

Editorial

As we embark upon the task of editing the seventeenth volume of *Ageing and Society*, we can draw upon the 8,600 pages of past editions, including well over 100 articles and 250 book reviews. In the context of this steadily growing body of learning, our aim is to sustain and develop the reputation of *Ageing and Society* as one of the foremost international academic journals in social gerontology.

Peter Coleman's contribution, building upon that of the founding editor, Malcolm Johnson, has been immense. In his opening editorial, Peter reaffirmed that the aim would be to keep the journal 'international, multi-disciplinary, scholarly, accessible and relevant'. We are happy to pursue these same five goals.

Peter referred to the journal's title as reflecting an emphasis on understanding human ageing 'in context'. The experience of, and response to, changing powers through the course of adult life, he suggested, depend on the characteristics of the society and culture in which people grow, develop and age. In the intervening five years, there has been a positive flood of studies which have undermined simple assumptions about 'the society and culture' in which people live their lives. Debates about postmodernism and life in the postmodern society pose fundamental questions about the nature of ageing and about how it is to be discussed and perceived. The fragmentation of the familiar 'post-war' worlds of employment and welfare is challenging many assumptions that have underpinned social gerontology in the past. Similarly the globalisation of trends in consumption and how people spend their time and resources in later life are key issues that we anticipate will be increasingly reflected in submitted articles.

The two words '*and Society*' in the journal's title obviously represent the 'social' in social gerontology, but they also represent a continuing interest in ageing in a rapidly changing and varied context. For this reason we will continue to encourage the strongly international and comparative element in the journal. We hope that an increasing number of contributions, no matter how firmly rooted they may be within one particular country or locality, will compare their findings with those of others who have addressed similar questions but in different contexts.

It is through discussion of the implications of such comparisons that

the journal will contribute to the continuing development of social gerontology. We also hope to receive articles which demonstrate how age and ageing are central to many basic issues in social science, and which focus attention on age the variable and ageing the experience, rather than on the category 'the elderly'. We believe that by examining the processes and experience of ageing through the whole life course, a better understanding can be gained of the characteristics, challenges and problems of later life.

Having said this, our intention is to see that the journal maintains its broad scholarly base, drawing upon many different approaches and perspectives. We hope to receive contributions that address all kinds of questions regarding the social context of ageing or related policy issues, representing not only from the many different perspectives within the social sciences but also those of the natural sciences, clinical disciplines and the humanities and literature.

Finally we feel the time is ripe to consult with the readership. To that end we include with this edition a questionnaire. We would urge you to complete it and to append any supplementary comments you would like to make.

We are confident that your responses and ideas will help us maintain a clear sense of direction as the journal develops over the next few years and beyond into the next millenium.

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