

Shorter Notes

M. Kaplan, *Leisure: Lifestyle and Lifespan: Perspectives for Gerontology*,
W. B. Saunders Co., London, 1979. 286 pp. £8.75 ISBN 721 652 727.

Kaplan's latest book picks up some of the ideas from his earlier writings on leisure and examines these in the setting of old age. In so doing, he provides a welcome addition to the sparse literature examining the relationships between leisure and the needs of the elderly. This paucity can probably be attributed to two main factors. The first is that leisure is not normally associated with 'problems' and the elderly are rarely considered worthy of attention until they become a problem. Secondly, for one reason or another, many leisure activities are not viewed as being appropriate pursuits for the elderly. Quite often this is a perfectly realistic assessment, but more frequently derives from social mores based on misguided assumptions, and much of Kaplan's effort is given to attempts to counter such beliefs.

The challenge of this book lies in its attempt to integrate theoretical concepts with practical examples of the lifestyles of the elderly, an attempt to reconcile theory and practice. To this end, the early part of the book is concerned to present a theoretical perspective before moving on to consider more pragmatic issues, first in the form of operating environments and 'activity experiences', then in the form of policies. This kind of link is frequently called for in the social sciences, less often attempted and all too rarely implemented successfully. Here, the link could at times beneficially be explored more rigorously; it is not sufficient simply to juxtapose theory and anecdotal material.

The theoretical basis for Kaplan's work is derived from the concept of social roles (assumed to comprise: a social circle; the functions the individual performs; attitudes towards self, towards others and towards the relationship between self and others; and, rewards, status and esteem). Although such an approach does have its drawbacks, it has the considerable advantage of encouraging an analysis of processes rather than falling back on a description of what currently is. Moreover, it acknowledges that leisure does not simply have one meaning, but is a phenomenon with changing significance, not only from one person to another, but for the same person from time to time.

Thus, ageing in general and retirement in particular see a recasting of an individual's role, placing different emphasis on the various components of life. This process of transition and re-adjustment of roles represents an alternative to the shedding of roles portrayed by the disengagement theory, and the wholesale acquisition of new roles advocated by the activity theorists. Kaplan would similarly reject the notion of a 'roleless role' in old age.

Whether the 'Protestant work ethic' is a myth, as Kaplan would argue, or reality, it is still extremely influential and lies at the source of many of the

'problems' associated with retirement. Because of the position of work, retirement, accompanied by the absence of a schedule, a job and a social apparatus, threatens the 'function' of the retiree. Certainly, many surveys have shown that it is common for those retiring to feel that they no longer have a use and that they have been cast on the scrap heap. However, it is Kaplan's contention that retirement has a dynamic and meaning of its own and the 'problem' is therefore not to find substitutes for work. Instead, it is the task of counsellors and programmers to build on the non-work complex of leisure, helping the retiree to raise it to its maximum usefulness within the framework of enlarged skills and tastes. It is fundamental to Kaplan's position that leisure experiences can be useful not only to those who are satisfied with spending time in hopefully interesting or entertaining experiences, but also to those who seek ways of remaining mentally and emotionally receptive and able to grow.

The attention given to the position of counsellors (leisure counsellors and retirement counsellors) is another manifestation of the American context of the book. However, the observation that the conventional role of those working with the elderly has been to comfort, soothe and schedule rather than to challenge, stimulate and innovate, is as true of Britain as of America. 'Social gerontology as a whole divides itself into those who stress 'disengagement' or 'activism', but in general those older people who lean towards the simple games and socials – disengagement in a sense – have had considerable help from recreational leaders in their midst.'

Kaplan exposes a contradiction in contemporary thought about the personality of the elderly; on the one hand, they are expected to build on their experience (drawing strength from the past), and on the other, they are urged to do things that escape the stereotypes of old age. Yet there is no reason why the elderly should not be able to reconcile these aspects. After all, Kaplan maintains that, far from avoiding tensions, we actually seek out such situations in order to avoid boredom and to ensure continued mental activity.

Kaplan is concerned to expose the workings and fallacies of ageism, hence the emphasis on activity and achievement. He explains that, as with racism or sexism, change must originate within the group subjected to the prejudicial stereotyping, and the elderly must rid themselves of the spurious notations that others encourage them to hold. If Kaplan is correct in observing an unwillingness on the part of the elderly in North America to accept and act by the perceptions held of them by others, it would seem that America is a few years in advance of Britain.

Similarly, he observes a greater political awareness among the elderly and gerontologists, accompanying a stronger political stand. In rejecting the political and social status quo, Kaplan stresses the need to become concerned with potentiality as another form of reality, accepting that what currently is does not have to be.

While many of his ideas are stimulating and the book is most readable, the American style of writing can, at times, be irritating. More importantly, it is necessary to appreciate that some of Kaplan's observations/findings are culturally circumscribed and should only be transferred to a British context with caution. And although aware of the many problems encountered by the

elderly and the debilitating effects of ageism, there lingers an impression of a 'gung-ho' approach that encourages a certain scepticism. Nevertheless, the stimulus is still there, inviting the involvement and commitment of the reader.

JONATHAN LONG

Tourism and Recreation Research Unit,
University of Edinburgh

Neil Howell, Duncan Boldly, Barry Smith, *Allocating the home help services*, London, Bedford Square Press, 1979. 110 pp. £4.50. ISBN 0 7199 10269.

Paul Chapman, *Unmet needs and the delivery of care: a study of the utilisation of social services by old people*, Bedford Square Press, London, 1979. 110 pp. £3.95. ISBN 0 7199 0962.

Both these publications are volumes within the series, Occasional Papers on Social Administration published for the Social Administration Research Trust by the Bedford Square Press of the National Council of Voluntary Service. The purpose of this series is to provide a vehicle of publication for research studies. It is hoped moreover that the series provides a link between research workers or academics and administrators.

The two monographs are concerned with the delivery of services to elderly people but both have quite different emphases. Howell and his colleagues present a model for the efficient allocation of one particular resource currently available to old people namely the home help service. Their brief appears to be an examination of the *efficiency* of this service; they do not discuss the wider and more basic questions of *effectiveness*. Chapman on the other hand is concerned with such questions of effectiveness but does not deal with the internal efficiency of welfare organizations.

Howell and his fellow researchers are either associated with or members of the Institute of Biometry and Community Medicine at the University of Exeter. Bemoaning the lack of a management science orientation to the delivery of personal social services they aim to make good this deficiency by presenting an operational research approach to resource allocation. Their particular task is to improve the system of allocating home help hours in Cornwall Social Services Department's jurisdiction so as to remove the territorial injustice built into the system. It is well known throughout the social services that resources are distributed on an area basis rather than a needs basis. The contention, however, of their study is that the provision of home help to individual clients should not depend on the particular area where they live but only on their requirements so that a client in one area should receive the same level of provision as a *similar* client in any other area.

The authors propose a simple formula for the rational allocation of home help hours which reflects this principle of equity. The numbers of each type of client in each area multiplied by their corresponding levels of provision give the number of 'work' hours (amount of contact time) required by each area. An additional allowance is then made for travel time, etc. the result being the total hours required by each area given its existing mixes of types of client. Further adjustment can be made to allow for different population