

**Pachana, N.A. (2016). *Ageing: A very short introduction*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 152 pp. ISBN 978-01-987-
253-29**

Banu Cangoz¹ and Yesim Gokce Kutsal²

Ageing: A very short introduction is organised around six well-established core areas related with ageing. Since recently more and more researchers have turned their attention to the problems of ageing in later periods of life, selected areas provide readers with a framework to understand the ageing and a unique balance of traditional and contemporary perspectives. This approach invites readers to develop a modern appraisal of ageing. The book covers a brief history, physical and biological aspects of ageing, psychology of ageing, social and interpersonal aspects of ageing, positive and successful ageing and reflections on ageing and future directions. The book is important to many features of daily life, from workplace and the family, to public policy matters. It is complex and new questions are continually raised about how behaviour changes with age.

The areas explored in *Ageing: A very short introduction* include a historical perspective of gerontology as an important emergent field of study; cultural myths and common wrong assumptions about ageing, later life, and old age; health and functional abilities in old age which are necessary for older persons to experience productive, successful and active ageing; the interface of increasing age on one hand, death, grief, loss and loneliness; the changes of familial dynamics and structures following retirement; the daily narratives and experiences of older persons; ageing-in-place and the impact of social location on wellbeing in later life; and the importance of financial planning as life expectancies continue to expand and grow. It is positive to note that that these areas are not only present in different chapters but are to a great extent interrelated in various parts of the book. Indeed, it is theoretically and empirically impossible to discuss gerontology without underlining the multifaceted and interdisciplinary nature of ageing and later life.

The publication *Ageing: A very short introduction* is organised around eight key chapters. The second chapter, 'Gerontology: A historical review' provides an overview of the foundational components from which current gerontology was built and considers many explanatory

¹ Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Department of Psychology (Chair) Ankara-Turkey.
(banucan@hacettepe.edu.tr)

² Hacettepe University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of PMR-Ankara-Turkey.
(ykutsal@hacettepe.edu.tr)

stances, both past and present, used in examining later life. The third chapter, 'Myths and common assumptions about ageing', addresses some of the prominent cultural narratives that frame what we think about old age and how we study it. This is a very important chapter since, unfortunately, many discussions about old age and later life are clouded by myths, stereotypes and assumptions that can limit possibilities in later life. The fourth chapter, 'Health and functional abilities in old age', looks closely at concept related to health measurement as well as the cognitive aspects of ageing, examining health and functioning from a broad context. The fifth chapter, 'Rethinking family and family structures', begins with an overview of the family and kin structure with regard to later life, including trends in marriage and other partnered relationships, sibling and later life and grandparenting - followed by an analysis of living arrangements and caregiving in the family context. The sixth, 'Death, grief, loss and loneliness', provides a brief overview of how death, grief, loss, and loneliness became structured and problematised in old age to the point that they are often not addressed in gerontological books. This chapter also deals with two other usually neglected topics: suicide and eldercide. The seventh chapter, 'Social location and place' begins with an exploration of the various ways in which social location affects ageing, with ageism being a major consideration, followed by an investigation of the types of spaces available to older people such as multi-generation housing, single dwelling and institutional settings), and the concepts how older persons experience place. The eighth chapter, 'Financing old age', examines retirement as a relatively new concept and life phase, and its interrelationship with pension systems, especially contemporary economic changes and reform policies. The final chapter, 'Narrative and creativity', profiles narrative gerontology, creativity and creative expression in later life, by highlighting the many positive ways in which age can viewed and experienced, and exploring the 'growth' aspect of growing old through narrative studies, creativity, wisdom and the arts.

Exceptionally well written, *Ageing: A very short introduction* uses tables, diagrams, figures and cartoons to help readers connect with the different aspects of ageing. All running features are integrated into the main body of the text, helping to maintain the flow of the narrative and the attention of readers. Also adding knowledge to the understanding of the multifaceted and highly complex process of life-span development, provides source material for researchers, clinicians and students regarding the basic problems of older persons. To sum up, *Ageing: A very short introduction* offers a rare, inside glimpse into the field of ageing and the ageing experience as it is actually lived. This book assists gerontologists and geriatricians to make sense of our journey through ageing. There is no doubt that as Thomas Cole and Chris Phillipson remarked respectively, "whilst this compact, focused guide is perfect for students and others new to the field of gerontology, it is also an outstanding, invaluable guide to research in gerontology".