

# Book Review

Lesser, H. (Ed.) (2012). *Justice for Older People*. New York, NY: Rodopi Press.

Reviewed by: Stephen M. Marson, Ph.D., Senior Editor

Harry Lesser, the editor of *Justice for Older People*, does not explicitly articulate the specific readership for his work. However, it is clear that the intended audience is gerontological scholars and students who have a specific interest in values and justice related to the aging process. Although some of the material is fit for those who are being introduced to the field, most of the writing assumes that the reader has advanced knowledge of gerontological theories and a background in the area of ethical theories. Without such a foundation, the reader will be lost.

The 15 authors focus on issues that can be generalized globally. They do a superb job of avoiding the trap of ethnocentrism. They are successful in this endeavor for at least two reasons. First, they focus on social concepts that are transcultural. For example, the authors employ such concepts as “human dignity,” “autonomy,” “resources” etc. Second, the authors wrap these concepts and empirical evidence with theory. Gerontology is frequently criticized for being theoretically barren. We do not see this as a valid criticism for Lesser’s work.

The book is divided into 16 chapters. These are:

- The present situation: Diagnosis and treatment
- Older people, care dignity, and human rights
- Age, dignity, and social policy
- Dangers and dilemmas surrounding the consumption of anti-ageing medicine
- Loneliness in older patients
- The effect on ageing on autonomy
- Intervention without patient consent
- Is a gray world desirable?

- Personal development in old age
- The global distribution of healthcare resources in the twenty-first century
- The rival claims of children and adults to healthcare resources: Is there a need for greater coherence in our view?
- Setting limits fairly: A critique of some of Daniel Callahan’s views
- Social injustice: Distributive egalitarian, the complete-life view, and age discrimination
- A fair innings or a complete life: Another attempt at an egalitarian justification of ageism
- Triage and older patients
- Justice, guidelines, and virtues

One can immediately acknowledge that this work is comprehensive. In addition, the chapters offer a good transition from one topic to the next. Coordinating meaningful transitions within an edited volume is an extremely complex task and Lesser must be applauded for his work.

Three problems commonly found in edited works exist. First, there is an uneven quality of writing. As a regular book reviewer, I use a ranking protocol to assess variation in writing quality. Some chapters are better written and organized than others. Second, and more surprisingly, the authors do not share a single citation style. Some use a variation of APA; while others employ MLA. This will be irritating for many readers. Third, edited books are rarely read from cover to cover. Readers are often drawn to these volumes as a result of a particular chapter (which is the reason I listed the chapters). With such a readership, the index is of utmost importance. While conducting my evaluation, I jotted down

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concepts that I wanted to reread. For example, Giddens's concept of "Third Way" is addressed throughout chapter 2. However, the index only refers to a citation found on page 32. With other words/ideas I listed, the index did not help me to return to the original section of the book I needed. The index is lacking.

The three minor problems should not detract advanced gerontologists from reading this fine volume. Academic libraries that are responsible for housing material for the study of gerontology should adopt this volume. Students and professors who specialize in the study of aging should read this.