# Reviews

Rosalie Hudson (ed.), *Dementia Nursing: A Guide to Practice*, Radcliffe
Medical Press, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, 2003, 400 pp., pbk £24.95,
ISBN 1 85775 899 4.

This substantial edited text is one of very few to be concerned with the nursing
care of people with dementia. With 36 authors, mainly from Australia and the
UK, contributing to the 24 chapters, it will have required considerable editorial
work, and for this Rosalie Hudson is to be thanked. Many of the authors are not
nurses, and there are therapists, theologians and psychologists among them. The
reader soon becomes aware that the book has no structure; the chapters are
not clustered by themes, no introductory account describes a rationale for their
sequencing or adds value to the individual chapters, and no concluding chapter
draws the issues together. The book therefore appears rather disjointed, and has
no organising framework.

So little is published about nursing practice in dementia care that this book is
nonetheless welcome. The book, however, displays many assumptions about
what makes 'good' nursing care, and few are explained or defended. Many of the
presented assumptions and priorities will appear rather dated, at least to Western
European readers. While, for example, Chapter 2 is on the perspective of
relatives, there is little on the perspective of people with dementia themselves; and
similarly, there are many chapters about the management of problems (Chapter 7
'Wandering', Chapter 8 'Sensory loss', Chapter 10 'Restraint', Chapter 16
'Aggression'), but only one on a therapeutic approach to intervention (Chapter 22
'Creative care'); and whilst several authors reflect on person-centred care, many
display a more pessimistic and diagnostically-driven approach (*e.g.* 'The horrific
complexities of dementia', Chapter 3).

The intended readership is not clear. It will probably be found most useful by
care workers, rather than professionally-qualified staff, but I am concerned that
the assumptions it reinforces will perpetuate nihilistic and limited approaches to
caring for people with dementia – the very thing the book states it seeks to avoid.
As the Introduction states, the focus is on people with dementia who are resident
in care homes rather than community settings.

Some of the chapters articulate a humanitarian approach that is welcome and
refreshing. Chapter 18 on 'Palliative care' makes a useful contribution to an area
of practice that has had very little attention to date. Chapter 20 on 'Listening to
the person with dementia' concerns storytelling – this is so important in dementia
care yet nothing else in the book concerns biographical or life-story work. One
chapter explores organisational issues around residential care. In itself, Chapter
23, 'The Eden alternative', is interesting but no alternative models are explored
or critiqued. In summary, despite some valuable individual chapters, this book
feels dated and is disjointed. The Foreword heralds the contents as 'a tribute to

expert nursing' and 'a celebration of all that is good in nursing'. Sadly it falls far short of such aspirations.

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Lars Tornstam, *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*, Springer Publishing Company, New York, 2005, 213 pp., hbk $39.95, ISBN 0 8261 3134 4.

Mention 'gerotranscendence' and researchers of the experience of ageing think immediately of Lars Tornstam, a Swedish professor who has been conceptualising and refining this theory of positive ageing for more than three decades. Gerotranscendence is 'a theory that describes a developmental pattern beyond the old dualism of activity and disengagement', a framework 'developed from the unsatisfying mismatch of common theoretical assumptions within gerontology and some empirical findings' (p. 4). For this collection, Tornstam has revised several essays published between 1989 and 1999, and placed them here in the context of 'traditional ways of thinking' while 'breaking theoretical boundaries' (p. 30). The book therefore provides a record of how a pioneer conceived, executed, and defended theory building on the micro to intermediate level in a scientific field of inquiry that James Birren characterised as data-rich and theory-poor.

Tornstam begins with a critical discussion of gerontologists' value-dependent assumptions, which he claims are contradicted by empirical data, especially 'the way old people themselves structure and discern reality' (p. 29). In the first chapter the author excoriates myths within gerontology – such as the 'retirement trauma' that scholars often contend contributes to misery in late life. Chapter 2 provides an historical perspective on the paradigmatic context in which social psychologists and other investigators attacked disengagement theory. Gerontologists sought to replace disengagement theory with models (Tornstam refers to those elaborated by among others Erik Erikson and David Gutmann), which emphasised activity and productivity in later years as well as 'older people's changing perceptions of time and space, life and death, and a growing sense of 'cosmic communion' (p. 41). Past scholarship offered valuable insights into the dynamics and dimensions of old age. Still, in Tornstam's view, social gerontologists failed to generate constructs that matched their perspectives and data on late life.

*Gerotranscendence* breaks new ground by taking 'a phenomenological approach to reach a "from-within" understanding of what developments come with aging. The subjective meaning given to aging has been given preference before the meaning researchers ascribe to aging' (p. 187). Tornstam divides gerotranscendence into three domains. First, the cosmic dimension deals with continuities and changes in connections between past and present, including links to earlier generations. At the same time, the cosmic dimension looks forward to the mysteries of finitude and beyond. Second, the dimension of self addresses individuation and shadows, an ego-integrity that surpasses puerile obsession with the

body. Third, the dimension of social and personal relationships probes individuals' capacity for asceticism, for a mature assessment of what roles and situations are worth pursuing, and for the attainment of everyday wisdom.

The heart of *Gerotranscendence* reviews respectively the qualitative (Chapter 3) and quantitative (Chapter 4) evidence that illuminate the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural characteristics that Tornstam ascribes to ageing across these three domains. A 1990 study invited 912 Danish men and women aged 74–100 years to reflect retrospectively on their life satisfaction and depression, sense of self, changes in coping patterns, and relationships. Larger surveys in 1995 and 2001 documented that measures of gerotranscendence became more evident over time among Swedes (aged 20–85 and 65–104 respectively). Tornstam reports that an increase in cosmic transcendence commences in early adulthood; men on average score lower than women until age 75. Life crises, especially among those active through middle age, enhance a sense of transcendence; in old age, crises lose this impact, though recent setbacks decrease the experience of transcendence among men over 95.

In the last two chapters, *Gerotranscendence* focuses on practice. Chapter 5 deals with the staff's understanding, interpretation, evaluation of the theory's utility in nursing homes. Although results vary by the level of nurses' education and the quality of facilities, Tornstam is convinced that the proposed educational intervention dispels ageist assumptions caregivers might harbour about residents. In addition, applying gerotranscendence theory promotes reminiscence therapy, dream analysis, and meditation courses; respects residents' need for positive solitude; and acknowledges differences in older people's sense of spatial boundaries, time, cosmic communion, and death and dying.

The book does have errors. The *Gerontological Society of America* established a Committee on the Humanities and Arts during the 1970s not the 1990s (p. 26). Gutman's (*sic*) name is consistently misspelled. More importantly, from the perspective of an American scholar, there is concern about the homogeneity of the samples: would the same results obtain in a diverse nation, torn by prejudice? Should there be better integrative linkages to other theories, particularly given the richness of race theory and gender studies? That said, *Gerotranscendence* is an important book, a testimony to the continuing need for theory-building that widens our field of vision conceptually and practically.

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 Helen K. Black, *Soul Pain: The Meaning of Suffering in Later Life*, Baywood, Amityville, New York, 2006, 209 pp., hbk $44.95, ISBN 0 89503 304 6.

This book nearly never saw the light of publication. Indeed, the author uses the story of her difficulties in interesting a publisher as an example of just how challenging, and even unacceptable it is to many people (perhaps most of us) to hear the unvarnished individual accounts of suffering, endured or reconstructed, by older people. Neither suffering nor old age are topics which naturally attract a

wide readership, yet realistically we all know that both are inevitable parts of our life's experience. To juxtapose two such topics was clearly thought to be more than most readers would cope with.

Who are the audiences for this book? Practitioners in multiple fields, such as nursing, medicine, social work, and those with pastoral ministries, should be grateful to find a topic, often encountered in their professional practice, openly explored in a way which honours the uniqueness of each experience. For although suffering is an experience known to us all, it is nevertheless always mediated through the individual life experience. The author has respected this, and left intact the expressions and interpretations of her respondents. She has rightly eschewed simplification, and those seeking quick-answer insights or recipes for intervention will not find them here. Rather, she has used this individual focus as a way of understanding suffering's meaning in regard to the development and preservation of the self, and the 'activities of suffering' which are the strategies by which survival is achieved.

The book also caters for various academic interests, each of whose particular literatures on the meaning of suffering in later life is reviewed. The contributions of psychology, medical research, medical anthropology, the social sciences, theology, and of course ageing studies, are all well covered. We therefore see how great is the need for stepping down from the veranda and listening attentively to what real older people actually have to say. This book is about just such a study conducted in Philadelphia, whose primary method of investigation and analysis was narrative. A stratified sample of 40 older people was recruited. The decisive criterion for inclusion was a positive answer to the question, 'Are you now suffering, or have you ever suffered?' (p. 19). The respondents had various religious faiths as well as none at all, and were ethnically and socially diverse. What they shared was the experience of having lived through the same period and therefore the same major historical events, such as World War II.

Choosing a definition of suffering as 'a visceral awareness that humans are vulnerable to being broken at any time and in many ways', the book progresses through different perspectives on the meaning of suffering as recounted by these elders. It begins by exploring these meanings as culturally communicated, and expressed in identity and social roles, before moving on to examine how gender affects both how suffering is experienced and how it is expressed. The complexity of the embodied nature of suffering in physical pain is explored, as is suffering as a social phenomenon. The uniqueness of individual coping strategies is laid before us, and the ways that these strategies are shaped by the values and interpretations given them by the person concerned.

The question of values is explored in depth in a chapter on the moral universe of respondents, the interpretation of the causes of suffering, and the corresponding value placed on suffering itself. The author examines the different metaphors of suffering used by the respondents, such as attack, injustice and loss, before exploring the 'activities of suffering'. These include the narration of experiences of suffering to a listening other – and therefore the research on which the book is based itself forms part of that activity. Finally, we are invited to understand how the experience of suffering, its reconstruction and interpretation, shapes the development of the concept of the self in later life. Although suffering has been

experienced as being about brokenness, the book leaves us with the knowledge that there was also 'a strong theme of hope' in the respondents' stories, 'to be reconnected, after brokenness, with self, others, and God, and ultimately to remain oneself' (p. 190). Those of us who approach old age, and those of us who live among elders, need to acknowledge both the brokenness and the hope. This is a sensitive and moving book which will help us to do just that.

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Richard K. Caputo (ed.), *Challenges of Aging on US Families: Policy and Practice Implications*. Haworth, New York, 2005, 221 pp., $29.95, ISBN 0 7890 2877 8.

This collection of articles was simultaneously published in *Marriage and Family Review*, **37**, 1–2, 2005. The articles range from good to rather trivial, and as most of them describe United States situations, with hardly any reference or comparison to other regions of the world, they will be of limited interest for European readers. Nor does the volume impress with its coherence, as it is loosely constructed around the theme. The intention was fine, to raise understanding of how the ageing baby-boomer cohorts will impact on American families and social policies. The major section of six chapters focuses on family care-giving to older people. It is followed by a shorter section (three chapters) about older people as care-givers – as surrogate parents for grandchildren. This achieves a good balance and a welcome reminder that older people are not only consumers of care, but also contributors. There is an overview introduction by Elizabeth Kutza on how the baby-boomer cohorts may come to be more of a trouble to themselves and others than expected, as both the economy and the political climate turn less generous. What then are the policy and practice implications of these challenges; how are they to be met?

First of all, I am not totally convinced about the reasonableness of the diagnosis and forecasts, which may be specific to the United States and less appropriate for many European countries. It is also strange for a Scandinavian reader to see that the only recommendations put forward to meet these challenges are so familially conservative, namely to stimulate family care positively through 'payment-for-care' programmes, or negatively by obligating children to care for older parents. Why not develop and expand services for older people, which according to many European studies is the preferred option for both the older and younger generations? This may seem unrealistic in the United States, but if so, the book might have expanded on why this is so.

Some of the articles are worthwhile and interesting. Sheila Feld and colleagues discuss why and when spousal care is not enough, and help is needed from outside the couple household. This timely but often overlooked theme is treated both theoretically and empirically, unfortunately with too small a sample to allow a proper test of the presented hypotheses. Another research gap is addressed by Joseph E. Gaugler and colleagues in a review article on the role of family

care-givers in residential care – after institutionalisation – but unfortunately the messages are rather vague, perhaps because too little research on the topic has been done.

Li and Seltzer focus on the stresses of care-giving, while Simon-Rusinowitz and others present the effects of a payment-for-care programme in Arkansas. These articles are reasonable but also miss opportunities. Li and Selzer, for example, talk about the ambivalence of care-giving daughters, but without any reference to ambivalence theory as presented by Kurt Lüscher and Karl Pillemer. Simon-Rusinowitz discusses the risks of family-care replacement by payment-for-care programmes, for which they find no empirical support, but again without reference to the many studies about the possible substitution or complementarity effects of public interventions.

The most interesting article for this reviewer was that by the editor, Richard Caputo, about 'Inheritance and inter-generational transmission of care'. This reports well-done research on the extent to which adult daughters provide assistance to parents on the basis of self-interest, filial norms or modelled behaviour. The theory and data are presented compellingly and clearly, and although I am not convinced by the conclusions, Caputo concludes that the self-interest motive prevails, and finds reasons to downplay the role of normative factors for family care. The evidence for this conclusion is not however very convincing. For one thing, the parent generation in the study was aged 45–55 years and can hardly represent the older generation, as Caputo admits. More importantly, Caputo assumed that the observed help patterns were produced from the provider (daughter) side only, but it takes two to make an exchange, and the attitudes and preferences of the potential recipient, in this case the parent, may have been equally formative. Many parents are hesitant, even reluctant, to burden their children. The assumed 'paradoxical finding', that a favourable attitude among parents to leave an inheritance to children reduces the likelihood of getting monetary help from children is not then paradoxical, and may simply indicate that parents prefer to be on the giving side of the relationship, as we indeed all do, particularly as parents. The Caputo article, while stimulating and well informed, has no reference to the substantial European research in this area, as by Martin Kohli and his colleagues.

The three articles about grandparents as care-givers and surrogate parents are timely reminders of a growing societal problem, and of older people as resources in the care system. More than 5.5 million grandparents take care of grandchildren in the US, often in response to the poverty and social problems of the parents. Informative as the articles are, I do miss the greater story about how a rich nation like the US can allow so many children to live in poverty. There should be quite a few other policies to combat this problem than to induce or force grandparents and other family members to clean up the mess. Overall, therefore, the larger perspective is missing, as well as the editorial effort that could have added value to the individual papers and turned them into a book. The short introductions are insufficient, and no conclusion knits the collection together.

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Stephen Katz, *Cultural Aging: Life Course, Lifestyle and Senior Worlds*, Broadview, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada, 2005, 272 pp., pbk Can.$31.95, ISBN 1 5511 1577 8.

It is a real pleasure to be given the opportunity to review this volume of essays by Stephen Katz, not only because it brings together his recent output on the cultural aspects of contemporary ageing, but also because he has established a reputation as an acute commentator on the status of gerontological thinking. Both aspects of Katz's work are well represented in this collection. The essays range from Charcot's reliance on older women from the Salpêtrière poorhouse in Paris for his landmark *Clinical Lectures on the Diseases of Old Age*, through to ethnographies of Canadian 'snowbird' communities in Florida.

The book has two parts, one concentrating on the cultural politics of expertise around ageing and the lifecourse, and the other on lifestyle and what Katz calls 'senior worlds'. As befits the author of *Disciplining Old Age*, this does not mean a division between theory and research; instead, we are given the opportunity to examine both the production of knowledge and its utilisation in different contexts. In one chapter we are invited to look at the construction of what goes into a gerontological handbook, and how this constructs particular fields of thought by setting up the nature of both the problems and the responses. Handbooks not only summarise knowledge, they also promote the professionalisation of gerontology as an activity somewhat distant from the day-to-day lives of older people. Stephen Katz's deconstruction of this role leads him to advocate a more pluralist approach, akin to Robert Bellah's notion of a 'public philosophy', in which social science is remade into a form of 'social self-understanding'.

This approach is followed up in a chapter on the social theory of old age, which asks why the sociological positions that make up 'critical gerontological theory' mainly derive from radical theoretical approaches that have lost influence in their parent disciplines. Part of the reason may be the 'data-rich but theory-poor' legacy of earlier traditions of gerontological thinking, but there is also the issue of the lateness of serious sociological thought being brought to bear on the dynamics of later life. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Katz posits the idea that social gerontology's failure to engage with these larger theoretical traditions during the 1960s and 1970s meant that the critical gerontology project is still trying to establish its paradigmatic centrality. Criticality, therefore, is still constructed from universalising discourses around age, gender and class. This creates a reluctance to engage with forms of contemporary criticality 'structured in the shadow of post-modern fracturing of the moral and intellectual foundations of modern knowledge formations' (p. 94). Katz furthermore states that 'this stasis limits the critical potential of gerontology by relegating critical approaches to a form of 'benevolent "mission practice"' (p. 91), and advocates instead a form of 'nomad science' that draws from the French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Here, the idea is not to create a 'royal' or state science which seeks to reproduce state power but rather to facilitate a more fluid and discontinuous knowledge capable of being critically empowering. Katz does not want to dismiss the arguments of extant critical gerontology, but opens them up to the profound

changes that are occurring to later life by engaging with theories and approaches that are sometimes dismissed out of hand as well as giving credence to novel areas of investigation.

On the basis of this critique of gerontological knowledge, it is not surprising that Katz is drawn to topics connected to the ordinary lives of older people such as activity and sexual fitness in the ageing male. These topics and their literatures more than demonstrate the points made in the first section of the book. The notion of the 'busy body' in relation to activity is not only situated in professional discourses but also has a normative quality that brings in Foucault's notion of governmentality, which sees activity as a 'positive' dimension acting against the negative forces of dependency and illness. In this, as the author's interviewees told him, older people's choices often conflict with professional assumptions. The motif of resistance to professional discourses of ageing recurs in a number of chapters and is keenly emphasised. One example he gives is the reaction of local U3A groups to the involvement in the British national organisation of *Saga*, a travel and leisure services company – that it betrays their principles. This resistance is seen by Katz as the flip side of governmentality, whereby older people create their own responses to attempts to organise and direct them. The status of such resistance is an area for further debate given that later life identities owe much of their power to the fact that they are located in a consumer society which is as moved by consumer pressure as it is by opposition.

Relating both male sexuality and ideals of retirement to the themes of lifestyle, consumption and identity, Katz demonstrates how they become entwined. Male sexual impotence, once seen as a natural consequence of growing older, has become identified as pathological (and exclusively physiological) erectile dysfunction. Later life is now no longer a period bereft of male sexual activity because of physical decline. Instead, 'youthfulness' and virility are possible through the intervention of drugs such as *Viagra*, which are marketed as much as lifestyle products as pharmaceutical therapies. Identity, in this light, can be established as an 'ageless ageing', and later life is reformulated as an extension of middle age complete with all of its concerns and marketing opportunities. Retirement too can be repositioned as a form of opportunity-seeking consumption, in which leisure is combined with lifestyle options that match personal desires. While this is not the only identity available in later life, Katz points out that they all are built around the need not to succumb to the 'negativities' of ageing and to particular traits that are associated with being 'old'. If such identities are seen as possible and desirable by both the population and the state, then considerable effort needs to prepare people for them. Health and social policy becomes concerned with people's ability to avoid such pitfalls through health promotion and financial planning, and dire warnings made about those who fail.

In this way, the cultures of ageing become the new terrain on which ageing needs to be studied. Stephen Katz shows that these aspects of ageing which often appear to be peripheral to the wider concerns of social gerontology are increasingly crucial to our understanding of modern ageing; for that important contribution, this book is highly recommended.

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Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Pensions at a Glance: Public Polices across OECD Countries*, OECD, Paris, 2005, 204 pp., pbk €16, ISBN 92 64 01871 9.

How to reform pension systems is now at the top of governments' agenda across almost all OECD countries. Many studies have been undertaken to investigate the financial sustainability of traditional pension systems and reform options from the macroeconomic standpoint. Lesser work, however, is focused on the micro-economic welfare effects of pension systems and their reforms: that is the adequacy of pension systems to support older people. This book fills a gap by providing a comprehensive comparison of mandatory pension programmes in both public and private sectors of the OECD's 30 member countries.

The book has two parts. The first of seven chapters presents the comparative results of key pension indicators for all 30 OECD countries; and the second part comprises 30 country chapters with detailed discussion and assessment of the national pension systems. In the first chapter, the authors outline a governing framework, namely the pension-system typology used throughout the book. Although this differs from commonly-recognised typologies, notably the World Bank's classification, it captures the two main social objectives of pension systems in modern democracies: redistribution and insurance. The first objective aims to maintain an absolute and minimum income level for older people, while the second is to maintain old-age income at a certain ratio to that of working life.

The second chapter summarises the principal features of the markedly diverse pension systems among the 30 OECD countries in 2002. On the level of pension benefits provided by the first pillar, redistributive schemes, (expressed as a percentage of average earnings), Luxembourg had the highest, at 46 per cent, while the Czech Republic had the lowest value, at 12 per cent. Despite the many differences in the national schemes, 65 years is the age of eligibility for men in most OECD countries. Chapter 3 lists the variables and key assumptions used to model future pension benefits. Specifically, the authors present three pension indicators, the replacement rate, the relative pension level, and pension wealth, to assess the adequacy of pension systems. Put simply, the replacement rate measures the extent to which the pension system is adequate for the pensioner in comparison to his or her own past earnings, while the relative pension level measures the extent to which the pension system is adequate for the pensioner in comparison to the economy-wide average wage earner. Pension wealth, expressed as multiple(s) of the economy-wide average wage, discounts or converts all future pension entitlements into the current value.

In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the results for these three indicators are sequentially presented. For comparative purposes, six earnings levels are specified, with the lowest band below half of average earnings, and the highest band more than 2.5 times the average. Again, the results show large variation among the countries. For example, the pension systems in Canada and the United Kingdom put more weight on the redistributive role; in other words, relative to their earlier incomes, poor people receive more pension benefits than rich people. In Austria and Finland, however, the opposite is found.

Chapter 7 summarises the results presented in the previous three chapters. Across the 30 OECD countries, the *pension wealth* of men is equivalent to 8.7 times average earnings, while it is 10.2 for women (the differential is produced by women's longer life expectancy). Luxembourg had the highest *pension level*, and Ireland the lowest, but it is worth noting that the difference between the two countries (possibly others too) does not necessarily mean that pensioners in the low-pensions country have lower incomes, for the analysis did not take into account supplementary income benefits or non-state (voluntary or privately-purchased) pension schemes. Incorporation of these into the analysis will surely affect the overall (mandatory and voluntary) level of pension entitlements in each country. Each country chapter replicates the same analysis, although in much greater detail. Overall this book is a significant contribution to current pensions literature and will have a ready and immediate market. It is suitable for a wide range of readers, particularly policy makers, academics and those concerned about the welfare effects of pension designs.

Brunel University, London                                      Y U - W E I  H U

   Sergio Cesaratto, *Pension Reform and Economic Theory*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, 2005, 384 pp., hbk £75, ISBN 1 84064 364 1.

There are always theories standing behind economic reforms, not excepting those that are driving today's pension reforms. Currently, conventional or mainstream economic theory suggests that 'unfunded' pension systems, notably pay-as-you-go (PAYG) arrangements, are inferior to 'funded' systems. In consequence, the funded system, touted as a way to tackle the issue of an ageing population, has become the normative form. This book of nine chapters is an interesting and innovative contribution to our understanding of one important question, whether this normative convention is theoretically justified. This question is of crucial importance, in that it directly influences pension design, and the welfare of millions of people. This book will be of particular interest to academics, policy makers and students of the pension field.

The book starts with a review of theories of the PAYG system from the seminal paper by Samuelson (1958) onwards. Samuelson argued that the PAYG system is welfare enhancing, because it bestows a windfall gain to the first generation (people in this generation did not make contributions, but were guaranteed a certain level of pension benefits when they retired). This theory is sensible when the working population is much larger than the older population, as it was decades ago. Given the demographic transformation towards an aged population in many countries, however, a shift from the unfunded to the funded system is needed.

The author then examines the notional-defined-contribution (NDC) system, a form intermediate between the PAYG and fully-funded systems. Although innovative and more sustainable in comparison to the PAYG system, the NDC system is by definition unfunded; and has therefore been adopted in only a few countries, *e.g.* Italy and Sweden. The book then turns to full-funded (FF) systems and their theoretical justifications. The first well-known assertion is that

they provoke a high savings rate, and therefore more investment and raised economic activity. In Chapter 3, however, the author argues that saving is not necessarily increased by a shift from a PAYG to a FF system, because the end of the former mandatory saving might not be compensated by the rise in discretionary saving.

Chapter 4, the core of the book, argues that even if we believe that saving is increased by a FF scheme, it is very likely that the higher saving is not transformed into more investment and therefore does not have the theoretically expected stimulus effect. This critique directly addresses the main theoretical weakness of mainstream pension economics. To consolidate this unconventional analysis, the author conducts two country studies, for Chile (Chapter 4) and the United States (Chapter 5). Although international pension experts and policy makers praised Chile's 1981 pension reform, its good post-reform economic performance during the 1980s and 1990s might have had other causes, including fiscal reform, so it is unwise to attribute Chilean economic growth solely to pension reform.

The analysis assumed a closed economy having no interaction with foreign countries. If foreign markets are considered, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 maintain that PAYG problems could be mitigated with more immigrants from younger countries and overseas investment. It is admitted, however, that because population ageing is a global phenomenon, more immigrants would alleviate not solve the problem. In addition, the author puts forward the importance of increasing labour supply (more immigrants and raising retirement age) and decreasing labour demand (labour saving innovation). In Chapter 8 he explores the economic implications of an ageing society if the PAYG system continues in this century. The message is very clear: some changes of traditional PAYG systems are required. The current pension reform based on mainstream pension economics, however, might be flawed at the very beginning. Therefore, more vigorous theoretical study in the future, along with robust empirical evidence, is warranted.

## Reference

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Brunel University, London                                               Y U - W E I   H U

Alan Walker and Catherine Hagan Hennessy (eds), *Growing Older: Quality of Life in Old Age*, McGraw Hill, Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, 2004, 268 pp., pbk £23.99, ISBN 0 335 21507 6.

This collection presents the main findings of the projects funded by the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council through its *Growing Older* (GO) Programme, and has been edited by the Director and Assistant Director. Its overall purpose is 'to present a state-of-the-art picture of quality of life in old

age' (p. 1). The chapters were compiled to represent the main themes of quality of life: definition and measurement, inequalities, built environment, ageing-well, support networks and social engagement. In addition to advancing knowledge about quality of life, the programme's goals included methodological advancement, highlighting the voices of older people, and influencing policy and practice. *Growing Older* was a large programme, with 96 researchers at all career stages. Its goals were ambitious and the chapters, though illustrating only a small proportion of the research, reflect some of its richness. In 10 substantive chapters, the authors report projects that addressed a broad set of quality of life issues of older adults in different settings and with diverse socio-economic, ethnic and social characteristics.

Gabriel and Bowling argue that the conceptualisation of quality of life is rarely grounded in the views of older people. From a national survey of older people, they found that quality of life associated with good social relationships, a supportive near environment, a positive outlook, social engagement, and adequate personal resources. The authors of subsequent chapters also address these themes, and emphasise social relationships, social engagement, context and personal resources. Several chapters are devoted to relationships between quality of life and social engagement. Clarke and Roberts focused on grandparent relationships to understand how meaningful family relationships and engagement with family members relate to quality of life. In a national study of grandparents, they found that grandparenting was an important relationship that kept people connected and enhanced their quality of life. In their chapter on loneliness in later life, Victor, Scambler, Bond and Bowling note that loneliness is often seen as a lack of social engagement. They found that loneliness is lower among those who are involved with family and friends and in community activities and that personal resources were buffers against loneliness.

Other authors considered the ways in which the contexts of older people influenced their quality of life. Kellaher, Peace and Holland conducted a narrative study on social and material environments of older adults. Quality of life came from participants' ongoing evaluations of the relative importance of environmental features and tuning in to desirable elements. The chapter by Scharf, Phillipson and Smith also has an ecological focus; they used the concept of social exclusion to address quality of life of people in deprived neighbourhoods and found that exclusion from social relations was an important detriment to quality of life. The goal of the participatory action project undertaken by Cook, Maltby and Warren was to understand participation and empowerment as sources of quality in older women's lives. Participants were older women in the city of Sheffield whose experiences of ageism, racism and language contributed to their sense of exclusion from formal community services.

In several chapters, personal resources were highlighted as determinants of quality of life. Moriarty and Butt found generally low levels of income and self-reported health but high levels of social support among people from minority ethnic groups. Having sufficient personal resources, including the ability to have control over daily decisions, was a key finding in the study of quality of life in residential care by Tester, Hubbard, Downs, MacDonald, and Murray. In their interviews with residents, they found that ability to be oneself in the residential

care setting enhanced quality of life while loss of control was a negative influence. Davidson and Arber addressed gender issues in quality of life through an exploration of the health and partnership status of men. Despite having poorer health, lone men were less likely than partnered men to seek medical advice, suggesting that older men's sense of independence and masculinity may preclude preventive health-seeking behaviours. Nazroo, Bajekal, Blane and Grewal found that both engagement and personal resources were important in understanding how inequality might affect wellbeing among older people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Across ethnic groups, having roles in paid work, community, and family were important to perceived quality of life.

This is a highly readable book that will be accessible to student, policy and service-provider audiences. Its citations provide sources of background information on conceptual and methodological issues of particular interest to academic audiences. A challenge in putting together edited books is to draw out the commonalities across the chapters. It would have been useful to have a critical analysis of how the set of contributed papers have moved forward our understanding of the quality of life of older people. Although there is a great deal in these chapters about influences on quality of life, definitions of the construct are elusive. As a reviewer, one is privileged to have time to consider a piece of work. I've enjoyed the journey.

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May L. Wykle, Peter J. Whitehouse and Diana L. Morris (eds), *Successful Ageing Through the Life Span: Intergenerational Issues in Health*, 2004, Springer Publishing Company, New York, 232 pp., hbk $36.95, ISBN 0 8261 2564 6.

Reading about other people's conferences is a curious task. Lots of the reasons we go to conferences – networking, respite, wanting up-to-the-minute information and the occasional good lunch – are not satisfied by a volume of conference papers, but they have their purposes and, as this book demonstrates, can provide a quick briefing on unfamiliar and not so familiar subjects. This collection is a mixture of overviews and research-findings chapters, and both kinds scatter policy and personal encouragement and prescriptions: phrases such as 'people should do this' and 'policy or society should do the other' recur. The conference audience has been transformed into the readers, but they only see the words on the page and many of the nuances are surely lost. For a non-American reader, the usual impressions apply. The world of gerontological research is huge and active in the United States. The whole book reflects the work carried out in one State, Ohio, and presumably is not exhaustive. This is a well-resourced area, underpinned by large bio-medical training investments. The second illuminating point, moreover, is the role of private foundations in commissioning research, not one-off project funding but long-term investment in higher education, extensive research processes and capacity building. No doubt there are *great* inequities, and presumably

foundations can be hard task-masters, but the resources are substantial and the commitment long-standing.

   This perhaps explains one of the curious elements of the collection evident to a British reader, the absence of the voices of older people in most chapters. The reader can only speculate about how older people are involved in research, what uses they make of it, and how researchers communicate with them. This is surprising, because the conference contributors cast themselves in the mould of 'new gerontology'. What this seems to mean is that they interpret ageing as a positive and productive process, as co-editor May Wykle explains. This is set in contrast to 'old gerontology' that stuck ageing in a mould of slow, steady, unproductive decline. The irony of using 'old' to describe this model remains unnoticed. Some generalities of successful ageing are described throughout the chapters and a short set of illustrative examples in the chapter on 'successful ageing in the face of chronic disease' by Eva Kahana and her colleagues counters the criticism that 'successful ageing' is an exclusive club of healthy, productive older people. Through these examples, the researchers point to the possibility of proactive adaptation by individuals and the impact of larger structural forces on people's self-agency.

   The book's second theme is that of the lifespan. Examples of work with younger people are given in descriptions of inter-generational work in a school on an organisational 'campus' for older people (Chapter 10). Another chapter, by Musil and colleagues, debates women's care-giving across the lifespan, with a focus on grandparent resources and ethnic variations. They note the increasing numbers of multi-generational households in the United States, and the risk of providing family care at any part of the lifecourse. The potential for exercise across the generations is argued by Roberts and Adler in Chapter 4, since this approach may be motivating to all and can provide 'social connection' or even fun.

   Like many of the chapters in this book, a contribution from older people, or younger family members, might make claims for enjoyment or fun more persuasive. One of the key chapters on the transfer of ideas between generations makes this evident. Chapter 9 discusses a Montessori-based programme for older people with dementia who attend day care. The Menorah Park experiment has been discussed widely: essentially it recruits older people with dementia to take part in Montessori activities with young children: art, music, exercise, playing cards, talking and so on. A child and an adult work together in this social context, often with a volunteer or leader. As the more detailed evaluations of this approach have shown, pleasure when working with children is evident, and anxiety and fear are seldom experienced. Sadness was rare. The children too seemed to enjoy the events. Some 'vignettes', pen pictures or reports of what people said would have been helpful additions to the quantitative evidence.

   The third theme of this conference was evidently health, but as the brief discussion of the contents has indicated, this is not really a book about 'issues in health'. It is wider and exemplifies the elasticity of language and the tendency to attach 'health' to almost everything. Nor is this really a book about 'issues', for like many conference collections, it provides some good overviews, though more might have been done to encourage the separate contributors to address common threads. In my view, the title of the collection suggests that the conference itself

had an infinite remit, but perhaps this was a necessary public or fund-attracting persona.

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Elizabeth MacKinlay (ed.), *Spirituality of Later Life: On Humor and Despair*, Haworth Pastoral, Binghamton, New York, 2005, 165 pp., pbk $24.95, ISBN 0 7890 2732 0.

This edited book is based largely on papers from a conference, held in Australia in 2003, on humour and despair amongst older people. Some chapters make little or no mention of humour but share the broader theme of the conference, 'spiritual tasks of ageing', and maintain the Australian focus. The practical import of the book is to help carers, pastoral workers and clergy develop support and intervention strategies that promote integrity rather than despair among those facing the multiple losses of old age. In this context, humour is regarded as a major skill through which people achieve what Victor Frankl calls 'self-transcendence'. So humour is to be encouraged and some of the pages in this book indicate how this may be done.

The first chapters are the most theoretical. Melvin Kimble carefully distinguishes despair from depression and draws heavily on the work of Victor Frankl as well as several theologians and philosophers. Noting that both Kirkegaard and Niebuhr drew a close connection between humour and faith, Kemble concludes with Christopher Fry, that 'comedy is an escape not from truth, but from despair: a narrow escape into faith' (p. 10). Susan McFadden teases out the difference between humour and wit and includes those with dementia in the general argument that humour expresses the defiant power of the human spirit and is closely allied to faith. Heather Thomson repeating much of what has gone before teases out the ways in which, as she puts it, 'humour can serve us in the spiritual tasks of ageing' (p. 40). In MacKinlay's paper we begin to hear the voices of 'ordinary' older people as she uses extracts from in-depth interviews to build a picture of how people use humour to transcend loss and face death. Useful implications for carers and therapists are suggested. I would have liked much more of these interview extracts and much less of the analysis of the role of humour in the spiritual tasks of ageing. It was during this chapter that I first began to speculate how many marks for self-transcendence are required to get into heaven and who would be doing the assessment.

Although several chapters touch on dementia, in John Killick's contribution it is the focal concern. Addressing the question of whether memory loss necessarily means loss of identity, Killick urges us not to overlook the continued and even expanded need for self-expression and attentive and encouraging listening to what is being communicated. Corinne Trevitt and Elizabeth MacKinlay's chapter also focuses on people with dementia and reports a pilot study that used spiritual reminiscence to explore issues of religiosity. Many participants had long-standing church affiliation and spoke freely of the importance of this especially earlier in life. Almost all were able to describe their image of God and the

importance of prayer including some who were not currently taking part in any form of collective religious activity. Yet, as the authors and some of the participants themselves note, discussion of issues to do with religion and spirituality rarely take place in care homes.

The following chapter by Ann Harrington makes a similar point in the context of the hospice. She reports conversations with hospice patients about their 'spiritual journey', and draws from these conversations an assessment of how far the individual has travelled from despair to hope, with the implication that someone may then be more able to help with the next step. Harrington argues that patients welcome such conversations. But as with all stages of development models there is a lurking danger that they will be used in a simplistic and prescriptive way. The final chapter on non-speech-based pastoral care, by Elizabeth Vreugdenhill, is inspiring and well-founded.

As a parish priest who cares for a large number of elderly people, parts of this volume encourage me to be more adventurous, playful and open in the kind of care that I offer. But overall the book's core understanding of spirituality has a curiously deadening effect: it claims to know exactly what spirituality is, where it goes (self-transcendence), and the map that will get us there. All that remains is for us to follow the recipe and success will be achieved. And yet this is a map that cannot do justice to the mysterious and messy nature of a terrain that will always evade our desire to master it. I wonder what would happen if this volume had not employed a supposedly universal and psychological understanding of a 'spiritual journey' that people only begin as they get older but instead had drawn on the experience of living and highly diverse faith communities? This would be a much less manageable task of course, but it might well have been more revealing.

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Erdman B. Palmore, Laurence Branch and Diana K. Harris (eds), *Encyclopedia of Ageism*, Haworth Pastoral, Binghamton, New York, 2005, 347 pp., pbk $39.95, ISBN 978 0 7890 1890 8.

Since the term 'ageism' was first coined in the late 1960s, it has helped to organise our understanding of the broad range of barriers, denials and many forms of exclusion imposed upon people as they age. It is difficult now to imagine attempting to account for an experience of growing older in contemporary society without reference to ageism. Yet, despite this increasingly common acknowledgement it is remarkable how little we know of this pernicious phenomenon, or perhaps more accurately, how little evidence has been gathered to illustrate its workings. To a large extent our understanding of ageism seems based upon comparisons, through reference to other forms of discrimination such as racism and sexism. There have been comparatively few attempts to explore ageism and the forms it takes or how it is wielded to uphold inequalities based upon age. So, it is now an 'urgent task to understand why we have kept the subject of aging at arm's length, that is, we must understand ageism itself' (Woodward 1999: x).

With such a challenge afoot, the *Encyclopedia of Ageism* makes a timely contribution. As the title suggests, the book seeks to offer an insight into the broad array of issues relevant to and shaped by, ageism. Indeed, the book aspires to confront ageism, with a large portion of the entries aimed at dispelling stereotypes and challenging some of the more entrenched myths associated with an ageing population. Organised much as one might expect, the encyclopaedia has an inventory of alphabetically-arranged entries that share a common formula: set out the issue; draw out its relevance to ageism; overview the topic and give references for further reading; and conclude with strategies to tackle ageism. The format has strengths and weaknesses when it comes to engaging with the thorny topic of ageism.

The sheer breadth of the issues paradoxically draws this book together and makes it a genuinely helpful resource; it demonstrates the pervasiveness and insidiousness of ageism across society, the diversity of its forms, and the many spheres of life in which it operates. What is particularly effective about the format is that it itemises what, for many, is a hazy or even ambivalent concept, and it grounds 'ageism' in specific case studies. The scope of issues covered by the book signals both its usefulness as a resource, and the powerful social indictment it represents. On the other hand, the format sacrifices depth for breadth, and the brevity required for so many entries has led to simplicities.

There were probably editorial headaches over which topics to include and how much space to grant them. Any reviewer would make different choices, and raise questions about the selection criteria. Perhaps the most unwelcome outcome of the 'quick and easy' style of the entries is that many sweeping generalisations are made, even in the accounts of the weightier topics. The ills of cursoriness and tokenism are difficult to avoid in a couple of pages. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the few paragraphs that describe particular minority communities, their identities and conduct. In this respect, the book is surely guilty of precisely the sort of essentialism that it sets out to deconstruct.

The *Encyclopedia of Ageism* deals almost exclusively with United States' society and institutions and refers mainly to research in that country, but it does more than provide insights into American conditions, for it reveals how many of the issues of ageism are shared and cross-cutting, and are relevant to all our lives. By bringing together American research and writing on the topic, it clearly delineates ageism for a potentially wide audience. A similar attempt in the United Kingdom would yield a slender harvest, which signals the importance of further research in this field to raise our understanding of ageing in British society.

## Reference

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