

measurement and evaluation analysed. Special attention is given to the goals of measurement in long-term care, including the importance of developing research tools which can distinguish small increments in patient function, since such increments can have a major effect on quality of life. In addition to proposing a research agenda, the authors provide a set of recommended actions designed to increase the number of persons practising geriatrics medicine, and to improve the quality of the care they provide. A bonus among the book's technical appendices is one listing the areas of clinical knowledge and skills which medical students, residents and geriatric fellows should acquire as a result of their training.

This book will be useful to medical school administrators, gerontologists, practising physicians and medical social scientists, in short all concerned with meeting the health care needs of the elderly.

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Caroline Godlove, Lesley Richard and Graham Rodwell, *Time for Action: An Observation Study of Elderly People in Four Different Care Environments*. Social Services Monograph, University of Sheffield, 56 pp., £2, ISBN 0907484 02 6.

The true significance of this title becomes clear as the central findings emerge from this absorbing and methodologically thorough piece of research: the elderly in each of the four environments studied (day centre, day hospital, local authority home, and a hospital ward) have a great deal of time at their disposal as a consequence of a minimal engagement in action/activity. Furthermore, classification of the 'activities' which fill the remaining third of the time betrays interesting disjunctions between institutional aims—explicit or implicit—and observed practices. For instance:

'In day hospitals, where it might be expected that a very high proportion of time would be devoted to rehabilitation, the observed percentage was as low as 17.8.

In the main, however, material is offered without deliberate interpretations so that the reader is free to construct his/her own inferences. The important thing about observation studies is that they entail the collection of data that is both complex and specific, and thus allow this kind of interpretive response on the part of the reader.

The ground covered in this monograph is not inconsiderable. In the end, 65 individuals, across 32 establishments of the four types mentioned above, were studied. The aims of the research, though potentially wide-ranging—'what happens to elderly people when they receive care or services in four different types of environment'—are interpreted modestly and realistically and lead to findings which range from the quantitatively measurable to the impressionistic.

The background to the larger study, of which this monograph is but a part, is outlined in the introduction, which is followed by an illuminating review of

observation techniques as applied to studies of the elderly. A fairly lengthy explanation of the methods adopted, and descriptions of some of the settings observed, precedes the presentation of results and impressions.

The central findings concern patterns of living experienced by those cared for in each setting – their activities, involvement in rehabilitation and contacts with staff and with others. From an examination of these patterns it appears that the proportion of ‘client’ time in which the care appropriate to each institutional type is received is generally low. These findings particularly have implications for policy makers as well as for practitioners. For example, the extent to which the variations in overall balance of activity, interaction and quiescence observed between the four environments can be attributed simply to environmental influences – organisational aims, ethos, etc. or to client characteristics – is considered. Some light is thrown on this question by an examination of the relationship between different disability levels and activities or contacts in each setting. In this central section of the monograph the results are presented in quantitative terms, illustrated partly by good graphics and partly in rather less approachable tabular form. Unfortunately, the text here is sometimes too condensed to make comprehension easy. Nevertheless, the material is valuable and interesting.

Activity and contact figures are presented as a necessary basis for comparison between the four environments and the kind of care or service likely to be experienced by the residents/attenders. However, and as researchers themselves remark, such an approach to the material of observation represents only one of several possible frameworks for understanding the impact of the social and organisational environment upon patterns of daily life. Two further perspectives are offered which extend this quantitative overview of daily routines by focusing upon the individual client as the unit of observation. In the first of these the activities of sixteen individuals – each observed for periods up to 6 hours in a single day – are described. A second perspective is provided by accounts of some of the researchers’ impressions of the establishments. These tend to reflect exceptional or striking events and practices, and whilst not representative of practice overall, they serve to draw attention to those informal interactions between staff and clients which may occur in between the more specific events/interactions isolated for classification in the observation study schedule.

I have so far refrained from commenting upon the methodology employed in this study because it seems important to stress that the results presented in this monograph are in themselves interesting. The findings contribute to a view of ‘institutional’ life for elderly people which is based on actual and measurable practice rather than on formal statements of organisational aims. In many ways it is unfortunate that the authors do not give prominence to the results. These constitute the second half of the monograph, the earlier sections being devoted to methodological discussion and explanation and to description of the settings. Whilst it is crucial to justify the use of a relatively novel method, one might argue that its justification rests in the study findings, and that explanations might be less distracting if located in an appendix. A briefer statement of approaches might have been more acceptable at the start of the monograph, with an elaborated appendix covering the quite complicated sampling,

selection and data collection procedures. Nevertheless, for the 65 subjects finally selected it has to be said that the criteria of 'complex specificity' appears to have been well met. For each of them their activities at 10-second intervals were observed over several hours, using a set of 96 symbols. The researchers make no claim that the 65 individuals are representative in any strict sense, nor that their settings are representative of the four institutional types, but the original selection of 80 people was organised to cover the range of physical dependency and mental status.

The findings reported here will be of particular interest to those involved in the delivery of care to elderly people—there are clearly overlaps and rationalisations to be made, if not economies, across these areas or provision. The suggestion made by the authors that this mode of observation could prove a valuable training exercise is certainly apposite. The application of observation methods to this kind of issue is justified by the findings, though I would add here that it is not always easy to follow the procedures used in the study. All the same, there is sufficient detail provided to permit replication of the approach. Observation strategies of this intensity can yield densely textured facts about the flow of daily life within a social environment, and permit certain generalisations to be made which have important implications for practice. It also seems to me that where an elderly, frail possibly submissive group of informants is concerned, observation methods are likely to produce material which is both more comprehensive and more useful than that yielded by self-reported approaches. In this instance diaries might have been the only alternative way of collecting data of this kind, a demand which would clearly have exceeded the strengths of these elderly people. It is a pity that methodological considerations and an often condensed style of presenting the more 'technical' findings obscure the central results, but all in all a useful and, for me, an interesting contribution to the ethnography of establishments for the elderly.

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Raymond M. Berger, *Gay and Gray*, University of Illinois Press,
Chicago, 1982, pp. 192, no price. ISBN 0 252 00950 9

In this study, Berger attempts to prove his hypothesis that ageing presents the same problems for homosexual people as for heterosexuals. The two main aims were: first, to study the degree of self worth, life satisfaction and integration into the younger and older gay community, and the extent of an active sexual life among the sample; and secondly, to consider the extent of successful adaptation to ageing among homosexual men.

There were 19 in-depth interviews and 112 respondents to a questionnaire. The interviews contained open-ended questions which reflected the importance to each individual of certain aspects of life relative to others. What was concealed or elaborated depended on the interviewee. There was difficulty in finding sufficient women and gay people from minority groups, so the study