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Allan Borowski, Elizabeth Ozanne and Sol Encel (eds), *Longevity and Social Change in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, 2007, i-x+397 pp., pbk AUS\$ 59.95, ISBN 13: 978 0 86840 889 7.

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in the United Kingdom as the perspective and orientation of this book is firmly rooted in the United States. Whilst there are some valuable sections, the overall slant of the book is so ethnocentric that it has little utility for readers in other parts of the world. The research and policy base that underpin the book are firmly American. Despite considerable gerontological scholarship in Europe (as evident in this journal) there are only two British references: Laslett (1965) and Young and Willmott (1957). There is no consideration of emerging research areas such as transnational and global ageing or mainstream sociological perspectives on 'the ageing body'. Indeed the sociological perspective presented here is rather traditional. Whilst there are discussions of activity theory, socialisation and cultural norms, more recent theoretical perspectives, such as those influenced by post-modernism, the ideas of Foucault and other social theorists or notions of consumption, are entirely absent. Overall this is probably a very useful book for its intended readership, American undergraduates, but the book will have little appeal beyond that market and will be of only limited value to gerontology teachers around the globe.

References

- Laslett, P. 1965. *The World We Have Lost*. Methuen, London.
 Young, M. and Willmott, P. 1957. *Family and Kinship in East London*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

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This book starts, as might be expected, with an overview of population ageing in Australia, and it succinctly explains the underlying reasons for population ageing and the attendant policy concerns. Like the United States, Australia is still relatively young by European standards (with only 13 per cent of the population aged 65 or more years in 2002). This is partly due to a much higher level of fertility during the post-war baby boom and subsequent fertility rates, although now below replacement, that are higher than most European (especially Southern European) countries. The 1950s and 1960s baby boom will of course mean a bulge in the numbers of older people when they reach later life. This chapter is quite brief and could have included more tables or charts (there are only two, one on the broad age distribution of the population and the other showing trends in youth, age and total dependency ratios). Other readers will however appreciate the clearly written text. The next chapter, by Colin Mathers, gives a more detailed overview of trends in mortality and disability, including some consideration of possible future scenarios.

Subsequent chapters explore implications of, and for, population ageing and the older population across the range of dimensions that would be expected in a text book of this kind. These include health policy, employment, income, housing, family and intergenerational relationships. Although all these have an Australian focus, they are of wider interest. The chapter on health policy (by Swerissen and Duckett), for example, reviews the arguments about the relative contributions of population ageing and innovations in medical technology to health-care costs, as well as arguments about costs attributable to the last year of life.

Other chapters examine particular issues and sections of the population, including gender and ageing, ethnicity and ageing, and an interesting essay on indigenous Australians. This conveys the depressing news that there appear to have been no gains in remaining life expectancy among middle-aged or older indigenous Australian during the 1990s, with a large gap between them and other Australians, although the statistical evidence for the indigenous population is poor (itself depressing). Additional chapters deal with issues less commonly included in overviews of ageing; these include chapters on 'ageing in space' (transport, access and the urban form), on lifelong education and learning, and on ageing and the law.

A particular feature of all the chapters is close consideration of policy implications and of the commentaries on policies and policy making. Although, naturally enough, the policies considered are Australian, these sections are of wider interest particularly to those concerned with possible alternatives to current systems in their countries (the Australian pension system, for example, is substantially different from that in many other OECD countries). As a whole, the book takes the view that cataclysmic pronouncements about the effects of population ageing are overstated but that much needs to be done in preparation for demographic change. The book is authoritative, clearly written and well referenced. One or two chapters were perhaps less convincing than others. I was disappointed, for example, that the chapter on family and inter-generational relationships contained little empirical information on inter-generational exchanges in the Australian population. I was also surprised that the USA was chosen as an example of the possible consequences of delayed childbearing 'when women postpone birth until their mid- to late-thirties (as is now the case in the United States)' (p. 344). The average age at first birth in the USA in 2002 was 25.1 years (US National Center for Health Statistics 2008), considerably younger than in the UK and The Netherlands. Overall this book will be a useful resource for students on social policy and gerontology courses, and their lecturers.

Reference

US National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) 2008. *Births: Final Data for 2002*. Fact sheet, NCHS, Hyattsville, Maryland. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/births.htm#stat%20tables> [Accessed March 2008].

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