Reviews

Lynn A. Botelho, *Old Age and the English Poor Law, 1500-1700*, Boydell, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2004, 208 pp., hbk £50, ISBN 1 84383 094 9.

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, populations grew throughout western Europe, as both birth rates and life expectancy rose. Largely in consequence, poverty also increased. Governments across Europe, then increasingly centralising and consolidating their powers, sought means to alleviate the problems. They did so on strikingly similar principles, whatever their religious beliefs, though institutional practices differed: everywhere those capable of work were expected, assisted and coerced to do so. Those unable to work, and lacking other sources of support, such as from their families, mainly the aged and disabled, were judged to deserve shelter and subsistence. The source of this support varied: in Catholic Europe the Church was the primary provider. In England, after Henry VIII broke from the Church in the sixteenth century, a Poor Law was constructed by 1601, which established a national system of relief funded by local taxes. The Poor Law built upon much older parish practices and survived vestigially until the mid-twentieth century.

Older people were always a substantial proportion of the recipients of poor relief, even in the earliest days of the Poor Law. More people survived to old age in early modern England than is realised. People aged 60 or more years were about 10 per cent of the population in the seventeenth century; but in the harsh conditions of the time, poor people, most of the population, aged faster than now. Commonly, people were deemed to deserve relief by reason of old age at any age after 50 years. So the numbers perceived as old were considerable.

Though the Poor Law provided a national framework for the treatment of the poor, including the aged poor, local practice varied throughout its history, influenced in particular by differences in local economies. It needs therefore to be studied at the local level if we are to understand the reality. Hence Lynn Botelho's detailed study of the treatment of the aged poor in two Suffolk villages from the mid sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth is particularly valuable, even though their experiences cannot represent those throughout England. Steven King (2000) has suggested that, at least in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the poor relief system was less generous in the north and west of England than in the south and east, probably for reasons to do with the structure of local economies.

Botelho makes no claim to national representativeness but, by studying two contrasting villages, she illustrates the variety within the national experience. She provides a fascinating study of the conditions and treatment of the aged poor in the villages of Poslingford, a poor community dependent mainly upon cloth spinning, and prosperous Cratfield, the wealth of which derived from supplying food to the London market. The villages were of similar size but their different

economic situations meant that their poor relief authorities treated their aged poor very differently. The population of Poslingford could not contribute enough in taxation to be generous but had to target their resources selectively on a minority, even among the very poor, and they tended to select those who shared their own religious beliefs and norms of behaviour. More prosperous Cratfield provided more in poor relief and in charity, by combining weekly stipends with gifts of clothing, firewood and food and by providing shelter. The differences are expressed in the life expectancies of the aged paupers: in Cratfield their average age at death was 72 years, in Poslingford 65 years, though in Cratfield men outlived women and in Poslingford *vice versa*. These differences related partly to gender differences in the possibility of finding work at later ages. But in neither village did poor relief provide enough for the aged poor to survive on without other resources: support from families if they were lucky (and not all old people had surviving children or ones who were not themselves desperately poor), from charity (formal or informal), or pay from whatever work they could find or were capable of performing. Alongside the recipients of poor relief was a group who struggled by without it but who were even more desperately poor and died at earlier ages than the paupers.

As Botelho vividly describes, the aged poor were active participants in their local communities, for as long as they were able, not just helpless dependants. Among many other things, they delivered babies and messages, mended roads, and cleaned the church. Communities reserved recognised tasks for them. There has always been a mixed economy of welfare, which assisted older people to survive – if only just and often in conditions of severe deprivation. Botelho rightly describes her book as one of the first extended explorations of old age in early modern England. Previous studies have focused on the social elite, who left more records behind. This book excellently redresses the balance.

Reference

King, S. 2000. *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.

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Julia Brannen, Peter Moss and Ann Mooney, *Working and Caring over the Twentieth Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2004, 234 pp., hbk £50, ISBN 1 4039 2059 1.

The question of whether we resemble our times more than our parents has no easy answer. This new book delves into the complexity of transmission and change in 12 British families over four surviving generations. Seventy-one adult men and women of the three oldest generations were interviewed, the eldest having been born in 1906 and the youngest in 1975. The focus was on how employment and

care have been handled in the life course of each generation, and how resources and patterns of life regarding work and care have been transferred and changed from one family generation to the next.

An important aim of the book is to grasp the complex interaction between structure and agency. The 20th century saw immense changes in the world of work, material living conditions, family patterns and the rise and decline of the welfare state. A sketch of the changing childhoods of three generations and the different normative discourses by which they are memorised gives an illuminating account of how these fundamental structural and ideological changes have deeply affected everyday life. But even if historical conditions play a very important role in shaping lives, they do not determine them; they affect people in different ways according to their class, gender and the families to which they belong. The perspective of the book shifts from viewing the life course of the informants within the structural and statistical frames of their historical gender cohorts, to listening to the life stories of the individuals and linking them to their family generational contexts. The dual perspectives indicate that continuity and change are always intertwined, and that social change does not have the linearity it appears to have at first inspection. For instance, most of the women in the two oldest generations did indeed prioritise care and motherhood over employment, but at the same time they engaged in diverse part-time work, something that was neither registered in the statistics of the time, nor hardly in their own or their children's accounts. Progress in occupational careers was faster for men, but some women caught up later in life, which the new (female) jobs in the expanding public sector facilitated.

Two fascinating chapters of the book scrutinise motherhood and fatherhood across the generations. What most surprised this Norwegian reviewer was how recently the changes in the perception and practices of traditional gender arrangements have been in Britain. The nature of the welfare regime seems to have been very important. Access to high-quality, public, day-care for young children and statutory rights to parental leave came 20 years earlier in Scandinavia than in Britain, along with acceptance that mothers should work and fathers take part in the caring for children. In the British study cohorts, the big shift in women's lives came between the grandmothers' and the mothers' generation; in Scandinavian equivalents, it would have come between the great-grandmothers' and the grandmothers' generations.

The contrast means that the context for the change is different: in an increasingly neo-liberal economic climate, young parents now have to figure out how to manage and organise a double career family. It also generates a very interesting difference in the practice of fatherhood. While the first generation of 'participating fathers' in the Scandinavian countries came from the educated middle-classes and their changing practice was supported by state-provided assistance in many aspects of life, according to this study in Britain low-skilled fathers are in the lead. The decline of traditional working-class jobs means that men of this social class have time to be more involved with their children, while middle-class men have to work long hours to meet the expectations of the liberalised labour market. This may also be a structural explanation of the somewhat contradictory views that many young men have on gender: on the one hand, they

embrace the ideology of modern gender equality, on the other hand, they think caring for children is a gendered matter and that the responsibility and the quality of care lie in their wives' or partners' hands. This 'mix of liberalism and maternalism' (p. 53) has slowed the change in gender arrangements, even among the youngest and most individualised parents.

Another intriguing chapter offers a typology of inter-generational relations shaped by occupational and geographical mobility: family relations marked by solidarity, incorporation, differentiation or reparation, each with their specific patterns of reproduction, innovation and ambivalences. In one case, there is the 'solidaristic' working class family with a traditional view on gender; in another, the upwardly mobile and 'differentiated' middle-class family with more special-ised inter-generational relations and less commitment to traditional gender norms. In both family types, resources and values are transmitted, but while in the first case mainly in the form of practical help and support, in the latter it is cultural capital and the desire for education that is passed on.

A huge challenge in a multi-faceted study like this is to convey the material in ways that communicate the complexities of different time dimensions, of the connections between historical and family generations, and of the influences of class and gender. The authors have displayed great skill in organising the material, for the complicated issues of time and memory are thoroughly discussed. The shifts between the structural and the individual perspective are valuable, yet the question remains whether the individual case stories are used mainly to illustrate the variability within certain structural conditions, or whether they represent an analytic level in its own right? While the reader may find some of the 'structural' sections rather dry (unlike the 'agency' sections), the question remains, what does one learn from this material? Patterns of generational trans-mission are generalised from the case stories in the last chapters, but the very exercise is surely a theoretical, methodological and expositional challenge for sociological and historical research.

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Howard Eglit, *Elders on Trial: Age and Ageism in the American Legal System*, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, Florida, 2004, 316 pp., hbk $49.95, ISBN 0 8130 2765 9.

All legal systems cast individuals into very specific and well-defined roles. 'Due process' entails a range of actors taking the stage according to a complex pattern of entrances and exits, participating in a tightly controlled drama that leads to a climax at which the truth is revealed, and verdicts and sentences announced. They also focus on the rights and responsibilities that come with adulthood. People who are not 'full adults' may feature, but generally speaking are passive in marginal roles, reflecting assumptions of their 'diminished responsibility'.

In this context, it is interesting to contrast the position of the very young and the very old. Whereas with the former, there is a complex legal subsystem which effectively regulates the individual's passage from birth through to adulthood, the latter is much less well-defined. As has been evident in many well-publicised cases (General Pinochet's springs to mind), there is no scheduled *rite de passage* prior to death when an individual is released from the trappings of adulthood. Instead, there is in most countries a hotch-potch of statute, regulation and legal precedent, which is invoked in complex negotiations as older participants grow even older on and off the legal stage.

One consequence is that gerontologists have fought shy of grasping the legal nettle. Rather, as is evident in the attention given to particular issues such as older witnesses and elder abuse, research has tended to focus on the ageist assumptions that age is associated with increased vulnerability and decreased competence. So we should be grateful to Howard Eglit for offering us a broad and engaging review of how older people feature in the American legal system. In one sense, the first part of his title is grossly misleading, because he includes chapters on plaintiffs, lawyers, clients, judges and juries as well as defendants and witnesses. 'Age on Trial' might have been a more appropriate title, since he reflects on the legal ramifications of population ageing.

Unashamedly, the first sentence announces the arrival of a demographic revolution and the second invokes the image of invasion: 'steadily increasing numbers of older men and women populate most communities in most states, and there are more to come' (p. 1). It is as if the US legal system is under siege, locked in the courtrooms of small town America. The 'first cohort of baby boomers' will turn 65 years-of-age and, among other things, Eglit warns, 'technological and infrastructural aids to enable people of diminished mobility to gain access to the courts' (p. 2) will follow. A 'tidal wave [is] lapping at the doors of lawyers' offices and judges' chambers' (p. 3), and there is 'little time left' to resolve the issues generated by 'a burgeoning population of older Americans intersecting with the pervasive American legal system' (p. 3).

The book is a delightful mixture of such over-the-top rhetoric and down-to-earth legal detail: 163 pages of text are followed by 107 pages of notes and a 34 page bibliography. Between the two extremes of demographic apocalypse and legal detail, however, there is much stimulating discussion of age, ambivalence, bias, guardianship, competence and decline. With energy and confidence, Eglit reviews a wide range of relevant literature and concludes that, although ageism and age-bias exist, people do differ and differences 'sometimes do make for meaningful and legitimate differentials in treatment' (p. 55). In my view, he relies far too heavily upon the duality of old/not old and the following, laudable, condemnation of age bars for judges is a good example: 'Age-based mandatory retirement imposed on judges … is unwarranted and unnecessary. It is unwarranted because the practice reinforces stereotypes of incompetence and intellectual decline that commonly are attached to the elderly. It is unnecessary because there are more nuanced means for assuring the continuing competence of judges – be they 45 year-old substance abusers or 80 year-old victims of Alzheimer's disease. The practice should be abolished' (p. 138).

As a result, I suspect, of his orientation to 'the elderly' (and his frequent use of the word 'oldsters'), he neglects the potential power of age differentials evident, for example, in courtroom speeches that begin: 'When I was your age, I never … ' or 'When I am your age, I will make sure I … '. Eglit concludes with a brief but cogent and fitting final chapter titled, 'A time for action'. His seven concluding recommendations include: more research, more education, techniques to enhance performance, changes to the design of courtrooms, codes that condemn age bias and, lastly, 'greater attention to the needs of aging attorneys' (p. 163). I'm happy to add an eighth: read the book and profit from reflecting on the issues he raises.

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Gerard Hughes and Jim Stewart (eds), *Reforming Pensions in Europe: Evolution of Pension Financing and Sources of Retirement Income*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, 2004, 305 pp., hbk £65.00, ISBN 1 84376 522 5.

Gerard Hughes and Jim Stewart have put together a very informative and insightful collection of essays on pension provision in Europe and its future. Of course there is, as yet, no Europe-wide pension scheme, nor even a specific proposal for one. The European Union, likes it predecessors, calls for a 'Social Europe'; and the Lisbon summit in 2000, the *Treaty of Nice 2001* and the draft *European Constitution* of 2003 all urged European governments to co-ordinate their policies on pensions. The *Treaty of Nice* supposedly committed members to strive for a 'high degree of social protection', while the draft *Constitution* inserts the phrase, 'solidarity between the generations', in a long list of desirable goals like 'equality between men and women' and 'protection of children's rights'. At the limit, such lip service does not explicitly prevent the *European Union* devising a common programme, with its own continent-wide apparatus and redistributive scope, akin to the Social Security programme in the United States.

What the existing EU provisions aim for is not a common programme, like the Common Agricultural Policy or even the Convergence Funds, but rather to sponsor 'pension reform'. On the one hand, this means further cuts in public provision and, on the other, it means conferring tax relief on the pension products sold by the financial services industry and in other ways trying to 'reduce barriers' to the latter's activities. It is, therefore, quite appropriate that the collection focuses, in about equal measure, on the evolution of national pension regimes and on an EU-supported project of 'pension reform', backed to varying degrees by the national governments. The countries whose pension problems receive special attention are the UK (Sue Ward), Germany (Holger Viebrok and Mechtild Veil, the latter focusing on gender), Hungary and Poland (Elaine Fultz), Italy (Felice Roberto Pizzuti), Ireland (Peter Connell and Jim Stewart), France (Jean-Marie

Dupuis and Claire El Moudden) and Sweden (Lena Granquist and Ann-Charlotte Stahlberg, a joint contribution on gender issues).

Most public pensions have some way of relating entitlement to contributions and status in the paid labour force, so women often find themselves with reduced pensions. On the other hand, public pensions are usually 'gender neutral' whereas, as Veil points out, 'tax subsidised products of private sector pension provision … require higher female contribution rates' because of greater female life expectancy. Of course, the qualifying conditions for public pensions are not difficult to change in the direction of citizens' pensions. Granquist and Stahlberg find that there is a type of pension reform, oriented to 'collective agreements' rather than individual provision, which can go far to safeguard women's interests.

Elaine Fultz's essay on pension privatisation in Hungary and Poland shows it to have had unfortunate results in its first three years. The value of the new funds sank, not so much because of market fluctuations, from which recovery might be possible, as because of the charges and fees associated with marketing, administration and profit. Hungarians and Poles would have been better served if their governments had driven a far harder bargain, as did, for example, the Swedish authorities. But much of the problem resides with cost escalation driven by competitive provision, customisation and information asymmetry between supplier and customer. The Hungarian and Polish authorities probably had less bargaining power than the Swedes – and even the latter have run into problems with poor or negative net returns.

Antoine Math's contribution is a very interesting assessment of the long-term impact on pensioner incomes of the 'reforms' (too often simply another name for benefit slashing) that have marked the last 10 years or more. He points out that the framers of these measures, knowing how politically explosive they were, pushed the main economies a decade or more into the future, by such measures as modifying indexation procedures. The result is that German and French employees, who are today still paying quite high social security contributions, will find that their own pension, when they come to claim it, will offer considerably less income replacement than do the pensions now paid to pensioners. In effect the 'transition costs' have not been openly faced, as the more punctilious pension 'reformers' used to insist they should be.

A lack of openness about the public cost of measures favourable to partial 'privatisation' is also revealed in an important essay by Gerard Hughes and Adrian Sinfield, 'Financing pensions by stealth', which looks at who gains from the revenue lost to the public treasuries by the Anglo-American regime of tax-breaks on pension contributions. In the UK and the USA, the tax-relief amounts to about one per cent of the gross domestic product. Because income tax in these countries is still somewhat progressive, tax-relief is bound to be regressive. Indeed the computations of Hughes and Sinfield show that the top 10 per cent of UK earners received 50.1 per cent of all tax-relief, and that the top 20 per cent received 67.2 per cent of that relief in 1996–7. The corresponding figures for the USA were 62.0 per cent and 73.1 per cent in 1988. Paradoxically, the Bush tax cut will have slightly reduced the gains made by higher earners, but on the other hand, the tendency for tax thresholds to rise less rapidly than inflation will have helped to conserve, or even exacerbate, these disparities.

Pierre Concilialdi and Araud Lechevalter probe the technical and philosophi-cal arguments of the proponents of privatisation-oriented reform and, in particular, the approach of so-called 'generational accounting' practised by Laurence Kotlikof and other US-based economists. The partisans of this approach compute future pension liabilities, and future pension incomes, using a discount rate to establish their 'present value', and then usually come up with scary scenarios that depict future generations staggering under unimaginable mountains of debt. Meeting future pension needs is likely to be difficult and most likely will require the raising of new resources by encouraging saving and obliging employers to make new contributions. But the exaggerations and panic-mongering of 'generational economics' do not help. These projections are highly dependent on the chosen discount rate. They also claim to plot overall economic performance 75, 100 or even 150 years ahead; once again, even small improve-ments to growth performance could substantially change the outlook over such long periods. Conciliadi and Lechevalter put their finger on a key assumption, when they say that this approach treats each generational cohort in com-plete isolation, as if it owed nothing to its predecessors or successors. Yet we all know that our upbringing and education have been paid by our parents and predecessors-at-large, and that we owe a debt to them. This latter consideration does not licence a return to patriarchy, but it does recommend a willingness to share burdens between cohorts.

Martin Rein and John Turner, who conclude this valuable book by considering the various pathways to pension reform, widen its scope by measuring European transitions with what is happening in the United States and Japan. In a com-prehensive account of this sort, with its consideration of various and as yet untried paths, it would have been helpful to have had a fuller account of Swedish approaches, and to have asked whether Rudolf Meidner's famous share levy scheme of the 1970s and 1980s did not, if suitably modified, offer a financial pathway or, as the book's sub-title has it, 'source of retirement income'. But the authors can certainly be forgiven for not tackling every aspect of a very complex issue. *Reforming Pensions in Europe* will interest all those concerned with the long-term impacts of an ageing society.

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Gail Hawkes and John Scott (eds), *Perspectives in Human Sexuality*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2005, 244 pp., pbk AU$59.95, ISBN 0195 517016.

This edited book overviews current socio-cultural research about human sexuality. Although it covers the whole lifespan, it would make a useful addition to a gerontological library, particularly for those new to the topic. This is partly because it contains an interesting chapter on ageing and sexuality that is integrated into the wider theoretical themes of the book. Gerontological studies of sexuality are still predominantly positivist and quantitative, but this book

provides a welcome counter-balance. All the chapters share a socio-cultural orientation and draw on theoretical approaches such as feminism, structuralism, post-structuralism and post-modernism. In this way, later-life sexuality is conceptualised in relation to the wider themes of human sexuality that are seldom explored in the gerontological literature.

The style is that of a well-designed textbook, complete with discussion questions at the end of each chapter, suggested reading, a standardised chapter structure, explanations of key issues in a different font, and a glossary. Most chapters end with a list of Internet resources and some list video and DVD resources. The contributors are all from Australia and New Zealand, and their contributions provide interesting contrasts and additions to the predominantly American and British literature. The book has three sections; the first and briefest is introductory and overviews socio-cultural approaches to the study of sexuality, including different theoretical approaches. It introduces important general issues, such as the special status given to sexuality as a locus of truth, the ways in which sexuality is regulated in the social order and in legislation, and the significance and impact of hetero-normativity. The discussion of the major social theories used in the study of sex should prove useful, both in introducing the reader to the history of the field and in locating other research (although one could quibble that 'the discursive perspective' is not adequately covered by reference to Foucauldian approaches alone).

The second section focuses on the ways in which sexuality is organised, with particular attention to categories, identities and cultures. It includes chapters on gay and lesbian history and culture in Australia, young people, older people, indigenous Australian sexual cultures, globalisation and queer culture. The chapter on ageing and sexuality is an informative overview of some important issues such as the medicalisation of erectile dysfunction and the menopause, and non-heterosexual ageing (including the fact that sexual practices are not necessarily the same as sexual identities, a point that is often overlooked in gerontological studies). There is a particularly interesting section on 'Older men and the spectre of the paedophile'. This quotes empirical data from grandfathers about the ways in which they police their own behaviour around children in public, even to the extent of not talking to them, for fear of being seen as a 'dirty old man'. The third section focuses on the regulation of sexuality, and has chapters on sex and sin in Christian thought, sex education, sexual dysfunction and sex therapy, public health (including the representation of AIDS as an 'epidemic'), homophobia, prostitution and pornography, and an epilogue about new ways in which sex is regulated.

Thus, the book covers most of the current 'hot' issues in the study of sexuality, but there is no chapter on disability and sexuality, a topic eminently suited to the socio-cultural approach. Similarly, more discussion of sexual abuse would have filled out the coverage. Overall, this book works well as an introduction to the major theoretical themes in the study of sexuality and is recommended for those working in socio-cultural disciplines, including gerontologists.

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> Benjamin Lipton (ed.), *Gay Men Living with Chronic Illness and Disabilities:
> From Crisis to Crossroads*, Harrington Park Press, New York, 2004, 114 pp.,
> pbk $16.95, ISBN 1 56023 336 2.
> Cheryl Claassen, *Whistling Women: A Study of the Lives of Older Lesbians*,
> Haworth, New York, 2005, 284 pp., pbk $19.95, ISBN 0 7890 2413 6.

There is a hierarchy in the topics that attract interest in social gerontology and in the wider debate on ageing. The exploration of sexual dissidence remains a more or less peripheral concern, but at the same time, the debate on sexual identities and the contentions associated with how to represent them has been slow to grasp the implications of ageing. Older lesbians and gay men tend to fade from view in notion of a unitary gay community that with age, becomes 'the forgotten' (Pugh 2002). How life histories and experiences might serve as significant points of departure between generations is often overlooked. It is a symptom of this collective memory lapse that little has been recorded of how sexual dissidence might shape biographies with discrete and cumulative effects upon both group and individual prospects.

In *Gay Men Living with Illness and Disabilities*, Benjamin Lipton has drawn together a collection of essays concerned with non-HIV related chronic illnesses (NHIVCIs) in gay men. In the opening chapter, he outlines a set of hitherto largely neglected issues surrounding gay men's health and care in the United States. The relative invisibility of gay men facing illnesses other than HIV is highlighted alongside a lament about the failure of care and support in other areas of health and disability to mirror the inclusivity for which HIV services are renowned. That such conditions prevail beyond the borders of the US signals the relevance of this subject matter to an international audience.

HIV and AIDS are the backdrop for much of the ensuing discussion. A running theme is the need to consider how gay men make sense of all forms of illness and incapacity given the impact of HIV and the subsequent call for health services to demonstrate 'cultural competence' in their dealings with gay men. Faced with a potentially gargantuan topic, this short book offers a general treatment, which means that there is little detail on differences in the nature or experience of the range of chronic illnesses and disabilities that gay men face. Throughout, there is a tendency to assume that gay men will be open about their sexuality when accessing services, and therefore easily identified. Indeed, there is little critical treatment of the differences between the men to which the title refers, who are drawn together according to an absence of HIV as 'gay men living with NHIVCIs'.

No new empirical research is introduced here, and the advice to practitioners that peppers the text is necessarily speculative and all-purpose. And, while the hetero-normativity of welfare and support is remarked upon, it receives little critical attention. Other than in the last chapter, which offers a first person account of a psychotherapist's experience of chronic illness, the voices of gay men with chronic illnesses or disabilities are largely absent from the book, with the result that the complex interplay of gender, sexuality and disability, as promised in the title, rarely breaks the surface. The book does however fire an opening

salvo for an emerging debate and is a useful signpost to several issues that deserve greater attention.

Cheryl Claassen's *Whistling Women* relates the stories of 44 mainly affluent and, in some cases, economically very successful older lesbians in the United States. These women are hard to track down and are portrayed in the opening chapter as almost mythical characters, rarely glimpsed or encountered. From the outset, the author displays her clear intention to consider the biographies of these women in a wider socio-economic context, and she is especially keen to explore how it is that these 'narrators' have thrived at a time when it was believed that women needed men in order to survive financially; indeed, at a time when women were *required* to rely upon men. Each chapter has lengthy, illustrative quotations, which provide insights into the complexities of managing a lesbian identity under constant threats from a pervasive and institutionalised derogation of homosexuality. As each story unfolds, we discover the myriad ways in which both sexual and gendered difference is used to justify and uphold inequality and the creative tactical manoeuvres employed to counteract this discrimination. Consequently, the book offers an illuminating slant on US social history from a rare perspective.

Claassen's approach enables the reader to consider the impact of wider cultural shifts and social change upon individual lives, but the occasional generalised conclusions are ill-supported by the socio-biographical method. Disconcertingly, there is also awkwardness in the face of sex. To avoid embarrassment, Claassen sends each narrator a postal questionnaire on sexual activity rather than cover this topic during an interview. The result is an impersonal and de-contextualised itemisation of sexual activities, prompting the question of whether certain ageist assumptions regarding talking about sex with older women triggered the approach.

Overall, the book offers a sophisticated blend of personal narratives together with a broad account of social, cultural and political events; Claassen shows considerable artistry in making such complicated writing both readable and engaging. For any reader who will turn a blind eye upon an Islamophobic outburst at the very end, the book delivers a measured and illuminating account of the experiences of a remarkably resilient and economically-adept group of lesbian women; it gives us all an opportunity to learn.

Reference

Pugh, S. 2002. The forgotten: a community without a generation – older lesbians and gay men. In Richardson, D. and Seidman. S. (eds), *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*. Sage, London, 161–81.

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Sarah Harper (ed.), *Families in Ageing Societies: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, 212 pp., hbk £45, ISBN 0 19 925116 9.

Current concerns about family change and its inter-generational consequences are not new. This edited collection of essays was compiled when Sarah Harper was developing the 'Older People and their Families' research programme for *The Nuffield Foundation*. The book was published in 2004 although much of the writing (with some notable exceptions) is familiar. The book comprises 10 chapters that cover three broad themes: (i) the impact of demographic change upon family structures, (ii) roles and relationships, and (iii) inter-generational support. Each chapter explores aspects of these themes in the context of different countries.

The first two chapters provide a wealth of data on the demographic and social forces that affect families. Harper's chapter uses data from Europe, North America and Australasia to explore how the ageing of societies impacts on family roles, responsibilities and transitions. It is a thorough and useful introduction with few surprises. While recognising that kinship systems are adaptable, Murphy's chapter uses data from seven countries to explore whether changes in family interaction suggest a more fundamental change in family systems. While the most pronounced differences in family contact were observed between different countries, those in southern Europe reporting most contact, there was no evidence of distinct kinship systems.

Achenbaum's chapter has a very different tenor and is full of fascinating insights. Adopting a historical perspective, he argues that American sociologists and demographers did not systematically begin to analyse the impact of population ageing on family dynamics until after World War II. He reports that academic interest then turned to topics such as family structure, kin relationships, care-giving and role conflicts. These were often analysed through the lens of ideological predilections, such that those who saw the family in decline worried about its capacity to support elders, while those who seized on the strengths of older women celebrated the capacity of individuals to survive adversity in later years. Achenbaum ends on a positive note, believing that relations between spouses, parents and children will continue to provide the majority of support with friends, neighbours and a network of agencies filling the gaps.

Lang uses the *Berlin Ageing Study* (BASE) to explore how older people activate extended kin relationships when nuclear family members are not available. The study of 516 Berliners was designed by a multi-disciplinary team with geriatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists and sociologists. Dimmock, Bornat, Peace and Jones examine inter-generational relations in British stepfamilies using findings from a study of 60 people living in Luton, Bedfordshire. The chapter is full of interesting insights into the way in which the notion of the family has evolved to take account of divorce, re-coupling and remarriage, rendering the 'stepfamily' redundant as a conceptual tool. They highlight the importance of applying an understanding of emotional attachment to adult parent-child relationships, and suggest that parents' descriptions of their relationships with their children were

usually more positive than the children's accounts of their relationships with their parents.

Three chapters cover the care and support of older people: Anderson examines the situation of working carers in the European Union; Johnson and Lo Sasso draw findings from the United States *Health and Retirement Survey*; and Knapp, Forder, Kendall and Pickard examine the growth of independent-sector social-care provision for older people in the United Kingdom. Anderson reports a lack of systematic information on the conditions under which carers are able to seek and sustain employment or quit work or care. He concludes that while public policies are in evidence to reconcile childcare with employment, the needs of those who provide care for older people while working are largely untouched by policy. The penultimate chapter explores inheritance and inter-generational relations. Finch suggests that while family members are not resistant to older people spending their assets on enjoying retirement, using assets to pay for care may be viewed very differently. The final chapter by Hughes and Waite suggests that the American family remains a key social institution, albeit in an altered state, and conclude with a sequence of 'big' and largely unanswered questions, which makes for a very unsatisfactory end to the book.

Overall, this book is an excellent account of family change that will be of value to students, researchers and academics alike, but like many edited collections it does have problems. There is no final synthesis, and throughout much use is made of data that looks out of date given the rapidity of technological change. Webcams, email, mobile phones for texting and telephoning have changed the nature of communication, but its use and impact on family interactions is not explored. Finally, despite the wealth of presented data, most of the contributors are very reluctant to predict the impact of societal and familial-based tensions and prefer to discuss a range of possible outcomes.

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Alan Tuckett and Alec McAulay (eds), *Demography and Older Learners: Approaches to a New Policy Challenge*, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester, 2005, 86 pp., pbk £10.95, ISBN 1 86201 240 7.

The *National Institute of Adult Continuing Education* (NIACE) of England and Wales has recently re-invented itself with a new logo which is prominent on the eye-catching cover of this Policy Discussion Paper, one in a series that aims to stimulate argument and debate on vital issues in the education of adults. As Alan Tuckett, Director of NIACE, explains in the Introduction, its purpose is to 'kick-start policy change – to secure for Britain's elders the education and training policies they have a right to expect, and all of us need to secure' (p. 3). To this end, the editors have brought together four papers from well-known education-alists who have a wealth of experience on the aspects of later life learning that they address.

In the first paper, Tom Schuller, now working at the *Centre for Educational Research and Innovation* at the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (CERI-OECD) in Paris, provides a masterful overview of the demographic challenges facing us. Rather than a doom-and-gloom scenario, he offers a shrewd analysis of population trends and projections, and pays particular attention to the changing shape of family structures and inter-generational patterns in the United Kingdom. He demonstrates clearly how the polarisation of time, money and social contacts is an issue of major importance over the life course and across different groups. He also outlines future challenges that include: the need to take account of risk, security and responsibility, ways of using collective funds creatively, consideration of appropriate service delivery and issues of both trust and reciprocation, and time distribution in all phases of the life course. This thought provoking paper concludes with key policy aims for an educational response to an ageing population.

The following three papers examine salient issues from a learner viewpoint. Stephen McNair, Head of the *Centre for Research into the Older Workforce* at the *University of Surrey*, comments succinctly on the issue of 'choice' in the timing of retirement and the factors that are combining to change retirement behaviour. He highlights the current lack of provision of education and training opportunities for older employees and discusses the kind of educational provision that might address the needs of both employers and older workers. He concludes that we need to recognise people's diversity as they age, to address issues relating to both retention and re-entry, to encourage personal autonomy, and to recognise the diversity of firms and sectors and their employment practices.

Judith Summers, NIACE Research Fellow, discusses the extent to which policies, planning and local services reflect the challenges that older adults pose to the provision of adult learning opportunities. She draws on local case studies of provision in four neighbouring, but very different, areas of North West England, to illustrate the characteristics of good practice and discusses the mismatch between how policies for learning and skills have developed and broader political and social realities and aspirations. She identifies several possible changes that would make a difference in quality provision for older adults and is to be congratulated on including in the analysis oft-neglected groups of older people, those who use day-centres or live in sheltered accommodation or care homes.

Jim Soulsby, NIACE Development Officer, charts and reviews progress in the *Older and Bolder* programme begun by NIACE in 1995. The aims of this initiative have been, broadly, to increase access to educational opportunities for older people and to deepen and improve their experiences. The very strong messages that emerge from the wide-ranging and admirable initiatives undertaken through *Older and Bolder* are the need to ensure quality of provision, to pay attention to the voice of the older learner, and for organisations and agencies concerned with older people's learning to work in a joined-up and collaborative way.

The four papers are a little uneven in scope and structure but make a useful contribution for debate, by identifying the challenges that urgently need to be addressed. Alan Tuckett draws the threads together in what he calls 'a modest

proposal' in relation to older learners. Here he reiterates the role that access to education and training can undoubtedly play in supporting older people to make informed choices about their lives. He identifies the key government departments that have a role to play in enhancing those choices, and backs this up with a strong argument for the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Education to co-ordinate a cross-departmental group to take forward learning strategies for older people.

It is to be hoped that this timely and focused document that will impact on government thinking and act as a catalyst for action in the UK and beyond. It should also stimulate debate among policy makers and practitioners striving to respond to older people's increasingly diverse needs, interests and concerns. Whilst it is also essential reading for employers faced with issues relating to an ageing workforce, it has much to offer academics and researchers concerned with later life learning – and indeed, the burgeoning number of older learners themselves.

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Sandra Evans and Jane Garner (eds), *Talking Over the Years: A Handbook of Dynamic Psychotherapy with Older Adults*, Brunner-Routledge, London, 2004, 290 pp., pbk £17.99, ISBN 1583911448.

This edited book is designed to be a unified volume on the theory and practice of psychodynamic psychotherapy in old age. It has two sections, the first covering theoretical approaches, the second clinical applications. In the first section, chapters address a number of therapeutic approaches derived from the Freudian psychodynamic tradition. Alongside the work of Freud, separate chapters address the work of Jung, Klein, Bowlby, Kohut and Erikson. The final three chapters focus upon group therapy, in-patient work and a concluding chapter on the ethical aspects of psychotherapy. It was especially pleasing to read the thoughtful account of the application of psychodynamic thinking to the in-patient setting in old age psychiatry, a site where numerous conflicts – conscious as much as unconscious – are routinely played out.

The second section contains a greater miscellany of applications which diffuses some of the earlier focus upon the psychodynamic psychotherapeutic approach. Chapters on individual long-term and brief psychotherapy are followed by others on art therapy, music therapy and dance therapy. The final chapters cover dementia, couple work, sexuality and bereavement counselling. No doubt the editors wished to be eclectic, but for me it would have made more sense to elaborate and expound on the clinical applications of psychodynamic psychotherapy rather than to extend the book's coverage. That said, the chapter on dance and movement therapy, by Marion Violets-Gibson, was a delight to read, primarily because of the author's capacity to invest identity in

the people taking part in the group, despite working in what she describes as a secure residential unit for people with severe dementia and challenging behaviours.

So, notwithstanding the diffuse focus in the latter part of the book, taken together these chapters do form a solid and useful overview of psychotherapeutic approaches in settings devoted to the health and social care of older people. The authors provide clear and succinct accounts of the traditional approaches developed by the founding fathers. These are supplemented by many and quite often extended clinical examples that enable the reader to share the various therapeutic journeys. The authors' evident enthusiasm is conveyed, and should interest a broad audience and extend the practice of psychotherapy across the lifespan.

Although chronological age has never served as an obstacle for the practitioners of therapy (there seems to be no mandatory retirement age for psychoanalysts), open access for patients of all ages has not been evident. If this book persuades practitioners, providers and commissioners of mental health services that the systematic exclusion of patients in old age psychiatry services from access to psychotherapy is unacceptable, it will be one positive step in reducing the institutionalised ageism that permeates Britain's National Health Service. It is a pity that in the chapter on ethics, little emphasis is made of this widespread exclusion.

The book has traces of such attitudes, as in the introduction. Rachael Davenhill begins by usefully weaving together Freud's own maturing outlook concerning the nature of psycho-analysis and the conceptualisation of psycho-analytic phenomena with clinical illustrations of therapeutic work and the development of 'thoughtful care'. But towards the end, she describes the extension of 'the observational method', originally involving would be therapists observing babies with their 'caretakers', to 'people who are older'. Such observations are to take place 'in old age settings' and, reading on, these settings turn out to be 'a hospital' and 'a continuing care ward'. Just in case one should feel a little surprised by this, she adds the alternative of 'a large extended family setting'. The elisions between age, inarticulateness and a return to second childhood are unfortunate, to say the least. Proposing the passive observation of another adult, in circumstances few of us would wish to find ourselves, does not suggest 'thoughtful care'.

The too easy equivalence of baby, child and older person is evident in several chapters. The book fails to acknowledge the potential for self-reflection on age and ageing from therapists who are themselves growing old. Surely there is scope to enrich this area of work by guided self-reflection, rather than observing old people as if they were pre-lingual infants. I am sure this point would be accepted by the writers, but it is lost in the writing. Focusing upon 'older adults' as recipients of psychotherapy foregrounds their age as the reason for therapy – 'analyse me, I'm old'. Balancing this with accounts of therapists' own ageing and the insights this brings to theory and practice would be salutary. I remember an interview with Erik Erikson at a great age that was published in *Psychology Today*. When he was asked to apply his stages and ages model to himself, he was quick to point out that he was still in

the generative [mid-life] stage. One cannot help wondering, then, if old age is just for losers.

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Neil Ferguson with Gillian Douglas, Nigel Lowe, Mervyn Murch and Margaret Robinson, *Grandparenting in Divorced Families*, Policy, Bristol, 2004, 176 pp., pbk £18.99, ISBN 1 86134 498 8.

Family studies have increasingly focused on inter-generational relationships, adding to rather than replacing studies that concentrate on marriage and parenting. This 'tri-generational' study is a good example of the shift of emphasis. The researchers interviewed 115 grandparents, parents and children from 44 families, and the responses enabled them to explore various aspects of the impact of divorce on inter-generational relationships, as well as the practices and strategies adopted by the individuals of each generation. Continuities and discontinuities between generations were explored, as were the impacts of the passing of time and the processes of ageing.

The study begins with a concise and critical review of the literature, focusing on British and American studies. The next four chapters deal largely with grandparents' relationships with their children, their activities, issues of discipline and favouritism and whether there exists a 'grandparenting hierarchy' that expresses a 'matrilineal advantage'. Then a transitional chapter examines issues of law and social policy in relation to grandparents in divorced families. The remaining chapters focus on the impact of divorce, exploring questions of communication, taking sides, 'being there' and the experiences of excluded grandparents. The concluding chapter returns to issues of policy and the law in the light of the research findings. There is a clearly written methodological appendix.

This short study contains a considerable wealth of insightful analysis. The analysis is careful and, where necessary, qualified, but often imaginative and capable of stimulating further research. The decision to elaborate four continua (partisan/partisan, enthusiastic/reluctant, adult-centred/child-centred and as parent/as grandparent) proves to be highly suggestive of the diversity of practices and orientations; it works much better than a formal typology. The sense of diversity, and of the complexities which emerge when a tri-generational approach is adopted, contributes to the judicious discussion of policy matters in the conclusion. Here the authors, rightly in my opinion, opt for a lightness of touch, one which favours the less formal and facilitating rather than prescribing.

I shall mention two themes that I found particularly interesting. In addition to the norms of 'non-interference' and 'obligation' (frequently discussed in the literature on grandparenting), the authors propose a third, the 'norm of non-communication'. Divorce is nearly always a distressful transition and the emotional effects ripple far beyond the estranged couple. Members of all three generations prove to be extremely skilled in avoiding the issue head-on and in

knowing when to keep silent or to change the subject. This is not simply, as some might suggest, of being 'in a state of denial', but a recognition of the complexities of multi-generational ties and obligations and a strategy which enables these to continue in some form or another.

The second theme is the idea of 'being there', a phrase which often occurs in grandparents' accounts of their own understandings of their role. It is a usefully flexible idea, one that can describe active and 'hands-on' grand-parenting as well as being ready to help if called upon to do so. This everyday phrase neatly encapsulates the moral balancing act that many grandparents face when confronted with the divorce of their children. It is at this point, and elsewhere, that the authors might have usefully have made connections with the discussion, by Janet Finch, Carol Smart, Jane Ribbens-McCarthy and others, on the everyday moralities of practical family living.

A relatively short book must inevitably skate over some important matters. Although there is, as indicated, a balanced discussion of policy matters, it would have been useful to know more about what the respondents felt about possible policies. There are hints but the issue might have been explored in greater depth. Further, while it would be unfair to expect the authors to have undertaken a comparative study, it would have been helpful to explore how a more compara-tive study would enhance our understanding of grandparenting and divorce. These are, however, minor matters and it is important to acknowledge the book's strengths, as a readable, stimulating and occasionally touching study. It is an important contribution to family studies.

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Charles Grimaldi (ed.), *False Teeth and a Smoking Mermaid*, Age Concern England, London, 2004, 136 pp., hbk £7.99, ISBN 0 86242 391 0.

This compilation is described on the cover as 'famous people reveal(ing) the strange and beautiful truth about themselves and their grandparents'. It is the brainchild of Charles Grimaldi, who found in the back of a wardrobe many 'beautifully illustrated' letters, sent to his mother by her grandfather, known as Kaka. This spurred him to find out what others recalled about their grandparents. Well-known people were approached and the book is the result. It has been produced by *Age Concern England* and the proceeds will go to the charities, *Age Concern* and *Railway Children*. The latter helps children who arrive, and perhaps stay, in danger on railway stations in India, Siberia, Russia, Mexico and Britain.

It is not appropriate to review the book in the conventional sense. The con-tributions vary greatly in their quality and a few are perfunctory. But many convey, with focused detail and great warmth, the significance of their grand-parents to them, in childhood and adult life. Amongst the most effective in con-veying the power of the relationship are those by Prince Charles, Ellen McArthur,

Bob Monkhouse and David Owen. Many others are vignettes, quite brief, recalling with vividness and humour aspects of their grandparents' lives, with the flashes of memory so characteristic of childhood; the older people are internalised through quite specific recollections, how they looked, what they said, and what they did. This is from Rabbi Lionel Blue; 'When I was a kid, my grandmother used to wake me up at night and, together with other elderly ladies, in black shawls, we visited houses where the man was unemployed and used to put small bags of money through their letterbox … (so) the giver and receiver never met'. Angels, he suggests were 'solid, work-worn, old ladies wearing shoes with cuts in them to ease their bunions' (p. 16).

So what does all this add up to? It is the kind of book that is given at Christmas (or similar festivals); to be dipped into casually, with no great effort. It does not need heavy analysis; indeed I would feel myself a killjoy to do so. However, it serves as a pleasant reminder of some essential elements in inter-generational relationships. First, about identity; memories of grandparents and (importantly) stories about them are part of the ways in which we establish ourselves in time and place. How many children are deprived of this dimension of their development? Secondly, the book prompts us to reflect on the demographic changes that mean a death of a grandparent now more often occurs in adulthood than in childhood. We need to know more how this affects memories. Thirdly, of course, the importance of these relationships is well illustrated; it is something about the acceptance of each other that seems so powerful. The love is not oppressive, not too demanding. The generation gap, when reciprocal obligations are not onerous, allows us to take each other as we are.

Yet, we all know that such comfortable, benign recollections cannot be the whole truth. No doubt some of those approached preferred not to respond, or to gloss over unpleasantness or tensions. But we need a little more sour with the sweet to tickle the palate. For example, I heard recently of a three year-old girl who refuses to kiss her grandmother unless she has shaved her whiskers. I guess the contributors would have felt disloyal, even to relate such trivial anecdotes.

I wonder how memories will be recalled in another 50 years? What about all these complicated family structures with various 'step' grandparents, more or (sadly) less in touch with the grandchildren? What about the dual reality of fit, busy 'young' grandparents and the frail, 'old' old grandparents – which perhaps shades into a fourth generation of great-grandparents. How will the children remember them? Will the memories of the adults cloud the earlier ones? Or will the childhood images provide a warm and safe basis that keeps better times alive? The title draws upon a delightful fragment of memory from Katie Price (Jordan): 'My gran was a wonderful beautiful woman. She was employed as a topless mermaid on Hastings pier. She performed behind two sheets of glass which contained water and bubbles. Men would pay to watch her in her fish suit. She was sacked for smoking under water' (p. 86). It seems best to end there.

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Gavin J. Andrews and David R. Phillips (eds), *Ageing and Place: Perspectives, Policy, Practice*, Routledge, London, 2005, 272 pp., hbk £63, ISBN 0 415 32044 5.

In recognition of the growing multi-national, multi-disciplinary interest in ageing and place, this edited book brings together a collection of papers with various perspectives on how older adults influence and are influenced by the geographical environments in which they live. As part of the Routledge Studies in Human Geography, there is an emphasis on geography, although the contributors come from several academic backgrounds and geographic locations. The diversity of perspectives is refreshing; and both reinforces familiar conceptualisations and adds dimensions that challenge and broaden the understanding of place. Indeed, though the title of the book is *Ageing and Place*, it could be argued that the chapters cover a wider array of geographical concepts. Ideas about space, place and the landscapes of old age flow throughout many of the 14 chapters.

The first four chapters introduce various theoretical and methodological approaches employed by researchers interested in the spatial dimensions of ageing. In the first, the editors introduce key players and pieces of work that have contributed to the development of what is referred to as geographical gerontology. They note challenges of disciplinary identity when working within a cross-disciplinary field. In Chapter 3, Pia Kontos notes that gerontology itself is considered to be multi-disciplinary, and illustrates variation in theoretical assumptions about place and methodological approaches employed by gerontologists coming from humanistic, anthropological, and critical cultural backgrounds. Using a medical geography lens, Robin Kearns and Gavin Andrews bring a micro perspective to the discussion, suggesting that meanings associated with places, such as the body, home and institution, are personally constructed through experiences and may influence health. This is nicely complemented by the macro focus of Chapter 4, in which Kevin McCracken and David Phillips discuss demographic transitions in both developed and developing countries, incorporating trends that may influence individual health, ageing and experience of place.

Chapters 5–11 are thematic and include material on the personal, home and community environments in which older people live. Kichu Nair critically explores how physical ageing may influence the use of space, whereas Robyn Findlay and Deirdre McLaughlin focus on psychological adaptations to challenges in the social and physical environment. Helen Bartlett and Nancye Peel review various definitions of healthy ageing, and provide useful examples to illustrate how this might be encouraged within a community setting. Gavin Andrews brings attention to residential homes, indicating some of the significant contributions geographers have made to macro perspectives in this area, and suggesting that further understanding of home and place at the micro level is needed. Janine Wiles contributes a home-care perspective, exploring how provision of care in the home may influence the meaning of place for older adults. Chapters 10 and 11 consider specific settings, with Alun Joseph and Denise Cloutier-Fisher emphasising the restructuring in rural communities in Canada

and New Zealand, and examining the impact on space and place for older adults, while David Phillips and colleagues critically assess some of the challenges of ageing in urban environments.

The final three chapters further explore the dynamics between ageing and place. In Chapter 12, Andrew Blaikie describes the landscapes of ageing and how metaphors may be used to associate chronological ages with specific spaces and places. Bill Bytheway and Julia Johnson effectively contribute to this discussion through the analysis of photographs. They argue that photographs may depict images and messages about age through cataloguing techniques, which identify specific signs of old age and age-related settings. Sheila Peace and colleagues conclude with a discussion of key ecological theories of ageing, and illustrate how place identity is an important component of an older person's self-identity.

This substantial edited collection (of 270 pages) has strengths and limitations. A wide range of methods, concepts and environments is explored, providing an excellent treatise on the salience and influence of place. Yet, some authors briefly skimmed through theories and concepts, and risked over-simplification. There are overlaps in the chapters' topics and concepts, which gives a sense of repetition, although for the most part this was acknowledged by the authors. Overall, the book provides an insightful review of research on ageing and place. With material ranging from theoretical constructs to practical implications, this book is recommended for a wide audience including, but not limited to, service providers, building planners, policy makers, researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and older adults themselves. I highly recommend this book, as it leaves the reader with a greater appreciation for the role of spaces, places and landscapes in the lives of older adults.

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Sandra S. Butler and Lenard W. Kaye (eds), *Gerontological Social Work in Small Towns and Rural Communities*, Haworth Social Work Practice Press, New York, 2003, 360 pp., pbk $39.95, ISBN 0 7890 1693 1.

The vast majority of gerontological practice literature continues to emphasise the challenges, problems, crises, and losses experienced by individuals as they age in urban settings. Although there have been well written and researched books about older people in rural communities and small towns, none has focused on social-work practice concerns, principles and issues. This book fills the void admirably (it has been published simultaneously as the *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, **42**, 1/2 and 3/4). The book has two parts and five sections. In the first of two chapters in Section 1, the editors introduce the reader to concepts of rurality, ageing and social work. They argue that elders in rural communities have unique needs that the social work profession needs to address. Chapter 2 is a demographic overview and profile of the major issues facing rural elders and their families. In Section 2, Cynthia Bisman presents a broad review of social work

practice with rural elders using a bio-psychosocial framework and with an emphasis on assessment. The next three chapters expand on those practice dimensions. Butler and Webster discuss advocacy techniques with older adults in rural environments. In Chapter 5, Li and Blaser review elders' informal support and formal service systems. An innovative approach to reaching the older adult in rural areas is suggested by McKeage and Kaye. They posit that social work practitioners must be familiar with marketing principles if they want to reach those they aim to serve.

The four chapters in Section 3 describe the circumstances of four sub-populations of rural elders. In Chapter 7, Barusch and TenBarage examine the history of the forced assimilation and colonisation of native Americans and the impact of that history on rural indigenous elders. Rasheed and Rasheed review the disparities between African-American and white elders in terms of mental health, service availability, service access, and socio-economic factors. The authors found that the informal care systems of rural communities are part of an African-American helping tradition. Applewhite and Torres discuss rural Latino elders. They advocate culturally competent practice based on a strong knowledge base, culturally relevant skills, and a value orientation that embraces diversity. In the final chapter of Section 3, DePoy and Gilson address the complex issues of people who are disabled, elderly and rural. They suggest that social workers guide their practices by the ideologies of self-determination and legitimacy.

Section 4 has five chapters that cover topics of particular significance for social work with rural elders. Fallkirk asserts that gerontological social workers have the values and skills needed for health promotion in rural settings. In an informative chapter, Dorfman examines the impact of the rural environment on work and retirement and the current employment status and income of older rural workers. Cassity-Caywood and Huber suggest that practitioners focus on a strength-based perspective – on what an older person can do to secure his or her own well being – for rural elders who live in their own homes. Butler and Sharland support this perspective in the following chapter; they say social work practice with rural elders in specialised housing must be client-centred and strength-based to understand the tension between autonomy and security faced by rural elders. The theme of the last chapter in this section is ethical practice issues in rural communities. Healy says that social workers have a responsibility to elders, families, communities, agencies, and society that may often conflict.

The final Section deals with future training and policy recommendations for rural gerontological social workers. Kropf discusses the curriculum necessary to prepare students to work with older adults in rural areas. Rathbone-McCuan and Bane encourage rural gerontological social workers to engage actively in advocacy to improve mental health services. Finally, Carbonell and Polivka discuss how the United States in general, and the ageing network in particular, can become more responsive to the needs and preferences of older people and their families. The Appendix offers a comprehensive set of additional sources for more information on social work with older adults in rural settings. This book is an important resource for students entering the human service field as well as for researchers, practitioners, programme planners and policy makers. It informs the reader about the unique and diverse characteristics and needs of elderly people in

rural areas. The chapters are well written and chock full of pertinent information for social workers and researchers alike.

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> Liz Forbat, *Talking about Care: Two Sides to the Story*, Policy Press, Bristol, Avon, 2005, 211 pp., hbk £36.00, ISBN 1861346212.

Talking about Care is a study of 'care talk' in informal and family care relationships from a broadly social constructionist perspective. Forbat draws upon in-depth semi-structured, life history interviews with six 'care dyads' (both carers and carees are interviewed separately) in the United Kingdom, and therefore presents 'two sides' of the care story. The participants were two mother and daughter pairs, a husband and wife, a father and daughter, a pair of homosexual friends, and a brother and sister. Their ages ranged from 22 to 92 years. Forbat emphasises the need to 'attend to both sides of a care relationship' (p. 25), in part because recent research and government policy have tended to present only the carer's perspective. The topics discussed include: identity, stress, abuse, difficulties, autonomy and dependency, and time and space.

Forbat's contribution can be divided into three substantial and overlapping parts. First, she presents a detailed discourse analysis of talk about care. As a study of the 'taken-for-granted language of care' (p. 15), there is a focus on how care relationships are 'put into words and discoursed into being' (p. 12). The interest is with how care participants 'construct their relationship and how difficulties are experienced and expressed' (p. 171). Forbat crucially points out that discursive psychology 'takes talk itself to be the subject of interest, and does not assume that this will give access to people's inner beliefs, thoughts or personality' (p. 51). For example, it is shown how care identities are 'dynamically and continually created within dialogue' (p. 35). As a discourse scholar, Forbat stresses that 'talk about care' is not merely reflective of the realities of care relationships, but constitutive of what it means to care and be cared for.

The second contribution is a critical engagement with care binaries and ideology. Forbat investigates – and seeks to challenge and go beyond – dichotomies such as care/abuse and carer/caree. She argues that such binaries are unsustainable in actual practice and that the 'rigid use of dichotomised labels is unhelpful if we are to develop a more finely tuned understanding of care relationships' (p. 3). Forbat also presents an analysis of power and ideology in care relationships and exposes 'the work that is accomplished in fostering common-sense assumptions of what care is or should be' (p. 65). For example, she proposes that 'the ideological work of a normative family care repertoire is its role in providing family members with a resource with which to build a case for what support members of the family *should* be offering each other. Importantly, too, it also operates ideologically in supporting government drives that families in the community *should* provide care' (p. 81; emphasis in original). Much of the book comprises an analysis of 'ideological settlement' in care relationships, that

is the ways in which care comes to be constructed, naturalised, defended and justified.

Thirdly, and most originally, Forbat provides resources for developing critical reflexivity in professional practice in relation to care. She argues that practitioners should pay close attention to the ways in which carers and carees construct their relationships and difficulties, through analysing the particular language and rhetorical devices they use. Practitioners are almost encouraged to develop an 'analytic ear' so that they can hear (and see) the kinds of things that discourse analysts might notice about care relationships. Forbat suggests that practitioners may encourage those in care relationships to take up new and more positive positions and understandings of care. This move from theory to practice is slightly tenuous, however, and might have been developed further. It remains to be seen whether insights from discursive psychology would help or hinder professional practitioners in health and social care, given that relativist discursive psychology is 'quintessentially academic', designed primarily to describe rather than change social practices (Parker 2003; Willig 1999).

Nevertheless, *Talking about Care* makes an important contribution to social constructionist research into care relationships. It is a careful and comprehensive study, comprising a sensitive and disciplined discourse analysis of care talk, which leads step by step to practical implications and recommendations for professional practice and policy. Indeed, it is a model of biographical discursive psychology and an excellent illustration of what a discursive approach can offer to the study and practice of informal and family care. Forbat provides a thorough discussion of the analytic procedure and approach adopted, which will be an important aid for researchers and practitioners working – or wanting to work – with a discursively informed social constructionist stance towards care. This book should be required reading for practitioners, trainees, advanced level students, academics and researchers within health and social care and related disciplines, as well as those seeking to develop critical reflexivity in the theory and practice of care.

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Eric Midwinter, *500 Beacons: The U3A Story*, Third Age Press, London, 2004, 318 pp., £12.50 pbk, ISBN 1 898576 815.

This book tells an impressive story, of the genesis, gestation and maturation of a popular movement, the University of the Third Age (U3A). It is told by one of the three principal shapers of the original proposition, and its single most powerful

voice. At the same time, it is a chronicle of dozens of locally-taken decisions, and of the creativity and leadership of individuals who decided to do the work to ensure the movement took root in Peterborough, Sheffield, Stevenage or Sarum. Five hundred groups, serving more than one-third of a million learners is an awful lot of local democracy, and properly a reason for the celebration Eric Midwinter's book offers.

It is a chronological account that combines analysis of the core propositions that people have huge creativity and the capacity to learn from one another in those years beyond full-time work, with an argument that self-organised movements, grounded in local practice, have a hardiness that makes them secure from the fickle winds of public funding.

As a celebration of the spread of an idea and cultural practice, it does occasionally read like the extension of Alexander's empire across central Asia – another chapter, another county conquered. This inevitably focuses the drama on the national office's concerns to bring the good news to fresh pastures at the expense of nurturing and developing any U3A. *500 Beacons* leaves us in no doubt that the energies of the local leadership are critical in securing the successful establishment of a local U3A. But what happens when a local group outgrows the vision of its initial enthusiasts? How is conflict managed? What place does curriculum development play? How do different groups ensure the reasonable quality of the offer? All these questions are addressed, but within the framework of the growth and evolution of the national movement. Yet Eric Midwinter gives enough sense of the diversity of local decisions and practices, and enough of the drama in the development of the national movement, to illuminate the complex politics of voluntary and co-operative associational life for third age adults at the end of the 20th century.

The book is a testament to the quality of thinking and imagination brought to the idea by those inspiring social entrepreneurs, Michael Young and Peter Laslett, who, with Eric Midwinter, shaped the proposal to establish a University of the Third Age in the UK, on different lines from but with comparable aspirations with the French movement. In France, the Universités de Troisieme Age were at great academic institutions. In England, by contrast, the strongest groups were distant from the great centres of learning. The French movement saw learning coming from above, the English from below. U3A was born from Peter Laslett's anger at the waste of talent of millions of older people, and at the paucity of education available for them. It was born, too, of the fecundity of Michael Young's imagining of new forms of association, fit for people with greater agency and control over their lives. And as this story demonstrates, it succeeded because of Eric Midwinter's indefatigable energy and skill in popular educational organisation.

Great sages can, of course, get in the way. But as *500 Beacons* shows, all three of the movement's founders understood both the importance of commitment to make the idea succeed, and the vital importance of stepping back to allow others' energies to take over. The role of national organisers, and of successive national chairs, demonstrates U3A's success in drawing on different skills at key stages. The most riveting sections of the story address the secession of the founding branch in Cambridge, the tussles for a settlement between 'federal

and state' rights in the respective roles of the national office and local branches, the agonies entered into in debates on whether to accept public funding, the challenge to find the money for staff, the development of a national communication network, and the modernisation of the finances and of the constitution. This is the stuff of democratic action.

I was struck by how late in its development the movement organised curriculum networks to support tutors and groups working on common themes, and by the focus on the development of geographical spread, rather than on how best to enhance the experience of learning. Eric Midwinter addresses another concern, sometimes expressed: that the U3A movement reaches middle class participants more easily than those with less prior education. So it does, in many places, like most other providers in their service of third age learners. What is certain, though, is that at a time when the third age cohort is growing and public funding for learning for cultural enrichment is once again under pressure, the U3A is a beacon for self-organisation and active citizenship. It is a model worth emulating and lighting a flare for.

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Azrini Wahidin, *Older Women in the Criminal Justice System: Running out of Time*, Jessica Kingsley, London, 2004, 240 pp., pbk £19.95, ISBN 1 84310 170 X.

Although the needs of older people in the criminal justice system have been gaining recognition for several years, they are still some way from receiving enough attention or from being a topic of common discussion for either professionals or the general public. In particular, the situation relating to older women prisoners has been neglected. Azrini Wahidin was one of the first people in this country to try to do something about this situation and to publish on the issue. Initially, as part of her doctoral studies, she conducted interviews with older women in several British prisons. More recently she has been involved as a consultant with the media, including television. Her long-term commitment to the issue has been apparent through many publications.

This book is a final report of a needs assessment undertaken by the author, developed from her doctoral research. It details the findings and makes a number of recommendations concerning practice in this area. Whilst there has been some anecdotal information about what is generally referred to as the 'growing problem of older people in prison', the voices of the individuals themselves have rarely been heard. By contrast, this book is rich in extracts from the women interviewed as part of the study and is therefore likely to be of interest to those people who are concerned about the imprisonment of older people and the development of appropriate responses.

Wahidin's research deployed a multi-faceted approach to identify the needs of older women prisoners. Essential quantitative data was collected, together with 35

semi-structured interviews in four women's prisons, including an open prison and a maximum-secure unit. This reflects the range of provision for women prisoners in the UK and also the different types of prisoners, from older first-time to long-term prisoners, including those serving life sentences who are ageing in prison. The interviewees participated voluntarily in the research.

The introduction to the book considers the background to the study, including issues of access and other ethical matters. The first substantive chapter provides a brief introduction to Foucault, whose work the study drew on. This includes a useful exploration of how modern forms of knowledge can result in particular types of subjectivity. An examination follows of Foucauldian approaches to crime, discipline and punishment, which is especially useful in considering the development of forms of punishment. This is developed into a thorough exploration of how gender affects punishment, so that punishment itself becomes gendered, a useful preliminary chapter prior to the main emphasis of the book. The following chapter focuses on a detailed examination of the lives of older women in prison. This encompasses initial reactions to the sentence and imprisonment and to existence and daily survival for the women. There is also a discussion of prison time and the marginalisation of older women who are isolated and excluded by the lack of appropriate facilities.

Later chapters present different aspects of the findings, as on the concept of time and the use of time in prisons, on health care and the costs of imprisonment, and on the fact that prison facilities are generally premised and structured around the needs of younger, able-bodied prisoners, particularly men. Denial of the roles and responsibilities which the women previously had and the diminution of identity through depersonalisation and discipline are also well covered. The chapters which detail the interviewees' narratives are important if not easy reading, for the women's stories are told through lengthy excerpts from the transcripts and give immediacy to the accounts. The women talk about their experiences, their relationships, and their perceptions about their situations. They tell us what they need, emotionally, psychologically and physically, and what it is like to grow older or to be old in the prison system. The disruption to and severance of identity and lifecourses and the neglect of this group of women is an important and powerful message from the research.

The final chapter provides an evaluation of the case study as a research method and examines the implications of the findings. Because of the lack of facilities within prisons, older people, in particular women, find themselves running out of time in an ageist and sexist system. Problems in providing appropriate resources are explored, and recommendations for alternatives are usefully made. This book collects the views of older women involved in the prison system to try to provide some coherence and focus on a much-neglected and previously under-researched area. Although the study focused on women, much of the discussion applies to older prisoners. Readers will gain some insight from the stories presented, but more importantly are also likely to discover common themes concerning the dynamics of the criminal justice system and the needs of older women within such settings. This is a thought-provoking and uncomfortable book and not for the faint-hearted. It should be a useful resource for those working in the criminal justice system (courts, probation and prison services), for criminologists and

gerontologists. Students, researchers and practitioners will find it instructive and useful and a basis from which to develop much-needed improvements in practice in this area.

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Peter Lloyd-Sherlock (ed.), *Living Longer: Ageing, Development and Social Protection*, Zed Books, Cambridge, 2004, 308 pp., hbk £55.00, ISBN 1 84277 356 9, pbk £19.95, ISBN 1 84277 357 7.

This edited book was produced following the *United Nations* Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, and is based on the contribution of the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) to that Assembly. Part 1 considers 'Development trajectories, social change and well being in later life', Part 2 examines 'Formal social protection and older people', and Part 3 'Older people and the care economy'. In each part, the chapters focus on particular countries (Brazil, Ukraine, Japan, Mexico, Thailand, Ghana and China). There are two comparative studies, including Barrientos's comparison of pension schemes in Chile, Singapore, Brazil and South Africa, and Redondo's of social health insurance in Argentina and the USA. The themes covered in each part are introduced and explained, providing helpful conceptual linkages.

Lloyd-Sherlock's introduction tackles commonly held misconceptions about ageing and development, and establishes some important generalisations: that older people are less likely to be engaged in paid employment; that they are more likely to be exposed to age-related risks, including disease; and that they are more likely to be exposed to stereotypical and prejudiced thinking about old age. An important perspective in this book, however, is that the circumstances of older people's lives cannot be divorced from those of other age groups and that population ageing is an issue for all. The authors examine both the future consequences of population ageing on the development of individual countries and the impact of development on the wellbeing of elders. A number of the authors point out the specificity of national contexts, which limits the possibilities for drawing general conclusions.

For example, Camarano's study of Brazil demonstrates that the current cohort of older people is relatively advantaged, having had more stable employment and consequently better social security entitlements than younger people. For many households, the social security income of older members has become a vital contribution to family welfare. In China, the social security system has consistently covered only parts of the population and there are considerable regional variations. Peng and Phillips argue that the size of the population of China and the extraordinary scale and pace of economic and social change sets it apart from other Asia Pacific countries. The authors argue that meeting the needs of older people 20 years from now, when population ageing reaches its peak, will be a very serious policy challenge.

In Part 2, Barrientos argues the importance of pensions, not only as a means of securing older people's wellbeing but also as an instrument of wider social protection and a contribution to economic development. Ogawa discusses the implications of the ageing population of Japan for the intergenerational contract, in the context of policy changes in that country. McIntyre considers health policy in Africa, with a focus on the equity implications for older people of recent changes such as the increased use of private sources of finance for health services and increases in fees for healthcare, which have had a seriously adverse impact on older people.

Part 3 examines the impact of informal caring on both care givers and care receivers in very different settings – Ghana, Mexico and Thailand. Aboderin's research in Ghana concludes that socio-economic change has undermined support for older people. By contrast, Thailand's greater prosperity, better-developed public health and health insurance systems have facilitated support for families caring for individuals with HIV, including many older parents and grandparents. In Mexico, population ageing is a relatively recent phenomenon but here the important challenge is how to sustain adequate levels of care for older relatives in the context of poorly developed formal social protection. Part 3 concludes with a discussion by Martha Nussbaum of her 'capabilities' approach, which she proposes as an alternative to the idea of a 'social contract'. It is a thoroughly stimulating read, whether or not you agree with her line of argument. This is a much-needed contribution to debates on ageing populations. As Lloyd-Sherlock points out, knowledge about ageing and development is still lacking. In my view, however, one of the strongest aspects of this book is that cross-cutting themes and issues are highlighted, contrasted and compared in the different national contexts. This makes it a useful resource for a wide range of academics interested in ageing and social protection, not only for those with a particular interest in development studies.

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Mary Godfrey and Tracy Denby, *Depression and Older People: Towards Securing Well-being in Later Life*, Policy Press, Bristol, Avon, 2004, 54 pp., pbk £14.99, ISBN 1 86134 642 5.

As the world becomes increasingly aware of the challenges posed by dementia, there is the possibility that it is mistakenly seen as the entirety of mental disorder in later life. Depression is the most common mental disorder in later life with at least twice the number of people affected compared with dementia. This study, funded by *Help the Aged*, is therefore to be welcomed, with its clear focus on improving understanding of the health and social care challenges of depression in later life. The publication is a concise summary of the available literature on depression in older people; it begins with prevalence, incidence and aetiology and goes on to consider treatment, service delivery and the possibility of prevention. It is commendable that the authors have managed to do this so concisely within the

confines of 54 A4 pages with large type. This makes it accessible on a number of levels. The publication is clearly set out and the avoidance of over-technical language make it potentially accessible to a wide range of older people as well as to those engaged in study of the health of older people and those providing health and social care.

The authors are also successful in identifying those areas where research is lacking. These include explorations of the experiences of people with depression themselves. Here, there is a clear need for good qualitative studies to understand lay/public conceptualisations of depression in later life, help seeking, what treatments would or would not be acceptable, and why. Equally, the lack of an effective or coherent strategy and service delivery model to identify and treat people with depression is identified. As in any brief review, there will be areas where there has not been sufficient space to explore in the detail that some would want. It would have been useful, for example, to have considered explicitly the particular issues presented by depression in black and other minority ethnic groups: despite the existence of a few published studies, we need more research in this area. Equally, in the discussion of prevention, the focus is on quality issues. It would have been useful to have considered the possibilities for prevention afforded by biological, psychological and social treatments and the prevention of handicap in individuals and in specific environments. These are, however, only minor quibbles about a text that is remarkably comprehensive.

The report concludes with a reiteration of the two findings that summarise the challenges to be faced, that depression in older adults is common and pervasive, and that only 15 per cent of those with the disorder receive anything in the way of active treatment. Given the profound negative impacts of depression and the simplicity of intervention, it is scandalous that this continues. This is a well-researched, well-written and accessible text for those wishing to start to consider the complexities of depression in older people. Understanding the nature of the challenges and some of the possible approaches to addressing them is a necessary first step to solving them.

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