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Dale Dannefer and Chris Phillipson (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Social Gerontology*, Sage Publications, London, 2010, 712 pp., hbk £90, ISBN 13: 978 1 4129 3464 0.

This is the latest in a number of handbooks and books which cover a wide range of topics and issues in gerontology. Fortunately, as the editors point out, they all take a slightly different perspective, and this particular handbook focuses solely on social gerontology. It is both multidisciplinary and global. A global approach is of growing interest across the world for policy makers and practitioners, and indeed many students expect such an approach although up to about ten years ago, with a few exceptions, the emphasis was very United Kingdom or Europe based. Not only are the topics in this volume multidisciplinary but also the authors of the chapters come from all over the world and are acknowledged experts.

The editors have taken five main themes, in sections of roughly the same length. Section One contains disciplinary overviews with summaries of findings from key disciplinary areas within social gerontology. These include psychology, history, economics, social anthropology, demography and epidemiology. There is also a chapter on the environment and one on disabilities, which do not fit quite as neatly into the disciplines but are nevertheless of great relevance.

Section Two covers social relationships and social differences and topics include social inequality, gender and ageing, the role of religion, intergenerational ties, social networks and friendships in later life. Section Three covers individual characteristics and change in later life. These chapters examine different aspects of individual ageing, including self and identity, cognitive processes and biosocial interactions, and the impacts of physical and psychological ageing. The importance of the lifecourse and issues such as loneliness and ageing bodies are covered here.

Section Four is specifically to do with comparative perspectives and cultural innovations including ageing and development, ageing in a global context, migration and cross-cultural perspectives on the very important topic of grandparents. It includes chapters that are specifically focused on particular areas of the world. The final section is concerned with policy issues. These include developments in social policy, long-term care, technology and older people, end-of-life issues, work and retirement, crime and older people, and the politics of old age.

Does this book cover all of the issues one would expect of a handbook? Clearly not all of them could be included, but it is perhaps a pity that so little attention has been given to housing. It is also perhaps surprising that there is little on the contribution of older people in the voluntary and other sectors. Each chapter is well referenced – indeed in one or two chapters the number of pages of references

almost exceeds the chapter itself. There is a list of authors and a subject index though I would have liked a slightly longer version of the index.

All in all this is a very useful new contribution to the literature, and the editors are to be congratulated on bringing together a distinguished group of authors on such an interesting number of relevant topics. At £90 it is not cheap: a paperback edition would be welcome.

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Murna Downs and Barbara Bowers (eds), *Excellence in Dementia Care: Research into Practice*, Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education, Maidenhead, UK, 2008, 640 pp., pbk £29.99, ISBN 13: 978 0 33 5223756.

For some time now, the contribution of both the editors of this book – Murna Downs (UK) and Barbara Bowers (USA) – have advanced the field of dementia care and provided a rich stream of inspiration for those confronting the complexity and myriad of issues wrapped up in the word ‘dementia’. Here I can speak from personal experience. If I wind the clock back 20 years, in 1991 I was practising as a community psychiatric nurse in a dementia team in North Wales and attending a part-time postgraduate certificate course in gerontology at Bangor University. In one of the course assignments I was attempting to locate a suitable evidence base for (nursing) practice in dementia. It was then that I was introduced to the work of Barbara Bowers, in particular her late 1980s articles on dementia and the identified five-stage temporal model of types of care: anticipatory; preventive; supervisory; instrumental; and protective (Bowers 1987). In 1991 this opened up my (neophyte) appreciation of the power of qualitative research, and in one way or another exploring, shaping and interacting with the properties of the ‘protective’ element of care has kept me busy these last 20 years. Given its pedigree, much would be expected of a comprehensive textbook on dementia care that combines the talents of these two editors and utilises their extensive academic/practice/policy/community networks. After reading and then using this book to help inform clinical practice in dementia and providing an evidence base for behaviours that challenge (Keady and Jones 2010), I am pleased to say that the book more than lives up to its billing.

In presentation and content, the book is split into four parts with each part equally balanced to contain seven chapters. The parts are: (1) Principles and Perspectives; (2) Knowledge and Skills for Supporting People with Dementia; (3) Journey Through Dementia Care; and (4) Embedding Excellence in Dementia Care. As these titles intimate, the book provides a wide coverage of topics, and authors who diligently focus upon their task and promote their area of expertise. For example, in Part 1, the opening chapter of the book is written by Blossom Stephan and Carol Brayne who describe the prevalence and projections of dementia, taking an international lens to this focus of study. This was an excellently researched and well-written chapter that deserves wide dissemination and reference. Also in Part 1, Steven Sabat describes the constituent elements of