

making the silenced majority more visible. Thus the address published here by Dr Linda Rhodes to the United Nations Committee on Aging last year (1982) leaves no doubt as to the world-wide statistics concerning women's *existence* as elders.

The figures are straightforward: of those over sixty years, women are the significant majority (over half) everywhere in the world; life expectancy for women is substantially higher than for men... yet women rarely surface as the central issue in aging.

Nor does she leave any doubts as to the sites and causes of the oppression:

In most cultures, women are valued primarily for childbearing and kinkeeping roles. This position in society is often considered secondary to the male role of provider. The rewards for women in these roles are rarely economic... once there are no children to bear or kin to keep, women are without a position.

Of course, this must affect the meaning of retirement for women (if its present conceptualisation has any meaning at all). Or the meaning of money (security, pensions, poverty) for women. Or the meaning of marriage and motherhood and widowhood. Or, in the case of my own research, the meaning of sexuality. Of course, in this context, being old has a different meaning, is a different experience for women than men.

Other articles look at sex differences in ageing in the experimental literature in psychology, the lives of middle-aged women, at women as carers, the use of interactionist rather than normative models in gerontological research, at women in rural societies: and much more. And there is a call from the volume's editor for feminist correctives to research on elders.

There is a useful section of book reviews, the syllabi used at three Canadian and one U.S.A. university in the study of 'the sociology of aging' which redress the sexist balance and include reading lists (excellent models for other such courses), and an immensely useful annotated bibliography on women as elders.

In my view this publication points the way forward for research on ageing – putting the focus on women as women, and by implication, but equally as important, on men as men. Acknowledging the ways in which living is different and difficult for women as distinct from men, as well as the ways in which life is difficult for women and men because of their age. In short, taking into account sexism as well as ageism.

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S. M. Peace, L. A. Kellaher and D. M. Willcocks, *A Balanced Life?*, Survey Research Unit, The Polytechnic of North London, 1982, 52 pp., ISBN 0 90697 013 X.
L. Hanaway, (ed.), *The Three-in-one House*, Home Care Research Inc., Frederick, Maryland, 1981, 46 pp.

Researchers are for ever being criticised for their failure to communicate research findings to practitioners. Both of these books, in their different ways, are intended to change practices with regard to the elderly. *A Balanced Life?*

is the condensed version of a British study which examined some aspects of life in residential care. The views of 1000 residents and 400 staff living and working in 100 local authority old peoples' homes, drawn from 30 local authorities, were canvassed.

In part the study was descriptive, attempting to capture the conditions under which residents lived and staff worked. A major theme developed by the researchers is that of the personal versus public space available to residents. About half the residents questioned had their own rooms, but the authors' conclusions were that:

Residential life is currently constructed socially, on an assumption that residents will be prepared to live out their lives in a largely public setting. Residential life is therefore an unbalanced life.

Altogether more ambitious was that part of the study which sought to analyse the impact of building design upon social life and satisfactions. Inevitably such a complex undertaking resulted in less clear-cut findings. But the recommendations the authors make about layout, design detail and siting must all now form the starting point for future construction.

The monograph stands up on its own as an excellent summary of prevailing conditions in homes, and as a guide for future development. The text is pithy, diagrams and tables are simple and informative and major findings and recommendations highlighted. However, it may also be used as a kind of illustrated index to the full report upon which it is based, drawing the interested reader into a more detailed examination of findings.

One of the conclusions to the British report is that future homes should be based around the notion of each resident having their own small 'flatlet', a model which would narrow the gap between residential care and extra-care sheltered housing or care hostels. The American *three-in-one-house* proposes a slightly different solution, one perhaps better known to British readers as a 'group home'. The text is a practical guide to the establishment of shared housing for older people. The concept has been widely mooted for some time in a number of countries, but practical difficulties seem to have stunted its growth. For a few older people it may be the answer to housing problems in later life but difficulties associated with matching prospective residents, and then subsequent adjustment to group living appear to be major weaknesses. However, for those wishing to establish such a scheme this book gives some useful advice, albeit with a heavy American flavour.

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Claudette Collot *et al.*, *The Social Situation of Older Women Living Alone in Three European Countries*, Cleirppa, Paris, 1982, 258 pp.

This study was carried out in France, Germany and Italy, and based on a questionnaire study addressed to 2,000 women living alone in towns. The questionnaire contained 80 common core questions for inter-country compar-