

Martin to feature in the texts becomes an accepted general method of approach to Shakespeare.

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Janet L. Ramsey and Rosemary Blieszner, *Spiritual Resiliency and Aging: Hope Relationality and the Creative Self*, Baywood Publishing Company, Amityville, New York, 2013, 278 pp., pbk £59.95, ISBN 13: 978 0 89503 411 3.

I became interested in the issue of spiritual resiliency and ageing while undertaking research with older people who I met through an African Caribbean day centre and outreach service. When I spoke to, and interviewed, people about their experiences of using health and social care services, religious faith was identified as something that enhanced personal resilience at times when they were struggling and enabled people to maintain some degree of independence from services. This book by Ramsey and Blieszner is interesting as it presents findings from two research projects in which they explored the role that religious faith played in the lives of 16 older people. The book builds on previous research by Ramsey and Blieszner in which they interviewed eight spiritually resilient older women. The authors have now interviewed eight older men and re-examined the original interviews with the older women to illustrate how religious beliefs and spiritual communities have enabled the older people to cope with difficult times while maintaining hope for the future.

The research is a cross-cultural study (United States of America and Germany) that aims to present the participants' narrative accounts of how religious faith based on a shared Lutheran heritage had, or had not, made a difference throughout their lives. The narrative approach was used and this works well as it brings to life the lived experiences of the participants and shows how their faith connected, supported and challenged them throughout their lives. It also works particularly well since the participants accounts illustrate their experiences of the polarities and conflicts of life, such as hope at the end of life and living through world wars. The experiences of the older German participants are particularly poignant as stories of living through World War II, trauma and the Holocaust are presented. Two fuller narrative accounts are also presented as two chapters in the book: Anna, a German woman and Alex, an American man. These more holistic narrative accounts also powerfully illustrate how religious faith has interconnected and challenged the participants throughout their everyday lives.

The book is in three parts. Part 1 draws on the accounts of the women and men to explore how spirituality can be understood and conceptualised. This is an introduction to the rest of the book and gives a preview of the findings, which interestingly highlight how there is a gender difference in how women and men talk about their feelings, spiritual selves and life stories.

Part 2 explores the social constructions of the older people as individuals, their interconnections with others and the impact of spiritual community to resilience. Part 3 presents the challenges that the participants had encountered and how life 'cannot all be happy' (p. 131). This is an important section of the book and the issues presented resonated with the findings from my own research. We all have difficult and challenging life experiences, but the interviews with the older women and men are used to illustrate how spiritual resiliency connects people to themselves and others in reflective, creative and hopeful ways. The authors conclude the book with a practical hope for the future, that the narratives from these 'ordinary but extraordinary elders' (p. 224) will encourage people to listen to the 'faithful' stories of older adults.

This book should appeal to academics, practitioners and non-academics. A real strength of the book is that each chapter is concluded with implications for research and practice. These summary statements at the end of each chapter also link the issues of spiritual resiliency to the wider gerontological literature along with practical recommendations for those working to support older people in a wide range of practice settings. As a nurse, I thought the practical recommendations and suggestions were simple, achievable but important aspects of care that often get over-looked. For those interested in the methods used to undertake this research, a useful appendix is provided which outlines the research methods and approaches used. A short pen portrait of the 16 participants is also provided. Overall, this is a well-written and interesting book that adds to the academic and practice literature on resiliency and ageing.

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