

Editorial

Change of editorship affords an opportunity both to restate and reformulate a journal's policy. Under Malcolm Johnson's long and outstanding editorship *Ageing and Society* has established itself as an international journal, one of the most genuinely international in the field of ageing studies. It has also demonstrated its multi-disciplinary character by publishing articles from a wide spectrum of academic disciplines and perspectives. Authors have been encouraged to write in ways which while remaining scholarly also allow their work to be read with profit by readers whose primary expertise may lie elsewhere. All those who have shared responsibility for the journal, its authors and readers, have much to thank Malcolm for.

Gerontology has achieved widespread recognition as an important subject of enquiry and has grown considerably over the last twenty years. But it has succeeded in preserving from its pioneering days an appealing sense of collegiality among contributors from very diverse backgrounds. This journal in particular has aimed to foster the study of ageing as a holistic study, where all participants should be expected to have some understanding of the work being carried out in adjacent fields. Only in this way can true interdisciplinary study begin. It has also attempted to bridge the divide between 'thinkers' and 'practitioners', providing a place for people to develop innovative and creative ideas about the experience of ageing itself, but also practical evaluation of society's response to the challenges of an ageing population. The journal will continue to build on these principles. It aims to be international, multi-disciplinary, scholarly, accessible and relevant. In all these ways, but especially perhaps for its insistence that published studies should be properly set in the context of previous work, and also for the encouragement it has given to new lines of enquiry, the journal bears the distinctive marks of its founding editor.

In a venture as ambitious as this, however, it is not easy to achieve an ideal balance of material. All depends on the collaboration of people from different countries and backgrounds. The journal has demonstrated its international character from the very first issue. But the mix can be improved. In particular, the content of the journal has so far inadequately reflected the gerontological strengths of continental Europe. More, too, can be expected in the future from the fast-

developing countries of the Pacific region. Certainly greater attention should be given to the increasingly urgent issues affecting ageing in the countries of the so-called 'third world', in which the greater part of the world's older population already lives.

An examination of subject matter will show that articles from the disciplines of sociology and social policy have tended to predominate over the journal's first decade. By contrast psychology, as important a field of enquiry within the study of ageing as sociology, has been much less evident. *Ageing and Society* invites psychologists, who themselves contribute to gerontology in a variety of ways, from studies of particular cognitive processes to psychobiographical analyses of whole lives, to present their work to a multi-disciplinary audience, particularly if they are prepared to reflect on the social implications of their findings. More too is expected from practitioners in the health and social services, from economists, from anthropologists and political scientists, from educationalists, from a broad range of authors in the humanities and sciences, all in fact who have a contribution to make to understanding the various ways in which human beings, and the organisations and structures which they create, change over time.

The journal's title can be taken to reflect in part an emphasis on understanding human ageing in context, on encouraging the publication of studies which examine how the experience of – and response to – increasing and diminishing powers throughout the course of adult life depend on the characteristics of the society and culture in which people grow, develop and age. There is – as Erik Erikson has eloquently taught us, through a lifetime's pioneering work on development over the whole of the human lifespan – an interdependence between the individual's growth and the opportunities that the social and physical environment provides. The latter includes people who are older and younger than the developing person. We depend on others for the sources and stimuli of our own development. Other people also restrain and inhibit us; they continue to do so until we die. We in our turn provide, or do not provide, the conditions for others to grow and flourish. These include not only persons of our children's generation but also of our parents'. In short, development and ageing, childhood and later life, are interdependent. We are regaining a respect, somewhat lost in the progress of the analytical sciences over the last two centuries, for the wholeness of human life, from its beginning in conception to its ending in death.

Although there are many features about ageing which for the foreseeable future remain beyond our control, some of the most damaging influences are the product of human attitudes. Invalid

generalisations and stereotyped thinking lead to self-fulfilling prophecies about failure and decline. *Ageing and Society* recognises its responsibility in this respect to counteract what has now come to be called 'ageism', the unjustified attribution of characteristics to people on the basis of their age. It therefore expects its contributors to be self-critical of the statements they make – about younger as well as older people – and to avoid simplistic commentary on age differences that does injustice to human potential at every stage of the life course.

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