

## Reviews

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Robert T. Woods, *Handbook of the Clinical Psychology of Ageing*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 1996, 676 pp. £85 hbk., ISBN 0 471 96136 1.

This book provides excellent coverage of a diverse area of clinical psychology. The editor is to be congratulated for providing such a tightly integrated resource. This edited book has 34 contributors drawn mainly from the UK, although there are contributions from experts in other parts of Europe and the USA. Each contributor provides extensive references for their chapters and, throughout, the writing style of the authors is high in quality. There are five main sections in the book: *The Psychology of Ageing*, *Psychological Disorders in Older People*, *The Clinical Context*, *Assessment of the Older Person*, and *Treatment Approaches*. In addition there is an introductory chapter co-authored by the editor that reviews professional aspects of working as a clinical psychologist with older adults. The stated target audiences for the book are psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health nurses, therapists and counsellors. The book serves ideally as a background text for post graduate courses in clinical psychology and is an outstanding resource in this respect. However, it is not limited to this use only, as its comprehensive coverage is at a sufficient depth to serve as an essential resource to any clinicians working with older adults.

The first section of the book is broad in its scope and the first four chapters flow neatly into one another, providing the reader with an understanding of the difficulties in determining the true nature of intellectual changes across normal ageing. Over the course of these chapters the reader is introduced to a neat critical evaluation of the general slowing hypothesis of normal ageing. The second half of Section One develops a perspective away from intellectual changes in ageing and introduces wider issues such as personality, health, social, interpersonal and sexual functioning in later life. Except for the chapter on bereavement by McKiernan, the chapters in Section One are not necessarily part of a clinical psychology perspective on ageing. Nonetheless all carry strong relevance for clinicians working with older adults.

Section Two focuses on psychological disorders in older people. The chapter by Woods sets the scene for this section of the book by briefly highlighting the prevalence and range of mental health problems in late life. The next two chapters take an in-depth neuropsychological approach to dementia and provide extremely detailed information that is useful in keeping clinical psychologists up to date with this fast developing area of research knowledge. The chapter that follows by Kitwood sets out an interesting position (the social psychology of dementia) from which to view dementia. The remaining two chapters in this section focus on stroke and sleep difficulties and, while they

provide good overviews of the current state of knowledge, they do not appear to fit so neatly within this section.

Section Three looks at the clinical context by including chapters on community care and family care. The chapter on family caregiving by Zarit and Edwards is a model of clarity and it impressively reviews a large amount of research evidence. Developments in institutional care follow, focusing on attempts to provide settings that maximise quality of life and independence. From this description of alternative models of care, the chapter broadens out to discuss other factors pertinent to the institutional system. The introduction of a chapter on social role valorisation is a useful way to set up alternative ways of thinking about caregiving and need. The chapter on elder abuse and neglect completes the comprehensive review of the clinical context.

Section Four on assessment of the older person provides good overall coverage of this area of working with older adults. Davies' chapter in particular provides a comprehensive review of the process and content of neuropsychological assessment.

Section Five provides a broad perspective on treatment approaches such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, family therapy, psychodynamic therapy. This section of the book provides an up-to-date review of treatments for mental health problems in late life. This last section is perhaps the most impressive of the whole book and covers a broad range of treatments. For those training in applying clinical psychology treatments with older adults, this section provides an excellent review of the main issues. Each chapter is written by acknowledged experts who present their approaches in a scholarly manner. The text becomes a real handbook at this point, indispensable to those working with older adults with a range of difficulties and needs.

There are a few minor omissions that could be rectified by the inclusion of chapters devoted to suicide and cross-cultural perspectives on ageing. Overall, however, I do not hesitate to strongly recommend this text to anyone working with older adults.

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Harold Brenner and Emer Shelley, *Adding Years to Life, Life to Years... a Health Promotion Strategy for Older People*, Report No. 50, National Council on Ageing and Older People, Dublin, 1998, 88 pp, £5.00, ISBN 1 900378 08 6.

This comprehensive report from the National Council on Ageing and Older People, in association with the Department of Health and Children, is the first phase of a three-stranded initiative to develop a Healthy Ageing Programme for Ireland. The aim of the programme is to promote the health and independence of older people. The three phases described briefly in the first chapter are:

- a strategy for the promotion of the health of older people in Ireland [this review]
- the development of an information and support network for the health, welfare and autonomy of older people
- the encouragement of the evaluation of new or existing initiatives designed to promote the health and well-being of older people.

*Adding Years to Life, Life to Years* sets out a clear and wide-ranging framework which sets the scene for the second and third phases. Chapter One gives the background and rationale behind the development of the strategy, placing it within a national, European and international context. It also argues the case for health promotion and older people with reference to some research-based evidence.

The second chapter is a comprehensive and detailed report of the health status of older people in Ireland. It begins with a demography which includes the interesting fact that the number of people over 65 in Ireland as a proportion of the population has remained the same since 1971, contrasting sharply with other western countries. It leads on to discuss mortality and morbidity statistics in relation to a range of illnesses, some of which are broken down into gender differences, and others are compared to EU countries. The chapter concludes with a very useful examination of the risk factors associated with lifestyle and the physical and social environment. The acknowledgement of the physical and socio-economic factors which affect health are particularly welcome as a recognition that health is not totally the responsibility of the individual but is influenced by societal factors. This has been echoed in the UK government's new green paper *Our Healthier Nation* (1998) and indicates a significant step forward in preventive health policies.

Chapter Three lays out the policy and action of the health promotion strategy which is underpinned by the five key areas identified in the World Health Organisation's Ottawa Charter (1986) and forms the main body of the report. It is usefully broken down into specific disorders, life style and the physical and social environment, with all the sections having goals and recommended action plans. The strength of this section is that the actions are grounded in older people's experience, and it does not read like a health promotion initiative for any group within the population. The actions of particular note include a discussion on sexuality, income and carers. I was also pleased to see the inclusion of attitudes to ageing as part of a health promotion strategy, as well as intergenerational aspects.

The fourth and final chapter, whilst shorter in length, begins to examine what is required for the success of the strategy. It discusses the roles of all the partners involved, as well as funding, technical support and training. Disappointingly, it only includes three lines on the involvement of older people themselves, which should have warranted further attention. The last two pages are devoted to the importance of evaluating the programmes, especially because health promotion with older people has previously been an unrecognised and undervalued activity. The following appears at the end of the chapter:

Research and evaluation should be built in to health promotion policy and programmes to preserve the dynamic relationship between them. Ideally, policy development and programme planning are based on data, and each step of the implementation process is structured, informed, driven and evaluated by high quality and timely research. (p. 81)

It would be difficult to argue with this statement and even more pleasing to see it implemented by all those involved in health promotion.

I found this report easy to follow with a logical and clear layout. The chapters are colour coded for quick reference and divided by headings, again facilitating easy access into the text. I liked the challenge of an holistic approach to the topic and the non-patronising way that the needs of older people were highlighted. It was encouraging to see reference to the importance of a lifecourse perspective to health promotion in later life; it would be interesting to see this developed in the future. I felt this was a strategy that was both forward thinking and achievable, given the necessary commitment from everyone involved. The part that older people themselves could play in their own health maintenance needed more attention, but I would have no hesitation in recommending this report to those policy makers and service providers with an interest in promoting a healthier old age.

## References

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National Pensioners Convention, 1998. *Pensions Not Poor Relief*, London, NPC, 40 pages, £1 from NPC Research Committee, 8, Milner Place, London N1 1TN. No ISBN.

This 'Pensioners Green Paper' sets out the National Pensioners Convention submission to the UK government's Pensions Review. It includes sections on the basic state pension, second pensions, the needs of older pensioners, the financing of national insurance and an assessment of the proposed Stakeholder Pensions. The submissions based on Tony Lynes's research for the NPC, build a compelling case for substantially improving state pensions, rounded off with a helpful summary of recommendations.

The booklet is a refreshing read in view of the widespread, and insufficiently questioned, assumption in the UK that state pension provision has had its heyday, and that SERPS (State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme) must be replaced for those lacking occupational pension cover by individualised private provision. This scenario, in which gender and class inequality of

pension income would increase still further, is challenged by the authors' evidence as to the feasibility of improving state pensions. A nation accustomed to hearing that 'Britain plc' regrets it cannot pay its older people better pensions, might be surprised to learn that the Treasury grant to the NI (National Insurance) Fund, has been reduced each year since 1993/4. It is expected to disappear entirely this April, leaving the £900 million voted by Parliament for the NI Fund in 1998/9 unspent. And to learn that the recent 0.2% cut in the employers' NI contribution will cost the NI Fund £590 million in 1998/9; and that an uprating of the basic pension in April 1998 in line with average earnings would have cost much less than these amounts – an affordable £200 million for the year.

The first section of the book is concerned with the basic pension. Restoring the link between the basic pension and national wages is the minimum required if Labour's 1996 commitment 'to ensure that all pensioners... share fairly in the increasing prosperity of the nation' is to be fulfilled. This could be achieved in 1999, it is estimated, by increasing the combined employer and employee NI contribution rate (18.25% of earnings in 1996) to 18.32%, without the need for any Treasury grant. In order to restore the loss in value of the basic pension since 1980 (£22 per week for a single pensioner), several ways of meeting the cost are suggested; raising or abolishing the Upper Earnings Limit on employee NI contributions, restoring the Treasury contribution to the NI Fund, placing a levy on the profits of commercial pension providers, and reducing tax reliefs and rebates on personal pensions. Means-testing the basic pension is firmly rejected as a way of funding a higher level of pension.

The chapter on the merits of SERPS – portability, defined benefits and, most important, protection of those temporarily excluded from paid work – is particularly welcome, given the Labour Party's dismissal of any improvements to the scheme and the lack of any explanation for this. Restoring SERPS to its original form would admittedly incur costs which would emerge over the next 50 years; an increase in NI contributions, combined with raising the Upper Earnings Limit, would be required. In terms of value for money, however, it is by no means clear that the proposed Stakeholder Pensions, which it is likely the Labour government will promote as an alternative to SERPS, would be better.

Stakeholder Pensions (SPs) are assessed in comparison with SERPS, by examining proposals from potential providers (most of whom sold personal pensions to an unsuspecting public in the 1980s). The estimated contributions and returns, levels of charges and arrangements for annuity purchase, are analysed. This reveals that, despite SPs having been hyped as avoiding the well-known drawbacks of personal pensions, charges are likely to absorb up to a quarter of contributions. The authors conclude that 'SERPS, improved in the ways we have proposed, providing defined, fully portable and fully inflation-proof benefits, will be the best source of second pensions for those not covered by good occupational pension schemes' (p. 37), while SPs and other savings schemes may have a role as a voluntary third tier.

A brief but important section emphasises the legal and moral entitlement to benefits which is established through social insurance contributions; for this

reason, increased contributions to improve state pensions would be perceived as fair, in contrast to taxation where no specific rights to benefits are established.

As Jack Jones points out in his Foreword, it is time governments listened to pensioners. In this book they will find a succinct, well-reasoned case to consider.

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Nada Stropnik (ed), *Social and Economic Aspects of Ageing Societies: an Important Social Development Issue*. Proceedings of the 5th biannual European IUCISD Conference. Ljubljana, Slovenia, 25–28 September 1997. Institute for Economic Research. Ljubljana. 1997. 279 pp. No price. ISBN 961 904131 3.

This book presents the papers given to an Inter-University Conference on the social and economic issues associated with population ageing. Twenty-one papers are presented grouped under five headings – demographic aspects of population ageing; sociological aspects of population ageing; social work and the aged; economic consequences of population ageing; and pension system reforms. The papers are presented from a wide range of countries, but with the largest number from the host nation, Slovenia. The other countries represented are Germany, Italy, Finland, Russia, Austria, Macedonia, Latvia and Croatia. Like most conference proceedings, this book is a mixture of interests and standards. It ranges from the excellent overview and challenging reformulation, to the pedestrian. The clarity and precision of the English is similarly variable.

The best sections of the book give helpful Europe-wide comparative perspectives, including less frequently considered views from the smaller and newer European states. For example, Christopher Prinz's opening paper on 'Population ageing: a three-level perspective' is a useful overview of population ageing from a demographer using primarily Austrian data to illustrate global and continent-wide trends. Piotr Salustowicz's contribution is a very interesting analysis of sources of social solidarity which link older people into society, using both sociological and philosophical sources to question the post-modern presumptions of a fragmenting society.

The book would also be of use to those specialising in the transformations of East Europe in the post-communist era. Although no individual paper within it stands out, the collection of papers in the last section of the book on pension system reforms provides a useful resource for studying such issues. They demonstrate the problems and issues in introducing market-based reforms and pensions systems into previous state socialist societies under conditions of economic retrenchment.

This book is not designed to be a good read for the generalist, and would not add much to student reading lists. It is, however, a good advertisement for the standards of Slovene scholarship and it has its place as a library resource for those interested in the transformation of Eastern Europe. It provides a

variety of perspectives on the social welfare and economic issues of population ageing, from smaller and newer countries of Europe.

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Caroline Lindsay Nash, *Consider the Alternatives: Healthy Strategies for Later Life*, Third Age Press Ltd, London, 1998, 160 pp. pbk £10.00, ISBN 1 898576 11 4.

This is an excellent book. It is clear, concise and packed with useful information. It is worthy of being on the bookshelf of anyone who is interested in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, whatever their age.

In her introduction, Caroline Nash says that it is her intention to review the plethora of alternative strategies to healthy living which are currently available and purported to complement allopathic medicine. In my view, she has done much more than *review* what is available, she has also presented her readers with a mine of additional information.

Each chapter is devoted to a particular set of alternative, or complementary, strategies. A succinct and clear description of each technique is presented, together with its possible outcome. In addition, the author offers her readers the opportunity to 'read more about it', by presenting them with other sources from which more detailed information may be obtained. She acquaints her readers with a range of routes available for finding appropriate practitioners, and clear guidelines are presented regarding what to look out for in terms of qualifications, experience, setting, fees etc., before making a final commitment and selecting a suitable practitioner. The author proffers a relevant cautionary note vis-a-vis possible malpractitioners and warns that those who claim to be qualified in everything, or who promise a 'quick cure', are *always* dubious and should be avoided.

I particularly like the way that the author presents her readers with just the right amount of detail about each of the strategies she reviews. She manages to deliver the key elements in a manner which whets the appetite without either over- or under-facing her readers.

The book is one which can be read from cover to cover or used as a means of looking up details of a specific therapy of interest. Either way, the reader will be provided with enough information to set them on their way to making an informed choice about their next step.

What I particularly appreciate about this book is the balanced and unbiased manner in which it has been written. It is evident throughout that the author respects her readers and fully believes in their integrity. She has made a thorough exploration of the strategies under review and makes no attempt to coerce her readers into believing one way or the other. Her aim is to inform. She acknowledges the excellence, when appropriate, of orthodox medicine and emphasises the desirability of a *complementary* relationship between allopathic and alternative strategies. She is careful to point out the importance of people taking responsibility for themselves and of their learning as much as is possible about all forms of healing *before* making choices.

This is a positive, reader-friendly book. It is cleverly illustrated, clearly structured and most informative. I believe all who are involved in the helping professions could make good use of it. It could be used to enable someone who may be considering alternative health-care strategies to make an informed choice. I recommend it.

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Joanna Bornat, Julia Johnson, Charmaine Pereira, David Pilgrim and Fiona Williams (eds), *Community Care: a Reader, 2nd Edition*, Macmillan in association with The Open University, Basingstoke, 1997, 351 pp. £13.99 hbk ISBN 0 333 69846 0, pbk ISBN 0 333 69847 9.

This is the second edition of a well-established text. It is a substantial volume, bringing together a wide range of perspectives on community care from a total of forty different contributors. It is the set text for the Open University course *K259: Community Care*, but has a wider relevance for students and practitioners in health and social care disciplines, and for anyone requiring a broad overview of key issues in community care policy.

The five editors have sub-divided their collection into four parts, to reflect four central themes in community care: *community, care, policy and practice*. The contributions on each theme are introduced by one of the editors, and preceded by an anthology of relevant shorter extracts from literature, personal accounts, press articles and other sources.

*Community* sets out to discover what, or who, is the community in community care, drawing on differing contributions to explore notions of kin relationships, social networks, neighbouring and other mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that delineate community identity. *Care* brings together a range of perspectives on the processes and experience of caring, highlighting the dilemmas and conflicts of interest that can arise. *Policy* identifies some of the key influences on the development of community care policy, encompassing both the value base and the economic and professional ideologies that have combined, in sometimes uneasy coalition, to drive forward policy formulation and implementation. *Practice* attempts to illustrate some of the key issues in the provision of care and support, and to show how ways forward through the challenges have been found.

Some of the contributions have been written specifically for this volume; others are re-printed from elsewhere as 'classics' that have been highly influential. Both approaches are justified, although in the main the former achieve greater relevance and are more focused on current concerns. The *Practice* section suffers from an imbalance due to the predominance there of re-printed material. Inevitably in a large volume of collected works some contributions stand out as highlights. Joanna Bornat and Fiona Williams offer especially clear and accessible explorations of the concept of community, both strong on the politics of definition. Yasmin Gunaratnam and Hilary Graham, in their contributions on care, give lucid accounts of the complexity



and diversity brought to caring by the social divisions of race, class and gender, and Clare Ungerson stimulates debate on the notion of users' rights, making important links with legal provisions. Len Doyal helpfully re-visits human need theory as the moral foundation of policy. Hilary Brown and Jan Walmsley offer a critique of the value base underpinning policy development, and Lesley Hoyes and Robin Means give an accessible overview of the concept of quasi-markets.

Of the four sections, *Community* and *Policy* have the strongest identity, and provide important historical commentary that will continue to provide valuable context for students' and practitioners' understanding of newly developing directions in policy implementation. The *Practice* section is less well differentiated and, whilst containing valuable individual contributions, as a whole misses the opportunity to convey the complexity, tensions and dilemmas of contemporary practice.

An anthology of this size is bound to bring breadth and diversity. A major strength here is the flexibility to include contributions from writers bringing differing, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives. This is particularly apparent in the section on *Care*, in the juxtaposition of Gillian Dalley's and Jenny Morris's contributions. Throughout, readers are given the opportunity to access original material that may not otherwise be sought out, and to judge its impact for themselves. The contributions are, for the most part, 'bite-sized', and convey key ideas with clarity. Some authors succeed, even in tight word length, in making issues of considerable complexity accessible.

By contrast to these strengths, a large edited volume containing many short contributions will perhaps inevitably convey a sense of greater breadth than depth, and can at times appear disjointed. Editorial intervention can assist integration, but here, having established the four broad themes, the editors have a light touch, and readers must bring their own integrating understanding to the vast array of material.

In summary, the volume is a diverse and rich resource, in which a wide audience will find useful and accessible material to assist the development of understanding. It will, I am sure, be much used as a guide to more in-depth enquiry, and deserves its claim to be 'something of a classic in the literature of community care'.

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Allan Borowski, Sol Encel and Elizabeth Ozanne (eds), *Ageing and Social Policy in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, 358 pp., pbk \$34.95, £15.95, ISBN 0 521 49820 1.

In the Preface to this timely and comprehensive book, Brian Howe, a past Australian Cabinet minister and Deputy Prime Minister 1991–95, urges decision makers at all levels of government to take account of the importance of lateral thinking, particularly in the area of social policy and planning. He also suggests that there is a need for some caution in planning community-based services for the ageing population, and that all reform and policy

development must be considered within a broader social perspective. This approach is echoed in 15 lively and stimulating chapters by 19 notable Australian contributors, as well as in the comprehensive Introduction. The latter is an informative piece that attempts 'to reflect the state of social gerontology in Australia, as well as to provide critical evaluation of public policy' (p. 2), and it sets the scene for a broad and expansive debate about issues that concern older people.

The volume is divided into five separate but interconnected sections, the first of which is the Introduction. Parts II and III are contextual in nature, and look at demographic trends, the health of older people, ethnicity, policies affecting Aboriginal people, and issues concerning older women. Part IV examines the impact of social policy on the work, retirement, housing, family and education needs of older people. Finally, Part V explores the political and legal issues that concern older people, for example, the differing attitudes of the Labor and Coalition governments towards such policies as the Aged Care Reform Strategy.

The current demographic profile of the ageing population of developed countries reveals that currently women outlive men by approximately eight years. A significant number of contributors in this book highlight gender differences in the older population, and it is heartening to see issues that have an impact on the lives of older women as integral to the structure and content of this book. Until very recently the circumstances of older women who live outside of institutional care have in the main been ignored by social policy makers, a neglect Karen Heycox seeks to redress. In her chapter 'Older women: Issues of gender' she looks beyond 'the "problem" orientation of contemporary ageing research', and focuses on the gender issues inherent in social policy.

The impact of increased labour force participation by women over the past few decades is also discussed in 'Older people and their families', while the chapter 'Work in later life' explores how unemployment and changing work practices affect women, not just men. The latter also considers the unpaid labour undertaken by women, recognising that housework is actually work (p. 147).

The chapter by Linda Rosenman and Jeni Warburton has as its focus retirement policy and retirement income systems in relation to women. The gender imbalance of the ageing population indicates that traditional retirement income policies based on past wage earnings may now be inappropriate. Many older women have never participated in the labour force or alternatively only been employed in low paying and/or part-time jobs, and must rely on the security of a government pension in their later years. It is gratifying that this chapter gives recognition to these important and fundamental issues.

The book also includes a most timely chapter that looks at the special needs of Aboriginal elders. Jo Harrison, author of the chapter 'Social policy and Aboriginal people', looks at the ways in which older indigenous Australians have suffered as a result of the traditional colonial attitudes of white administrators and service professionals. Harrison draws our attention to the poor health status of Aboriginal people, which is reflected in a life expectancy

15 to 20 years lower than that of white Australians. Her chapter highlights past and current inadequacies in the provision of responsive and relevant health care for Aboriginal people, and Harrison incorporates the accounts of Aboriginal people themselves, as she poses the question of whether there is a role for non-Aboriginal Australians in the development of care policy for elders and services (p. 135).

Although written specifically about Australia, *'Ageing and Social Policy in Australia'* should be of great interest to professionals concerned in care for older people, policy planners and students in other countries, as many of the issues presented are universal. Its concerns are diverse, contemporary and relevant, a useful combination to have in one book.

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SUSAN FELDMAN

Fred C. Pampel, *Ageing, Social Inequality, and Public Policy*, Pine Forge Press/Sage, Thousand Oaks, California/London, 1998, 176 pp, £11.99 pbk, ISBN 0 8039 9095 2.

This text is a new addition to the 'Sociology for a New Century' series and is clearly intended for the undergraduate textbook market in the USA. Writing from a European perspective, I can see that this book will be a welcome addition onto many undergraduate reading lists, broadening our students' knowledge and understanding of inequality, ageing and later life in the USA. Yet I would suggest that the book has to be used as a supplement to other more detailed texts: as a springboard rather than a sofa.

The volume is arranged into six chapters and a short epilogue. These consider: images of old age; public policy and the case for government intervention; class differences before and during old age; race, ethnic and gender differences; comparative perspectives (focusing upon Japan and Europe); and generational inequality and equity issues. All the chapters provide the student reader with a useful overview of each area in a clear and concise manner. The reader is left in no doubt about the importance of public policy to the (often) improved situation of older people in the USA.

The chapter that provides a comparative overview of social inequalities among older people would, on its own, act as a very useful introductory primer for any student based outside North America. However, Pampel's endorsement of Esping-Andersen's now classic 'Three Worlds' framework, presented as the main typology for comparative analysis, made this reviewer very uneasy. This was particularly so because he failed to acknowledge the wide range of alternative methods of analysis within comparative and cross-national inquiry. Additionally, one of the widely acknowledged criticisms of Esping-Andersen's typology is that it remains 'gender blind'. This is important when considering the subject matter of Pampel's book and the 'feminisation' of the older population in Western industrial societies. Similar degrees of superficiality occur throughout the text. There is a reluctance to develop many important lines of inquiry in sufficient depth for his audience,

the undergraduate reader. Indeed, the author acknowledges as much in his introduction, calling his level of analysis a 'general treatment' (xii). Yet much of his analysis has a tendency to be too general and much of the literature he cites is dated. For example, when acknowledging the feminist critique on pensions, his discussion covers little over one page and the most recent text he cites is dated 1993, even though there is a very vibrant and current literature: other examples abound.

As an aid to student learning, he uses 'stories, vignettes, or narratives set off from the text and indented' (xiii). These illustrate and underline his analyses. This use of what one should call 'asides', I found distracting rather than helpful. The flow of the argument was disrupted by these interventions, both in the level of detail they contained, but also because of the change of writing style. More importantly, it tended to reduce the work to an anecdotal level and individualise many of the serious issues he was raising. Although their intention was to assist students to ground the theoretical and abstract, to relate it to their daily experiences, these asides singularly failed to catch the imagination. His use of the word 'elderly' throughout the book when referring to the population over 60 was also surprising to read, particularly for an American text. Most of my colleagues in the USA tend to prefer the more widely used term 'older people' or more generally 'senior citizen'. For many, the word 'elderly' is now considered a pejorative description of older people. The use of this was therefore, at odds with the subject matter and the more recent social gerontological literature.

As a basic, very general and sometimes superficial, introduction to a range of issues, this text is useful on its own. However, I would strongly suggest that the book, if used as a student text, although covering some very salient issues in an interesting and novel manner, requires support with additional reading.

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