explores different networks and ways of working in care homes, including those that might change the existing culture, and others that might combat the isolation that some staff experience in care homes. Improvements in care in relation to specific conditions suffered by residents, as well as improvements in care workers' skills and confidence, can be enhanced by strengthening relationships; with, for example, higher education (Tina Fear) and district nurses (Claire Goodman, Sue Davies, Stephen Leyshon, Mandy Fader, Chris Norton, Heather Gage and Jackie Morris). This book should be essential reading for policy makers, directors of care-home organisations, care-home staff, and others working at the coal face providing all elements of support to care-home residents and staff. The book shows how a

commitment to improve the care-home experience for residents, relatives, professional carers and providers can lead to innovative and exploratory projects, which in themselves could feed into policy and practice.

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Erdmute Alber, Sjaak van der Geest and Susan Reynolds Whyte (eds),
Generations in Africa: Connections and Conflicts, Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2008,
432 pp., pbk €39.90, ISBN 13: 978 3 8258 0715 3.

This appealing collection of papers looks at intergenerational relations through the lens of the social anthropologist. It deftly switches between the viewpoints of generations, as elegantly captured in the cover illustration of a youth and an older man exchanging spectacles. The book takes us on a geographical tour of a dozen countries in Africa. The authors are mainly European scholars with an intimate knowledge of Africa gleaned from their own field experience as well as ethnographic records. The 16 papers in the collection draw on rich materials to describe continuity and change in intergenerational relations including everyday discourse, historical records, field notes, poetry and popular songs. As one contributor notes, poets may be even better than ethnographers in capturing the spirit of the age.

The generation concept is introduced as a powerful analytical tool for studying society because it implies relations in time (p. 1). The lead chapter introduces the three most common concepts: *genealogical* generation that defines kinship relations and rights and obligations; *age-generation* that uses chronological age or birth order as a principle for structuring society; and *historical* generation that concerns the cohorts of people born at the same time who share common experiences and may make 'fresh' contact with, or reinterpret, their cultural heritage. The substantive topics addressed in the chapters that follow reflect the rich cultural diversity of the world's 'oldest continent'. They are neatly grouped under four key themes starting with *reciprocity* between the generations, moving to adaptations to intergenerational living from the *past to the present* attuned to the shifts in the political and economic situation, and ending with a section on *virtue* that discusses the manner in which issues of moral excellence, success, faith, maturity or 'good sense', and sexual integrity are spoken of from a particular generational position. Appropriately, an essay on wisdom has the final word. The appendix includes biographical notes on the authors and there is a useful subject and author index.

As the saying goes, there is always something new coming out of Africa. In this respect *Generations in Africa* does not disappoint. Plenty of novel insights and surprises are in store for the reader. For instance, we learn that there can be multiple trajectories into adulthood and grandparenthood in Tanzania. Thus, pregnant teenagers can to a certain extent negotiate to which generation they wish to belong by variously demonstrating maturity or rejecting care-giving responsibilities. In Swaziland, tradition is reinvented when young girls revitalise a ritual